

UC SANTA BARBARA

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UCSB to Help Make a Dream Come True for 17-Year-Old Louisiana Student

Thanks to a phone call to Dan Reed, a research biologist and deputy director of UC Santa Barbara's Marine Science Institute, a 17-year-old girl from Baton Rouge, La., is about to realize her dream of spending a day with a marine biologist.

Dreams Come True of Louisiana, Inc., a nonprofit that fulfills dreams for children with life-threatening diseases, is sending Caroline Roy, 17, and her family to Santa Barbara for a visit to the UCSB campus. After doing online research about where she would like to visit, Caroline chose UCSB and the Marine Science Institute. Becky Prejean, executive director of Dreams Come True, took it from there, calling Reed and asking if he would be willing to be the host for a visit by Caroline and her family.

Caroline's wish -- to learn about what it would take to become a marine biologist -- took Prejean by surprise.

"I mean, this is a teenage girl," Prejean said. "When I looked at the form her mother had filled out for Caroline's wish, I thought: No shopping spree? No Walt Disney World? She really wants to be a marine biologist and she really loves your university. She did her homework on this one and she came up with UC Santa Barbara as where she wants to go to school."

Caroline has had three surgeries since being diagnosed with Recurrent Pleomorphic Adenomas cancer of the salivary gland when she was 11 years old. The cancer has come back three times, but it hasn't stopped Caroline from pursuing her dream of a college education and becoming a scientist.

"She's such a sweet girl," Prejean said. "She was embarrassed when she found out that her mother had filled out the form for her wish. She feels that other children deserve this far more than she does."

Caroline and her family will spend Tuesday, June 14, at UCSB. After being welcomed by Reed and Mark Brzezinski, director of the Marine Science Institute, they will be given a tour of three laboratories at the Marine Science Research Building.

"You feel like you want to help someone in need who is interested in becoming a marine scientist," Reed said. "We want to help any way we can, and we can tell her about marine science at UCSB."

During the lab tours, the Roy family will hear about three areas of research at MSI: the Moorea Coral Reef Long-Term Ecological Research Project, presented by Andrew Brooks, associate project scientist at MSI; the Santa Barbara Coastal Long-Term Ecological Research Project, presented by Shannon Harrer, research associate at MSI; and the UC Ocean Acidification Consortium, presented by Gretchen Hofmann, professor of Ecology, Evolution & Marine Biology (EEMB).

After a tour of the campus, led by Erika Bland, a third-year Aquatic Bio Major and program coordinator at the REEF (Research Experience and Education Facility), Caroline and her family will have lunch with Reed, Bland, and Sally Holbrook, professor of EEMB.

The family will then go to Campus Point, where they will meet with Jenny Dugan, associate research biologist with MSI, for a visit to the beach and to learn about Dugan's research. That will be followed by a visit to Marine Science Institute's REEF, an interactive aquarium facility, for a hands-on demonstration given by Bland and Scott Simon, REEF director.

In addition, on Wednesday, June 15, the Roys will be treated to a whale-watching expedition, courtesy of Sea Landing and Condor Express at Santa Barbara Harbor.

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