

## Maritime Museum Pirate Festival, Make-A-Wish fulfill boy's dream

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Jessie Olmedo, 6, of Medford, poses with Valhalla's Pirates after he participates in their show at the Long Island Maritime Museum Pirate Festival in West Sayville. (June 15, 2013) (Credit: Kathleen Fordyce)

After two years of battling cancer, 6-year-old Jessie Olmedo had dreams of taking on a new fight: Battling pirates in a quest for treasure.

His wish came true Saturday when Make-A-Wish Foundation of Suffolk County and the Long Island Maritime Museum in West Sayville teamed up to make Jessie an honorary pirate for the day at the museum's annual Pirate Festival.

Sporting a smile and fake sword -- and decked out in a pirate costume including vest, boots, hat and eye patch -- Jessie joined other costumed pirates as they hunted for buried treasure. He also watched pirate shows and even got to take his first sailboat ride with some of his new mates.

"My favorite part is when they fight," said Jessie, of Medford, after he participated in one of the festival shows where pirates fought over treasure and control of a ship. "And I love to find treasure."

Jessie's mom, Marcela Olmedo, said it was a treat to see him getting to lead the other kids in the pirate games, especially after the two difficult years when he battled acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

"The hardest part was when he had to stay in one hospital room for a month, and couldn't be around any kids," she said, remembering the time when his immune system was so weak that he had to be quarantined. She said Jessie has been in remission for six months and is now attending kindergarten.

Olmedo said Jessie's obsession with pirates began about a year ago when he started watching the Disney Jr. show "Jake and the Neverland Pirates." When officials from Make-A-Wish Foundation visited Jessie to discuss his wish, Olmedo said he couldn't talk about anything else.

"They asked him many questions and all he kept talking about was the pirates," Olmedo said.

Make-A-Wish found a way to extend Jessie's wish by getting him a wooden pirate ship playground set, so he can be a pirate every day.

"He's a very sweet, quiet boy, so for him to have this wish to be a tough pirate, it just shows he has this sense of adventure," said Karine Hollander, president and chief executive of Make-A-Wish Foundation of Suffolk County.

Hollander and Kathleen Prokesch, of the Long Island Maritime Museum, said they were thrilled with how eager everyone was to help make Jessie's day special. As Jessie walked around the festival grounds, costumed pirates gave him high-fives, tucked fake pieces of gold in the lip of his hat and saluted him as one of their own.

"There is no better feeling in the world than helping a child," said Diane Marman, of the Kings of the Coast Pirate Show, who led the treasure hunt. "We often get to work with kids at their birthday parties and things, but this was a real treat."