



Commercial Development Manager, Dan Graham, and Jack Thompson, 14, on Go North East Santa Bus

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Bus-mad Jack launches the return of Go North East's Santa Bus for 2022

Bus-mad schoolboy Jack Thompson was given the best Christmas present of all this week, with an exclusive 'behind the scenes' tour of Go North East's Gateshead Riverside depot.

Fourteen-year-old Jack, who lives in Gateshead, was just four months old when he was diagnosed with a brain tumour on his optic nerve which has left him registered blind. He's undergone several rounds of chemotherapy and had numerous hospital stays, but Jack says he is the happiest boy in the world and takes pride in passing his optimism onto others and raising money for

charity.

When Jack's nana, Elaine, of Washington, got in touch with us to tell us that Jack's Christmas wish was to have a tour of our Gateshead Riverside depot, we went one step further and asked if Jack wanted to officially launch the magical Santa Bus, which returns for its annual week-long tour of the region, from Monday 19 December.

Nana Elaine said: "I'd like to thank Go North East for taking the time to give Jack a tour of the bus depot and the Santa Bus. This has been the best Christmas present that Jack could have ever hoped for, and he'll never forget this day. We'll be out on Monday night to give Santa and his elves a wave!"

Jack has been raising funds since he was seven-years-old for charities CLIC Sargent and Heel & Toe, and is now raising funds for the Dreamflight charity.

Dreamflight is a UK charity that changes young lives through taking children with a serious illness or disability, without their parents, on the holiday of a lifetime to Orlando, Florida. Dreamflight believes that fun & joy are just as important as medical research & equipment - especially for children who perhaps can't wait long enough for the breakthrough they need or whose illnesses & treatments have brought pain, distress & disruption to their lives.

Jack had an amazing time with Dreamflight in October, and wants to help other children have the same opportunity.

Commenting on the tour, Go North East's Commercial Development Manager, Dan Graham, said: "The Go North East Santa Bus is ran by non-driving staff volunteers to spread joy and cheer to children and their families in our communities, a tradition which began during Covid when it was the only way to see Santa. We were blown away by how popular the Santa Bus open-top tour was last year, and we can't wait to get started again, seeing all those smiling faces as we pass through the region's villages, towns and cities.

"This year, we'd like to help Jack with his fundraising efforts. The magical Santa Bus open-top tour is free to watch, but we would really encourage the community to help other children like Jack by donating towards his GoFundMe fundraiser for Dreamflight."

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