

Wish Granter

A love for Angus cattle and for giving back guides a young man from Idaho.

Story & photos by **Maggie Malson**

Having survived cancer at the age of 14, one young Angus breeder chose to use his high school senior project as a chance to give back to an organization that gave him so much during his difficult ordeal.

Kyle Bratton, 17, lives with his parents,

George and Chris,
near Caldwell, Idaho.

A senior at Notus High School, Kyle chose to donate a bull he raised, BAR Wish Granter, and all the proceeds raised through

the sale of the bull, to Make-A-Wish® Idaho.

“I can never fully repay the debt of kindness shown to me during my experience, but I thought I could

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► Kyle Bratton chose to use his high school senior project as a means to give back to Make-A-Wish Idaho, an organization that gave he and his parents, George and Chris, hope and inspiration as he battled Hodgkin's lymphoma.

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start with this," says Kyle, a humble and polite young man. "Make-A-Wish grants wishes to children who don't have much hope. I hope to earn enough money to send at least three deserving families on a trip of their dreams."

His own wish

When Kyle was in the hospital for treatment of Hodgkin's lymphoma, his family received news that he had been referred to the Make-A-Wish Idaho program. Janelle Jensen, who has served as a volunteer for seven years, was Kyle's wish granter.

"The Brattons are seriously one of the happiest, nicest families that I've gotten to

work with through Make-a-Wish Idaho," Jensen says. "Even before we worked on the wish, Kyle was thinking of ways to give back.

"Kyle has a great sense of community and making people feel included," she adds. "He's so polite and personable."

As a wish granter, Jensen is assigned to the deserving child, meets with their family, gets to know them, finds out their likes, dislikes and favorite things.

"Make-A-Wish gave us something good to think about and got our minds off the diagnosis," Chris says. "With all the stuff you're going through, this gave us something to look forward to."

When determining a child's wish, the child is encouraged to think big — something really special. Kyle had no problem thinking big.

"When Janelle asked what his wish was, he said, 'A Ford Mustang!'" Chris chuckles. "Then she asked, 'Well, what's your second wish?' We all got a kick out of it."

That's when Kyle chose a trip to Walt Disney World for his wish. What a trip it was. Make-A-Wish Idaho sent Kyle, his parents and his best friend on the trip of a lifetime. While in Florida, Wish kids and families stay at Give Kids the World Village, a 70-acre, nonprofit "storybook" resort, located near Central Florida's most beloved attractions, where children with life-threatening illnesses and their families are treated to weeklong, cost-free fantasy vacations.

"We visited six parks in 10 days," Kyle says. "Every detail was taken care of. We got special passes, so whatever ride we wanted to go on, we got to go right to the front of the line. We also got to go behind the scenes and see things not everyone gets to experience."

"The volunteers made the trip so wonderful," Chris adds. "You saw parents who were scared to death, facing the same scary situation we were. But, the volunteers do everything to help families forget all about



► **Above:** BAR Wish Granter 837 will be auctioned off at the Gem State Classic Sale Feb. 8 in Twin Falls, Idaho. At that time the Syndicate will purchase him, then donate him back to be auctioned off to the highest bidder. All proceeds from the Syndication, as well as the actual sale of the bull, will be donated to Make-A-Wish Idaho.

► **Right:** "I always hoped Kyle would love Angus cattle and have a passion for it like I do," George Bratton says. "It's neat we get to do this together as a family."



that and have an incredible time. It's whatever you want that week — even ice cream for breakfast!”

In fact, the Brattons felt such gratitude for the warmth they felt during their visit to Give Kids the World, Kyle and Chris returned in June 2013 to volunteer themselves.

“Going back and giving back was a highlight for me,” Kyle says. “I saw all those kids facing difficult situations, and they were having a great time.”

“We're proud of Kyle for choosing to use his senior project in this way,” George says. “Students are encouraged to do something they've never done before, to think outside the norm. Kyle is gaining more experience by marketing the bull, putting together a website, as well as keeping good records of the funds he's collected.”

“He's putting his whole heart into this project,” says Jensen, who not only helped grant Kyle's wish, but now sees him as a wish granter himself. “This is really special, and he's making a lot of effort.”

Angus in his blood

Kyle's roots in Angus cattle stem from his grandpa and his dad, who owned Double G Angus Ranch in California. They traveled the Northwest, helping other breeders and showing cattle. In 2003, the Brattons moved to Idaho. They kept a few select females to start building a new program.

“I always hoped Kyle would love Angus cattle and have a passion for it like I do,” George says. “It's neat we get to do this together as a family.”

Kyle started showing in 4-H with a heifer named Libby. He's continued to grow his herd to 25 cows now, using birthday money and funds earned swathing hay, catching gophers and irrigating to purchase more females. Kyle enjoys searching the annual bull books, and working with his dad to decide the matings for each female. He's a member of the Idaho and Northwest Junior Angus associations, and enjoys exhibiting at breed shows throughout the West.

