

Eli Shenise was six days away from getting his wish granted. He was looking forward to the weekend, all set for a Charlotte Knights game with his parents. The 12-year-old just started a fresh year of middle school on time, a miracle in itself considering his whole summer was spent battling Burkitt's lymphoma, a cancer of the lymphatic system. He completed four rounds

Magic for Eli

On August 31, Eli finally celebrated his triumph over cancer at the Charlotte Knights Ballpark. He was spotlighted during a press conference, signed a one-day contract as an official team member and warmed up with his new

teammates. Eli was announced as the honorary first baseman for the game and, while his parents watched from top-notch seats, Eli spent the entire game in the dugout, handing out high-fives to pump up his team.

Six days before this day of magic, Eli's mother said she wished Eli would have the biggest smile on his face. She got her wish.



Make-A-Wish: the work behind the wishes

Written by Katie Toussaint | Photos by Make-A-Wish

of chemo and was declared cancer-free. Now, there was something big to look forward to. He had a wish—and it was about to come true.

Only a week after his cancer diagnosis in May, Eli's oncologist informed him that, in spite of the wave of negative news he was processing about his body, there was still a positive point: he was eligible for a wish from **Make-A-Wish®** Central & Western North Carolina.

An avid baseball fan, Eli dreamed of playing for the Boston Red Sox. Two volunteers visited him for an interview to get the best feel for his wish. Knowing Eli loves baseball, they brought baseball-related movies and knickknacks. Eli shared his three biggest wishes.

The result: Eli was about to become a professional baseball player in the local spotlight with the Charlotte Knights under their bright, new lights Uptown.

Six days prior to the big day, Niki and her husband Tim knew only a hint of what would be happening for their son. Make-A-Wish kept the plans shrouded in mystery. Niki said, "It's been so secretive. They are trying to make it really special for him."

She added that the organization turns a child's wish into a silver lining along the cancer journey: "It's their way of saying, 'Hey, let's have a party. Let's celebrate.' There are a lot of things you can celebrate along the way."

Niki's wish for Eli: "A smile on his face and just being a kid—getting to be a kid and participate in something fun. He didn't have a summer. His summer was spent in the hospital." His summer revolved around Levine Children's Hospital and the great medical staff, as Niki pointed out, but that still meant chemotherapy bags, vitals checks and separation from home-cooked meals.

