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## Dream trip for brave Maddy

Brave, 12-year-old Maddy Warnes has been chosen to go on the holiday of a lifetime to Orlando, Florida.

Maddy, of South Shields, will be among children from all over the UK with a serious illness or disability who will spend 10 days with the Dreamflight charity in October visiting major attractions such as Walt Disney's Magic Kingdom, Universal Studios and SeaWorld. She will also have the chance to swim with dolphins. She was nominated for the trip by Joanne Henderson, a paediatric diabetes specialist nurse at South Tyneside District Hospital.

Harton Technology School pupil Maddy, who was four when her mum, Donna, died following an asthma attack and who lives with dad Keith, 52, and sister Ellie, 16, said: "I'm really excited about swimming with the dolphins and going on all the rides and I'm looking forward to meeting others like me."

At the age of seven, Maddy was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes, which affects four in every 1,000 children and is a lifelong condition. She has to check her blood sugar levels by pricking her finger four to six times a day and needs an insulin injection a minimum of four to six times a day, which she does herself. She has had to learn how to count the carbohydrates she eats and modify the insulin dosage accordingly. She also has juvenile rheumatoid arthritis which causes swelling and pain and often means she has to have steroid injections into her joints.

Mr Warnes said: "She deserves this trip and I am over the moon for her. At times, she can find it really hard but she just gets on with it. She is doing really well at school and she is very caring."

Grandfather Ron Stonehouse, 60, also of South Shields, added: "Maddy is a star. Since she started getting injections for her rheumatoid arthritis and her diabetes I have never seen a braver little girl. Her Nana and I know that all those daily diabetes injections must take their toll but she is a little fighter. She is full of life and gets on with everyone. She loves to dance, likes sport and she comes to the football matches with me to look after me. She is an inspiration to all young children and the family are so proud of her. We only wish her mam, Donna, was here to see her get this trip of a lifetime."

Mrs Henderson said: "We have got to know Maddy very well over the last few years and she is lovely young girl. She has to cope with such a lot and when we were asked by the Dreamflight charity to nominate someone for their holiday she was an obvious candidate. She didn't know anything about it and when we told her she'd been chosen she was overwhelmed and burst into tears and we were all in floods of tears, too."

Dreamflight fundraising manager Lisa Bishop said: “‘With the help of an army of fantastic volunteers, Dreamflight charter a Boeing 747 and head off to Florida every October with 192 seriously ill or disabled children for 10 days of fun and excitement. Dreamflight is not just a holiday; it does something that medicine can’t. The children leave their families behind, giving them an opportunity to discover independence, confidence and a whole new outlook on life. Often, for the first time these children realise that they are not alone, and they are not the odd one out. They see children around them who have also suffered, they gain perspective, and experience things they never thought possible.”

Among the doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and non-medical volunteers caring for the children, aged eight to 14, this year will be Stephanie Dunn, a staff nurse in children’s A&E at South Tyneside District Hospital.

Miss Dunn said: “I met a couple of nurses who had been on the trip and they thoroughly recommended it. It will be good for me to experience a different kind of nursing. I can’t wait to see all the children having a great time.”

**ends**

*Pictured above: Maddy Warnes and her grandad Ron Stonehouse with Consultant Paediatrician Dr Gabriel Okugbeni and paediatric diabetes specialist nurse Joanne Henderson*

Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan

For press enquiries on this release, contact 0191 404 1128 or email [kay.jordan@stft.nhs.uk](mailto:kay.jordan@stft.nhs.uk)