



# Mateo's Story

*I wish to spend time outdoors again (still waiting)*

**Mateo, 6**  
congenital heart condition

6-year-old Mateo faces many challenges on a daily basis. He was born with a congenital heart condition, a hearing impairment, and a visual impairment. He was later diagnosed with epilepsy and dystonia – a movement disorder that causes his muscles to contract. At his young age, Mateo has endured five open heart surgeries, three neurosurgeries, four bowel surgeries, and many more medical procedures. When he was five years old, his family was overjoyed awaiting his first day of school. During a routine heart procedure, something went wrong, leading to a brain injury, changing his life forever. As a result of this brain injury, he is now a quadriplegic, relies on a wheelchair for mobility, is g-tube fed, requires a tracheostomy and ventilator, and is unable to communicate verbally but he is learning American Sign Language.

It has been two years since the brain injury, and Mateo has started school. Mateo has always loved spending time outdoors soaking up the sun, listening to the birds chirping, watching the trees swaying, and spending time at the park. Before this procedure he loved going to the park with his mom and dad. He now dreams of having a park in his backyard where he can once again enjoy the outdoors comfortably. Mateo still tries to enjoy as much time outside as he can while sitting in his wheelchair, but due to his brain injury, epilepsy, and dystonia, he is on multiple medications that often leave him feeling nauseous and uncomfortable.

He wished to have his backyard made accessible, allowing him to spend as much time outdoors as he could imagine. His wish is still in the planning stages, but he imagines being able to sit outside with his oxygen and ventilator, a shaded area to enjoy, a hammock to lay in, water to splash around in, and a flat surface for his wheelchair. His family can't wait for Mateo to have a safe way to be able to sit outside and enjoy all the things he previously could. "Mateo spends most of his time indoors, so providing him a way to enjoy the outdoors while being home would truly be a dream come true for him and our family," Mateo's mom, Ana, shared. Mateo and his family look forward to making many more memories with him, enjoying all the good things that nature has to offer.