



Brave Ben has the flight of his life

Zero gravity flight experience is a dream come true for teenager from Puckeridge

Seventeen year old Ben Heraud from Puckeridge near Ware recently had his dearest wish to have a zero gravity flight granted by Starlight Children's Foundation, the UK's leading wish granting charity for children and young people with serious and terminal illnesses.

In 2010, Ben, who is a pupil at Freman College in Buntingford, was diagnosed with a rare immunodeficiency disease, which meant that his immune system was unable to fight infectious disease. As a result of his condition, Ben had to undergo a bone marrow transplant, which is a lengthy and complex procedure that required Ben to be in isolation for a long time.

Ben's illness came at a terrible time as it was his GCSE year and a time when a young person's social side of life starts to expand. Despite the huge hurdle he faced, Ben was very brave and never lost his great sense of humour. For a year after his transplant, Ben was mostly confined to his home but, despite this, he was never self-pitying, showing instead an admirable determination to get back to his old ways as soon as possible.

Always a very active child, Ben loves to give everything a go and he enjoys trying new experiences. Before he became unwell, Ben's favourite hobbies were skating, longboarding and skiing and it was very hard for such an energetic teenager to be unable to pursue his interests while he was in hospital.

Ben was referred to Starlight by one of the Clic Sargent nurses at University College Hospital in London where he is treated. It was hard for such an ambitious young man to choose a single wish but, after a lot of thought, he decided that a zero gravity flight experience would be a dream come true!

To make sure that Ben could have the best possible experience, Starlight contacted one of the world experts in weightless flights, Zero Gravity Corporation (ZERO-G). "We were delighted to be able to help Starlight grant Ben's wish," said Terese Brewster, the company's President and COO. ZERO-G offers "a unique opportunity to experience true weightlessness" by taking clients up in a specially modified Boeing 727 and, having heard about zero gravity flights on a television programme, Ben couldn't wait to have his own weightless experience!

Starlight organised for Ben and his family to fly to Orlando on 7th November for the trip-of-a-lifetime. The highlight of the trip, the ZERO-G flight, was to happen on 10th November in Cape Canaveral so Ben, his parents Jill and Neil and his sister Grace, aged 23, had a few days to enjoy the sunshine and the sights on offer!

Both Ben and Grace had been booked in for a zero gravity flight and, on the day of the experience, they were very excited and a little nervous! The team at ZERO-G immediately made them feel relaxed and, once in their special flight suits, they began to feel like real astronauts! To do the flight, Ben and Grace had to undergo a short training session, which helped to prepare them for their once-in-a-lifetime weightless experience!

ZERO-G's parabolic flights create the same sensation of a flight in space and Ben and Grace had an amazing time during the experience, floating, flipping and soaring as though they really were in space! They even had their picture taken, with Starlight t shirts on show under their flight suits, as they enjoyed being completely weightless!

On their return from the trip, Ben wrote to Starlight and said, "Thank you so much to Starlight for everything they have done. We had an amazing time – I would recommend it to anyone!"

Information

To refer a child for a wish or to make a donation, please go online at www.starlight.org.uk. For every £1 you donate, 93p goes towards helping Starlight's very ill children.

For more information, please contact Henny Vere Nicoll at henny@starlight.org.uk / 020 7262 2881 # 231.

Starlight grants once-in-a-lifetime wishes for seriously and terminally ill children, restoring the magic and fun of childhood and giving the whole family happy memories to share, whatever the future holds.

Starlight also creates entertainment in every hospital and hospice throughout the UK. Sick children go to Starlight parties, laugh their way through pantomimes, go out on Starlight Escapes, play games and watch films on the Starlight Fun Centre, and enjoy the toys and puzzles of the Starlight Distraction Box. Happy children respond better to treatment and Starlight helps children to forget about their illness and simply have a bit of fun.

About ZERO-G

[Zero Gravity Corporation](http://www.ZeroGravityCorp.com) (ZERO-G) is a privately held company whose mission is to make the excitement and adventure of weightlessness accessible to everyone. Based in Arlington, Va., ZERO-G is the first and only FAA-approved provider of weightless flights to the general public; entertainment and film industries; corporate and incentive markets; non-profit organizations; research and education sectors; as well as foreign and domestic government agencies.

Founded in 1993 by X PRIZE Chairman and space visionary, Dr. Peter H. Diamandis; former NASA astronaut, Dr. Byron K. Lichtenberg; and NASA engineer Ray Cronise, ZERO-G worked more than a decade to bring the marvel of weightless flight to the public. Since launching the *ZERO-G Weightless Experience* in October 2004, the company has conducted more than 315 weightless flights and flown over 9,000 people from around the world, including celebrity and media personalities; corporate charters; teachers and students; research scientists; and individuals aged eight to 93. ZERO-G operates under the highest safety standards as set by the FAA (Part-121) with its partner Amerijet International Inc. For more information, visit www.GoZeroG.com.