

# LTFUC BRINGS SMILES TO 300 CHILDREN

by Ray Levy



On 14th July 2009, the London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children took 300 'special needs' and disadvantaged children in a convoy of 100 balloon decorated taxis on yet another of their legendary outings (81 to be precise) to Southend on Sea. The taxis started to arrive at east London's Victoria Park from 7am and what a relief that the sun was shining, especially after last year's heavy rain. The excited children started to arrive at 8.30am and were greeted by Clown 'Jolly Jack' (David Girt) and Britain's much-loved character 'Little Princess' from Five's hit TV show, Milkshake, who kept them amused until we were ready to depart. We were also pleased to welcome the Lady Mayoress of the City of London, Lin Luder, the Sheriff of the City of London, George Gillon, and the Mayor of Tower Hamlets, Councillor Ahmed Omer, who had come to meet and wave the children off and we thank them all for giving up their valuable time to be with us.



After breakfast, the convoy set off with music and horns blaring and numerous people lined the streets clapping, waving and cheering. The Committee would like to thank the City of London Police Outriders (Roads Policing Unit), who did such an amazing job escorting us safely to Southend and back again and Rob Wilsmore, Tim Scarr, Ian Bainbridge, Howard Taylor, John Jones-Gill and Jeremy in the Police car. As usual a 'wee stop' was made at the Live Hotel (Palms) in Hornchurch and we thank the management and staff for the refreshments and prompt service.



We were joined at the hotel by the Essex Police outriders and thank them for their additional help and also thank the RAC, St. John's Ambulance and the Red Cross for joining us all day on the outing.

We arrived at the Cliffs Pavilion, Southend at 12.30pm and the children were greeted by 'Eddie the Eagle' from Essex County Cricket Club, with Ben wearing the costume on behalf of Southend United FC – thanks Ben. After a hastily consumed lunch, the children spent an afternoon of fun and jollity at Adventure Island, enjoying all the free rides that were on offer. Grateful thanks must go to Brian Houssart of the Southend Taxi Drivers Charity Fund for Children, who worked hard ferrying us all down to the sea front and back. It was dry, the sun was shining and everywhere I looked I saw the children with ice cream and candyfloss covered faces having great fun – what more could we want!

At 4.30pm it was back to the Cliffs Pavilion for a tea and disco where the children were thrilled and delighted to be greeted by Southend's Carnival Queen, Hannah. Also greeting the children were Southend's Salvo the Clown and Balloonists Mr Chippy and Tony Hanscombe, who had travelled from London to be with us to provide the balloons and we thank them all. Thanks also go to local magicians Magic Al and 14 year old Rocket Rob, Robbie Wood, for joining us and special thanks go to Clown 'Jolly Jack' who travelled with us from London and kept the children entertained throughout the whole day.

The fund's Honorary President, Bill Tyzack, BEM, made a speech welcoming everyone and also welcomed the Deputy Mayor of Southend on Sea, Councillor Ann Holland who had joined us and made a speech in return. The Deputy Mayor presented The Terry Stapleton Rose Bowl, Champagne and Chocolates to the driver of the best decorated cab, Steven Bell (Cab No. 44), whose cab was decorated as a Spaceship and the second prize of Champagne and Chocolates to Steve Pulham (Cab No. 43), whose cab was dressed with an inflatable car and people. The draw for the over night stay at

London's Connaught Hotel was won by Cab No. 49 – Alan Arthy and this was presented to him by the Deputy Mayor. Honorary President, Bill Tyzack, BEM, then gratefully accepted a cheque for £2,000 from Pam Mason and Mark Kennedy, which had been donated by all the staff at EDF Energy, Canning Town, E16 and we are grateful to them for this kind donation.

With the speeches and presentations over, the long awaited disco finally started, with drivers frantically trying to copy the children's moves to 'Agadoo'. An hour later, to ensure a hasty retreat, the disco ended with a cleverly planned giant conga which led everyone out of the hall and back to their taxis. As usual, the crew at Hadleigh Fire Station were waiting to hose all the cabs down as we passed and this was greeted with squeals of delight from all the children, especially when any unsuspecting driver got soaked!! Unfortunately that Fire Station will soon be closing down and we would like to take this opportunity to thank them for all the pleasure and happiness they have given us and the children over many years. We will miss you.



We extend grateful thanks to everyone who helped make the outing possible. All the drivers were given diesel vouchers, which had been donated by an anonymous donor. We were pleased to hear from a new driver on his first outing with us who said "the children had smiles 100 miles wide and played like they never had a care in the world". I would also like to quote the words of a little boy interviewed on Anglia TV news who covered the outing. He said "The outing is really good because it shows they care, it shows they care about people, because some people don't care". These are two quotes, one from a driver and one from a child, both which sum up perfectly what the day was all about.

**THANK YOU TO ALL THE WONDERFUL DRIVERS AND HELPERS WHO MADE THIS DAY POSSIBLE. WE ONLY PUT IT TOGETHER, BUT YOU ALL MAKE IT HAPPEN. WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU.**

"None Walks so Tall  
as he who stoops to help a Child"