“The junior Angus

association has allowed me to meet other young people that have the same goals, interests and love of Angus cattle,” Kyle says. “These relationships have been formed with youth all across the Northwest. Without the various junior Angus shows and functions, I may never have had the opportunity to meet them and form that bond. These are friendships that will stick with me for a lifetime.”

Kyle also recognizes the work ethic he's learned by taking care of his cattle.

“Knowing the work has to get done is a trait not all young people understand today,” he adds. “I realize the cattle have to be fed twice a day no matter what the weather and that show cattle are not born halter-broke, or the perfect hair just doesn't magically appear on show day. Somebody has to get it done or it doesn't happen.”

Kyle says the junior Angus association has taught him many life lessons he hopes will stay with him as he continues his show career and ventures out into the real world.

“I've learned to be a humble winner, as well as a gracious loser,” he adds. “These are two traits that would help us all lead a better life.”

These are profound thoughts from a teenage boy. In addition to raising and showing cattle, Kyle keeps busy playing football, serving as an FFA officer and mentoring elementary-school students.

“Kyle is a great individual; wise beyond his years,” says Kim Holt, whose family is friends with the Brattons. “Each day he shows us that great comebacks are possible — even from a setback such as he unexpectedly experienced in his young life,” she adds. “He is giving back, and that is one of the greatest things, in our family's opinion, that we can all do for one another.”

Scott Holt agrees. “Giving back is so important, and yet we sometimes get caught up in our own daily struggles,” he says. “Kyle is a great example of perseverance and determination to make things better. I'm confident he'll do well in anything he sets his mind to. Our family is better off because we call him our friend.”

Chris and George also appreciate what the

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Angus family has done for them, as well.

“We look forward to seeing junior Angus members and fellow Angus breeders at the various shows and events,” Chris says. “During the rough time our family went through with Kyle's illness, it was overwhelming the amount of kindness, concern and outpouring of help that everyone showed. It is people like this that help make a devastating time a little easier to cope with.”

“Angus shows and functions allow Chris and I the opportunity that all parents live for; and that is to watch your son or daughter fulfill their dreams, be very successful at developing a program and seeing all of their hard work pay off,” adds George.

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"I know I can't change the world, but I can make a difference."
— Kyle Bratton

A bull can make a difference

When Kyle decided to give back to Make-A-Wish Idaho, he felt it was important to give something himself, rather than just ask people for money. The idea to donate one of his bulls came to mind. He developed a bull syndicate, where individuals or groups can purchase shares of the bull, BAR Wish Granter 837. Each share sells for \$50 and people can purchase one or multiple shares of the April Pay Day son, thus becoming part of the "Wish Granter" Syndicate.

Wish Granter will be auctioned off at the Gem State Classic Sale Feb. 8, 2014, in Twin Falls, Idaho, as part of the Idaho Angus Association's annual consignment sale. At that time the Syndicate will purchase him, then donate him back to be auctioned off to the highest bidder. All proceeds from the Syndication, as well as the actual sale of the bull, will be donated to Make-A-Wish Idaho.

"It's really unique to see that Kyle has taken his passion — Angus cattle — and turned it into something powerful to help others," says Torene Bonner, CEO of Make-A-Wish Idaho. "It's a very positive thing for him to do."

Kids for Wish Kids® is a Make-A-Wish program adopted in local schools, where students have the opportunity to experience philanthropy and help others.

"The fact that Kyle is healthy now and can

give back in this way is special," she adds.

"Because he had such a great experience, he wants to share that with other kids. We are always amazed at the kids who want to give back."

Make-a-Wish Idaho grants 70-90 wishes a year for kids in Idaho. As a national organization, 14,000 wishes are granted each year. More than 250,000 families have been helped since the first wish was granted in 1980. Make-A-Wish® serves a unique, and vital, role in helping strengthen and empower children battling life-threatening medical conditions.

"We believe so much control has been taken away from these families that by granting a wish, we are building a belief in

something to hope for," Bonner adds. "They help plan the whole wish. It gives some of the power back to these families who are facing so much. The wish is really transformational. We like to say doctors do the medicine and we do the magic."

"One of the happiest days of my life was last summer when we went to the county fair and there sat a new trailer with BRATTON across the front," says Scott. "George is notorious for being the first to the barn, and there sat the trailer across from the gate. Kyle and his parents were already unloading and making their stalls. Tears ran down my face as I walked to the barn with a smile knowing our friends were back."

Chris has had a lot of proud mom

moments with her son, but one that is truly dear to her was when Kyle returned from being out of school and all his activities for a whole year while he was sick.

"It was wonderful to have him back showing again after he had endured so much," she says. "He had a lot of success once he was able to start showing again, but he remained so humble. He's had lots of accomplishments, but what sticks out to me most is when he said, 'I know I can't change the world, but I can make a difference.'"



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Editor's Note: Maggie Malson is a cattleman and freelancer from Parma, Idaho.