

# “Taking seniors wishes come true!”



Shannon (*kneeling*) with a volunteer pedaler and her senior bike buddy

**Shannon Catalano’s beloved Grandma Margie had one wish in her final days: to ride a bicycle. So when Shannon was looking for a way to honor her grandmother’s memory, she founded a unique nonprofit that provides free joyrides on an adaptive bicycle to seniors!**

Shannon Catalano’s Grandma Margie always made her feel like the most important person on the planet. Her heart broke when in 2012, Grandma Margie passed away. Wanting to keep her memory alive, Shannon tried to find ways to honor her. She started donating blood regularly, and in 2018, she even donated a kidney to a stranger. But still, she wondered, *What next?*

Then Shannon saw a video of volunteers in Maine giving free rides on special adaptive bikes to senior citizens through the nonprofit Portland Wheelers. Suddenly, a memory popped into Shannon’s head.

During the end of her life, Grandma Margie had lived in a memory care facility. During one visit, she told Shannon and her brother, Johnny, that she wished she could go outside.

“What would you do?” Johnny had asked.

“I’d ride my bicycle,” their grandmother replied.

*Such a simple request. If only she could,* Shannon had thought at the time. But now, she knew the perfect way to honor Grandma Margie. *I’ll take other grandmas and grandpas on bike rides!* Shannon thought.

## A ride to remember

In 2019, Shannon founded Lone Star Wheelers ([LoneStarWheelers.com](http://LoneStarWheelers.com)), a Plano, Texas, nonprofit that offers “free adaptive bicycle joyrides” to seniors with mobility issues. Thanks to Grandma Margie’s advice to always save money—“You’ll be surprised how quickly it grows,” she always told her granddaughter—Shannon had enough saved to purchase a special three-wheeled electric bicycle, or e-bike, in which a passenger can sit up front.

Soon, Shannon recruited volunteer “drivers” so she wouldn’t have to limit rides to her schedule.



# on 'joyrides' helps



Riders enjoy the fresh air



They take in the scenery; some even sing



And new friends are made

Lone Star Wheelers volunteers visit DaySpring Senior Living every Saturday, rain or shine. If the weather forces them indoors, they stay and put together puzzles or play dominoes with their older “bike buddies.”

Though some seniors were initially hesitant to take a ride, the overwhelmingly positive response of participants led others to take a chance on a new experience.

Sometimes the new friends sing on bike rides, or swap stories about their lives.

“The bike was very comfy!” a 100-year-old woman remarked after her first ride.

“I hadn’t been out of the building. Getting out and enjoying the scenery and the wind in your face...it was exciting,” another senior commented.

Children and grandchildren sometimes ride bikes alongside the Lone Star Wheelers. “You light up his life! You give our seniors experiences they would never otherwise have. God bless you!” a daughter enthused.

## Legacy of love

Thrilled with the response, Shannon decided to expand

the program to children with disabilities and anyone who cannot pedal independently. She bought two more adaptive bicycles. Shannon donated one

bike to a school in Dallas and trained a special education teacher in safety protocols. That teacher then trained other staff members, and now they pedal students around the campus.

The other bike is used for the “Borrow a Bike” program for families with children with disabilities. Each month,

Shannon picks up the bike after a month of use and delivers it to the next family.

Shannon, who works as a professional caregiver for a man who is quadriplegic, hopes to purchase a fourth bike to keep at another assisted living center for Lone Star Wheelers outings. In the meantime, she and her 10 volunteers have already shared more than 170 bike rides with seniors at DaySpring.

Though it’s hard losing new friends to old age, Shannon, 44, cherishes the relationships she’s made along the way.

“I don’t have any grandparents left, but now I have grandparents again,” Shannon says. “And one of the greatest things about the Lone Star Wheelers is...I’m going to cry...is that I have a reason to talk about my Grandma Margie every day.” —*Jen Reeder*

*“I don’t have grandparents left, but now I have grandparents again”*

## 3 fun ways to lift the spirits of seniors!

### 1 Grant their wish!

Go to [BucketListFoundation.org](http://BucketListFoundation.org) and donate to help grant wishes for terminally ill seniors. From going deep-sea fishing to taking a helicopter tour, simply click the “Wishes” tab, then click “Donate” to support their fulfillment with any dollar amount. And if you know a senior with a bucket list, click the “Submit Wish” tab to add their wish to the list too.

### 2 Host a mystery night!

Know a senior who loves to play detective in their spare time? Plan a night of fun for them with a free murder mystery party game. Go to [TheSpruce.com](http://TheSpruce.com), click the search button and type in “murder mystery party” for free murder mystery scripts. Then choose your mystery and follow the instructions for a fun way to be a detective for a night.

### 3 Support their passions!

If the senior in your life has a love of art, crafting, knitting, home improvement, gardening or even baking, help them hone their skills by visiting YouTube for a quick, easy step-by-step project that’ll fill their day with fun and let them practice their skills.



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