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# BRENDAN'S HONORING OF A FURRY FRIEND TOUCHES HEARTS

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**"I could never do anything more amazing than this."**

**Wish Kid Brendan**

**Brendan , 9**  
blood disorder  
*I wish to dedicate a lantern to my dog*



1/5 Nine-year-old Florida wish kid Brendan wished to dedicate a lantern to his late dog, Nani.  
Photos: Darcy Fiero

On Memorial Day, flags are flown across America as people pay their respects to those who lost their lives serving our country. In Hawaii, remembrance takes a different form. Memorial Day traditions take place at sunset, when the stretch of ocean at Ala Moana Beach Park twinkles with paper lanterns sent to ones. More than 50,000 people journey from around the world to the Shinnyo Lantern Floating Hawaii ceremony, remembering those who have served and others who have passed away. One of those floating a lantern this year was Florida wish kid Brendan, who attended the ceremony to remember his late service dog Nani.

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Nani was by Brendan's side through every illness and treatment related to his blood disorder. The two did everything together, and their favorite pastimes included swimming at the beach, playing in the pool, and watching funny dog videos. When Brendan needed her, Nani was there, and when Nani was diagnosed with cancer and needed Brendan, he was there. One of the most difficult times during Nani's battle was taking her to treatments where she was away from the family. For the first time ever, Brendan wouldn't have his furry supporter with him during his own treatment. Though they were apart physically, she wasn't far from Brendan's mind – during the six-hour infusion, he researched where they could celebrate when she beat her cancer. However, Nani's lymphoma returned, and the family was only able to share a little more time with her before she suddenly passed away, without a chance for Brendan to say goodbye. Devastated, he wanted to find a way to give his best friend a proper farewell.

Following extensive online research, Brendan found Shinnyo Lantern Floating Hawaii. The family was unsure if they would be able to make the trip happen, but Brendan was determined. Says wish mom Kerry, "Without knowing whether this was a wish that could ever be made, [we] tried persuading him into looking into the virtual lantern float. But he had a wish, a wish that he wanted nothing more than to make happen." Make-A-Wish was happy to help make this very personal wish come true. Brendan built the lantern with care, covering it with photos and an illustration of the two with a handwritten message from the 9 year old: "Nani, you are the best dog I could ever ask for."


Before the floating, Brendan sat on the sand, remembering the amazing memories shared with his friend. A bell chimed over the beach, signaling the beginning of the floating. Brendan draped his lantern with an orchid lei, waded into the waves and gently guided it to sea. It was only fitting they spent one last time in the water, one of their favorite places to be together. Nani's tribute floated into the horizon, joined by the thousands of other well wishes and farewells. Brendan got his goodbye, and told his family, "I could never do anything more amazing than this."


Giving his beloved Nani a lei at the ceremony inspired Brendan, and he returned to Florida with a name for his new puppy – Leilani. The experience was touching for everyone involved, and the wish of who Kerry calls "a boy who loved his dog just as much as she loved him" was fulfilled.


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