

Chino Champion (CA)

## Wishing for a city New York calls Chino Hills teen

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The hustle of a New York subway, holiday shoppers at Rockefeller Center and a couple of blockbuster musicals were all part of a wish granted for a Chino Hills girl with a rare disease.

**Rebecca Gilman**, a senior at Chino Hills High School, can get a little spacey, according to her mother, Rhonda **Gilman**. But **Rebecca** isn't blanking out from "senioritis." A condition called cerebral vasculitis causes episodes during which **Rebecca** is "locked down" inside her body.

During episodes, **Rebecca** experiences inflammation of the blood vessels in her brain.

"If she's having an absentee episode, she stares into space, and she can hear and see, but can't move or talk," Mrs.

**Gilman** said.

**Rebecca** says she doesn't know who gave her name to the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Orange County and the Inland Empire, but one day last summer an envelope arrived asking her to come up with a wish, a request she had no trouble filling.

"My uncle is an actor in New York and I've always wanted to see his city," **Rebecca** said.

For **Rebecca**, who has loved performing since she was very small, a trip to New York was just what the doctor ordered.

"I've loved to dance since I was 4, tap and ballet," she said. "It's one of the hardest parts about being sick, is not being able to dance anymore." To grant her wish, Make-A-Wish OCIE sent **Rebecca** on a five-day trip to New York with her mom; father Jess; older brother Aaron; and younger brother Nathan.

Some of the highlights were seeing Mrs. **Gilman**'s brother perform as a professional Christmas Caroler, visits to Ground Zero, the Statue of Liberty, Rockefeller Center and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. They also saw two musicals, "Rent" and "Wicked." **Rebecca** recalled a moment, when, as she was being pushed through the city in a wheelchair, a stranger handed her pink roses, then disappeared into the crowd.

Another favorite moment was a visit to the International Center of Photography School and Museum, where she has decided to apply after high school.

Extreme fatigue is a symptom of **Rebecca**'s condition, one which prevents her from doing everything she would like to. She didn't attend school during her sophomore and junior years, but now attends morning classes so that she doesn't miss out on senior year.

She was active on both the swim and dance teams at Chino Hills High, and still goes to practices when she can, though she has found a new way to participate by capturing her teammates on film.

"I love to take pictures - it's like an active way of watching, instead of just sitting there," **Rebecca** said. "I might see something through the lens that I never would have noticed otherwise." Though **Rebecca** said it is frustrating to have a disease that no one knows anything about, she feels like a trailblazer.

"Even if they don't cure me, I feel like am paving the way for someone else." The trip to New York, she said, was more than just a treat for her, it was a much needed break for her family.

"To all be there together, it was great," **Rebecca** said. "To just be having fun with my family was the best part of the trip."

**Rebecca Gilman** (left) poses for a family portrait during her Make-A-tour of New York. With her are older brother Aaron, younger brother Nathan, father Jess and mother Rhonda.

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