

Make-A-Wish Foundation grants custom cosplay wardrobe to local Hmong teen

By Pamela Ellgen
The Asian Reporter

The Make-A-Wish Foundation is in the business of granting wishes of fairytale proportions. So, when teenager Leslie Cha asked for a wardrobe straight out of the comic books, it just made sense to the organization to wave their wand and make magic happen.

Cha, who is battling lymphoma, a type of blood cancer, developed an interest in cosplay a few years ago. The performance art involves dressing up like characters from comic books, video games, manga, anime, and other virtual worlds, and costumes can range from \$100 to well over \$1,000 for more elaborate designs.

"She's a big fan of anime and comicon conventions," said Tracey Lam of the Oregon chapter of Make-A-Wish, "but apparently had never really been able to participate because she didn't have a wardrobe of her own."

Make-A-Wish Oregon recruited the help of local cosplay fashion designer Angeline Abuyen to make Cha's dress-up dreams come true. Abuyen created five unique costumes according to Leslie's favorite characters, each featuring true-to-story design complete with hair pieces and accessories. Abuyen tailored each costume to fit Cha's petite frame, but in the interest of keeping it a surprise, did not invite her to try them on before the big reveal.

"Cosplay provides an escape, an opportunity to pretend to be someone else and not think about what's going on in real life and be with people who are doing the same thing," Abuyen said. "Looking at the characters Leslie chose, all of them had



WISH GRANTED. The Make-A-Wish Foundation took to the catwalk to make the wish of teenager Leslie Cha come true. Cha, who is battling lymphoma, a type of blood cancer, developed an interest in cosplay a few years ago. As part of the special event, Cha (right photo) received five unique costumes made by cosplay fashion designer Angeline Abuyen. (AR Photos/Pamela Ellgen)

some hard times but are in general optimistic."

The costumes were unveiled at a lavish party and fashion show held at the Benson Hotel on Sunday, March 9, also Cha's 14th birthday. Cha arrived in costume and was met by a swarm of photographers and an eruption of cheers as she walked the red carpet into the ballroom. Surrounded by family, friends, and a colorful crowd of fellow cosplayers, she saw the costumes for the first time during a runway show.

"It's pretty exciting, it doesn't show on my face, but on the inside, I'm really hyper and happy," Cha said. "Make-A-Wish gives the opportunity to have something that's kind of once in a lifetime."

Make-A-Wish also recruited the help of Ann Akre, executive producer of the

Portland Fashion and Style Awards Show and owner of Venus Allure Salon and Spa.

"Ann played a major role in getting the fashion show put together by mobilizing her friends in the fashion show industry," Lam said. "I'm so happy that the community — the comicon community, the cosplay community, the fashion show community — came together and helped us do this and helped make Leslie's wish come true."

Wendy Thompson worked with Cha and her parents, father Gary Cha and mother Payang Xaychouyang, over the past eight months to make her dream become a reality. As a wish granter, Thompson never knows what is going to be wished for, and sometimes those dreams take her places she never expected.



"This journey with Leslie introduced me to the world of anime, and I witnessed a very shy child gain confidence within the magical world of cosplay," Thompson said. "This was a very powerful wish to be a part of."

Make-A-Wish Oregon grants wishes for children with life-threatening medical conditions and has granted more than 2,900 wishes since it joined the foundation in 1983. It operates through generous donations and the help of 250 volunteers. To volunteer, donate, or host a fundraiser, call (503) 292-2280 or visit <www.oregon.wish.org>.



EVANS SCHOLARSHIPS. Madison High School seniors Olivia Andersen (left) and Meuy Saechao (right) as well as Franklin High School senior Quy Hoang (center) have been named as winners of the 2014 Evans Scholarships. The awards were given through the Early Adventures in Golf for a Lifetime of Enjoyment (EAGLE) program and the Western Golf Association Evans Scholarship Foundation (WGAESF). Each student receives a four-year scholarship with tuition and housing to the University of Oregon valued in excess of \$50,000. The three students served as caddies for 80 separate 18-hole rounds during the 2012 and 2013 summer golf seasons through Portland Parks & Recreation's EAGLE program. (Photo courtesy of Portland Parks & Recreation)

John Love, Bataan Death March survivor, dies at 91

Continued from page 7

burial detail at a prisoner-of-war camp in the weeks following the Death March.

When Love learned of the caption revision in March 2010, he became emotional with a reporter.

"Son of a gun. Isn't that great?" Love said. "It brings tears to my eyes. It really does."

Japan lets first evacuees live in nuke no-go zone

Continued from page 3

within a year for residents from areas where the government decides it is safe enough to go back and live.

The radioactive plume from the Fukushima plant did not spread evenly, so some areas outside the 12-mile radius are unsafe. Decontamination on an unprecedented scale is ongoing in Fukushima, but some places may not be safe to live for decades.



15-year-old female Amur tiger Nicole passes away

Nicole, the 15-year-old female Amur tiger at the Oregon Zoo, passed away last month after experiencing what was believed to be a seizure. Animal care staff responded immediately, but were unable to save her.

Nicole and her brother Mikhail were born on Halloween in 1998 at the John Ball Zoological Garden in Grand Rapids, Michigan and moved to the Oregon Zoo on September 12, 2000.

As an Amur tiger, Nicole loved the cool weather and was especially playful with her brother during snowstorms. Visitors to the zoo often witnessed her lounging on a rock next to her swimming pool and rolling on her back for attention if one of her keepers was nearby.

"Nicole was adored by everyone who knew her," said Kim Smith, director of the zoo. "She was an especially affectionate tiger, but had just enough spunk to let her brother know she was the one in charge. I know many of our visitors had a special connection with her and it's clear she will be missed."

Wild Amur tigers are among the most endangered big cats on the planet, with fewer than 500 believed to remain in their home range. The Amur tiger species derives its name from the Amur River, which runs through the region of southeast Russia to which the subspecies is native. The median life expectancy for Amur tigers is 16 years for males and 14.3 for females.

North American and European zoos are participating in



AFFECTIONATE TIGER. Nicole (pictured), one of the two Amur tigers at the Oregon Zoo, passed away last month after experiencing what was believed to be a seizure. Nicole and her brother Mikhail have lived at the zoo since September 12, 2000. (AR Photo/Jan Landis)

coordinated breeding programs to help preserve the critically endangered cats.

To learn more about Amur tiger conservation and ways to help, visit the website of the Amur Leopard and Tiger Alliance (ALTA) at <www.altaconservation.org>. ALTA is an international coalition of organizations working for the conservation of Amur tigers and leopards in the wild.

Give blood.

To schedule a blood donation call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE or visit HelpSaveALife.org.

American Red Cross

Summer Run

Retirement Apartments

- Studio & One-Bedroom Apartments
- Affordable Rent with No Costly Buy-Ins or Application Fees
- Federal Rent Subsidies Available
- Ideal Urban location near shopping, bus lines, restaurants, and more!
- Enjoy our small community atmosphere that's relaxed & friendly!

7810 SE Foster Road
Portland, OR 97206
503-774-8885