

Dacon answers child's Make-A-Wish request: Designing a child's wish via virtual reality

November 01, 2019 - Front Section



Dover, MA Nurturing the imaginative mind is something every parent desires for their children. As an essential element for dexterity, cognitive and emotional strength, play enhances perceptual development, emotional growth and social interaction. With play and learning hand-in-hand, technology offers operational capabilities, fine motor skills and long-distance communication, teaching children the symbiotic relationship between cause and effect.

Dacon received a request from Make-A-Wish Massachusetts and Rhode Island on behalf of a deserving 11-year-old boy for a play apparatus. Edward's request was unique in that he designated the beneficiary to be his school, Chickering Elementary. Only 1% of wishes nationally focus on a child giving something to their community. Given his open-ended desire for something within the school to help others, Dacon focused on creating a long-lasting structure which offers experiential learning through play. Alvaro Ribeiro, director of design said "In considering the role of technology in education, we decided that designing a communal space where children could relax, interact and learn amongst peers and teachers would be a nurturing experience. With the magnitude of Edward's unselfishness, we wanted to ensure this play space benefitted students of multiple ages, capabilities and their teachers."

Enter King's Imaginarium, King being a nickname given to Edward by his family. This brightly colored 15 x 8-foot geodome with 3D virtual reality is wheelchair accessible and can accommodate up to 8 students. Constructed of PVC piping, carpeting, felt and fabric, the geodome enables students to play interactive games, make virtual 3D art, listen to music, connect with audiobooks and watch films using VR Oculus Quest headsets. As with children's imagination, there are no wires and

no limits. Using Google Chromecast, images are broadcast to a smart TV for a larger audience. In addition, others can be engaged via Bluetooth speakers outside the dome. A USB hub keeps power generated 24 hours a day. Yogibo bean bags are provided for comfort and side tables for storage. Additionally 120 feet of LED tape lights provide gentle lighting and support activation of the visual senses.

The following firms lent generous material and motivational support:

Maharam and Momentum Textiles – fabrics

Patcraft – carpeting

FilzFelt – felt

Wentworth Institute of Technology – laser cutter

Make-A-Wish Massachusetts and Rhode Island grants 400 wishes a year to children with life threatening conditions. Within this geography, approximately 500 children are newly diagnosed with critical diseases annually. Of 60 chapters nationwide, they are in the top 10 in terms of revenue and number of wishes granted. A child does not need to wait for a wish to be granted. Any child ages 2 ½ to 18 years is eligible with a doctor's approval. Currently the most prevalent juvenile diseases are cancer, congenital anomalies and neurological related conditions. In its 32nd year, Make-A-Wish Massachusetts and Rhode Island has fulfilled 8,500 wishes through the support of local businesses and citizens.

Dacon Corp. is a fully-integrated design build firm providing comprehensive facility development services to address clients' unique project requirements. With a process centered on transparency and collaboration, Dacon's multidisciplinary team is comprised of professionals specializing in architectural design, engineering and construction management. Dacon provides effective building solutions while eliminating the inherent risks of traditional construction processes.

Material Statistics

750 foot PVC struts, 353 foot designer carpet, 325 foot Velcro, 120 foot strip lights, 160 different triangles, 91 geohub connectors, 25 Home Depot runs, 18 Dacon volunteers = 450 happy kids!

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