

Give Kids The World Celebrates 40th Anniversary With a Full Year of Events

Founder Henri Landwirth's Life and Legacy Honored With the Addition of a New Short Feature Experience at Give Kids The World Village

KISSIMMEE, Fla. (February 3, 2026) - In 1986, [Give Kids The World](#) began to welcome children with critical illnesses, and their families to Central Florida. The inspiration came from one little girl's dream and one man's goal to help make it come true. Four decades later, Give Kids The World continues to provide light, joy and kindness to children with critical illnesses and their families from around the world. The internationally recognized nonprofit organization has embraced children battling a critical illness and provided them with a complete week focused only on having fun and creating memories.

Give Kids The World began when Henri Landwirth, then a successful hotelier in Central Florida, learned about a child with cancer who wished to visit the famous theme parks. A Holocaust survivor who lost his own childhood to the horrors of World War II, Landwirth immediately identified with the young girl. Her story inspired him to learn more about children with critical illnesses and how he could help. Landwirth first launched Give Kids The World as a small nonprofit organization which operated out of a small closet in his hotel. The organization grew along with Landwirth's drive to serve more children and in 1989, he opened Give Kids The World Village. By inspiring and partnering with generous companies and individuals, Landwirth's whimsical Village provided lodging, meals, transportation and fun for families who needed it most. Now celebrating its 40th anniversary, Give Kids The World has welcomed more than 200,000 families from 77 countries and all 50 states.

"Give Kids The World is a place where kindness lives," shared Caroline Schumacher, President and CEO, Give Kids The World. "For the past 40 years, Henri's love and legacy have inspired us to continue what he started. Every day, we welcome families who are supporting a child with a critical illness. During their stay, they are embraced by our volunteers, team and partners for a complete week of fun and time spent together. We are excited to kick off a year-long 40th anniversary celebration. Whether you have been with us since the very beginning, or are new to our story, this is the year we invite everyone to share in celebration with us."

"Henri Landwirth's generous heart and spirit remain at the heart of everything we do," Schumacher continued. "We want the families who visit and our partners and volunteers to know his story and how his experiences led to establishing Give Kids The World. To help us do this, we worked closely with his family and a handpicked team of creative professionals to create an original short feature titled "What Henri Gave the World" which shares his story and honors his legacy."

"For someone who endured the most unimaginable horrors, Henri's life story is one everyone should know," shared Audrey Perrott, writer and film producer. "Understanding the depth of the darkness he endured in his life makes the light and love he created for children and

families at Give Kids The World shine even brighter. Our film delicately shares these truths in a visually beautiful, sensitively accessible, and poignant manner. We hope it inspires others to find ways they can find light in their own lives and share it with others.”

“Forty years is an amazing milestone for any organization,” continued Schumacher. “As we worked with Henri’s children, Audrey and the talented filmmakers on this project, we also contacted previous wish families, volunteers and partners who have been touched by Give Kids The World and invited them to come back to the Village to celebrate this anniversary. Many wish children, who are now adults, have shared memories about their time at Give Kids The World, and even their personal stories of time with Henri. While each is unique, they all share a common thread of kindness, joy and happy memories that helped strengthen them as they fought their illness.”

Katy Gore was a Wish child who visited Give Kids The World in 1989. “Being a Wish child at Give Kids The World was truly a life-changing experience, one that shaped my heart long before I was old enough to understand it,” she said. “During my visit, I also made a lifelong connection with Henri Landwirth. Over the years, Henri took me under his wing and into his family. In my childhood memories, he and Give Kids The World are inseparable. I loved listening to Henri speak with passion about his dreams and his unwavering commitment to making sure every child who came to the Village felt magic, dignity, and love. Those conversations profoundly shaped how I see the world and how I choose to move through it.”

As part of its year-long 40th anniversary, Give Kids The World has many ways for partners, volunteers and the general public to learn more and take part. Special events, experiences and opportunities include:

Henri and the Holocaust Memorial Resource & Education Center of Florida

In partnership with the Holocaust Memorial Resource & Education Center of Florida (HMREC) Give Kids The World and the Landwirth family shared details about Henri’s experiences during World War II to help create the all-new, “Hope and Humanity: The Core Exhibit” which tells the stories of ten Central Florida Holocaust survivors.

Henri’s portion of the exhibit will be on loan and display at Give Kids The World Village from March 7 – May 31. The “Hope and Humanity: The Core Exhibit” opened at the Center on January 18. To learn more and to visit hmrec.org/special-exhibits

Founder’s Day at Give Kids The World

Founder’s Day is a treasured tradition at Give Kids The World. This year’s event celebrates Henri Landwirth’s 99th birthday. On March 7, Give Kids The World will welcome back former wish families, long-term volunteers, partners and friends to come together in celebration, reflection and the future. The short feature, “What Henri Gave The World,” will debut on Founder’s Day.

Give Kids The World Golf and Gala Weekend

The 40th anniversary Give Kids The World Golf and Gala Weekend presented by Innovative Construction will take place at The Four Seasons Orlando at Walt Disney World Resort® on May 8-9, 2026. The return of one of Give Kids The World's most recognized events, the Golf and Gala Weekend, should not be missed. Tables and tickets for the Gala are on sale now, and sponsorship and partner packages are also available. To learn more email Gala@GKTW.org.

Gingerbread Run 5k

For more than ten years, the Gingerbread Run has been a flavorfully fun event that takes place within the colorful gates at Give Kids The World Village. Diehard runners and beginners come together in a shared mission to run and have fun in support of Give Kids The World. This year's event will take place on Saturday, December 5, at 6 p.m. Sponsorship and partner package opportunities are available now. To register and to learn more, visit: Events@GKTW.org.

As part of the 40th anniversary, Give Kids The World will continue to add unique events, programs and opportunities to celebrate the milestone year and look ahead to the next 40 years of providing light, joy and hope to families who need it most. To stay in touch with all that's new, follow Give Kids The World's social channels @gktwvillage and online at GKTW.org

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Exclusive Media Notes:

Give Kids The World Village is not open to the public. Members of the media can contact Give Kids The World to set up personal tours,, view Henri's portion of the "Hope and Humanity" exhibit, to attend an exclusive viewing and discussion panel of the short feature "What Henri Gave the World" and to take part in Founder's Day. To learn more, contact Susan Storey at SusanS@gktw.org

About Give Kids The World

Give Kids The World Village is a nonprofit resort built exclusively to serve children with critical illnesses and their families. Children visiting Central Florida on their "wish trips," stay with their families at Give Kids The World's storybook Village for weeklong, dream vacations. Give Kids The World provides meals, transportation, nightly entertainment, and complimentary admission to Central Florida's world-famous theme parks and other attractions. There is never any charge to visiting families, and no child is ever turned away.

Since 1986, Give Kids The World Village has served more than 200,000 children and their families from all 50 states and 77 countries. GKTW is four-star rated by Charity Navigator, with more than 93 cents of every dollar spent going directly to program services.