

# Make-A-Wish sends Chippewa Valley student to Super Bowl 50



Eugene Williams is given a jersey with his name on it from Janice Krueger of Make-A-Wish Michigan. Ray Skowronek--**The Macomb Daily**

By [Frank DeFrank](#), The Macomb Daily

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Eugene Williams is surrounded by family and friends at Chippewa Valley High School Wednesday. Ray Skowronek--**The Macomb Daily**

Nearly 70,000 fans at Levi Stadium and tens of millions around the world via television are expected to watch Super Bowl 50 on Sunday.

It's safe to say few will enjoy the experience more than Eugene Williams and his family.

The Chippewa Valley sophomore, who turns 16 Monday, will travel to California with his parents and brother courtesy of the NFL and Make-A-Wish Michigan, the agency that grants requests to children battling life-threatening medical conditions.

"It's a bit overwhelming," Eugene said Wednesday during a surprise visit to his school from Make-A-Wish Michigan representatives.

He was presented with a football jersey, complete with his name on the back and the number "8500." The number recognizes Eugene as the 8,500th person to be granted a wish by Make-A-Wish Michigan.

“We are thrilled for Eugene to experience his wish weekend at the Super Bowl and to celebrate Eugene’s wish as our 8,500th Michigan wish,” said Karen Davis, Make-A-Wish Michigan president and CEO.

“We have seen firsthand how wish experiences like this can have a profound impact on wish kids and their families, and we are grateful for the support from the NFL and our Michigan community that has made Eugene’s heartfelt wish possible.”

While in California, the Williams family will attend a welcome reception, visit the NFL Experience and enjoy a tour of Levi Stadium, among other opportunities.

And the weekend will be capped when the family settles in to watch the Denver Broncos and Carolina Panthers battle for NFL supremacy.

The best part of going to the Super Bowl?

“Just going to the Super Bowl,” Eugene said.

About three years ago, Eugene was diagnosed with cancer in his nasal passages. The disease later spread to his hip.

Months of treatment followed, and Eugene and his family were forced to ride out the emotional highs and lows. When the opportunity to make a wish came along, Eugene, a football player, didn’t hesitate.

“He wanted to choose something out of the ordinary,” said Eugenia Williams, Eugene’s mother. “Something not everybody gets a chance to do.”

The partnership between Make-A-Wish and the NFL dates to 1982, when a 12-year-old boy from Arizona made a wish to attend Super Bowl XVI at the Pontiac Silverdome. At least one “wish kid” has attended every Super Bowl since.

On Sunday, 13 kids from around the country with life-threatening conditions will attend Super Bowl 50, bringing to nearly 200 the number whose Super Bowl wishes have been granted by the organization.

Rob Williams, Eugene’s father, said the Super Bowl trip is a welcome high point in the family’s journey.

“It’s something positive to look forward to,” he said.

Eugene’s battle pulled the family closer, Mrs. Williams said.

“It’s a different type of bond,” she said.

Eugene’s cancer is in remission, his parents explained. The illness put his own football career on hold, but he hopes to return to the gridiron.

For now, Eugene will settle for a trip to Santa Clara, Calif., where he hopes to witness Cam Newton and the Panthers bring home the Vince Lombardi Trophy.

## About the Author



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