



BUMBLEance

**The world's first
interactive ambulance
designed specifically
for children.**



FOUNDER TONY HEFFERNAN
WITH THE STATE-OF-THE-ART
BUMBLEANCE AMBULANCE
FOR CHILDREN



TONY & MARY HEFFERNAN have experienced a profound sadness that few families have had to endure. For the first few years of life, their daughter Saoirse and her younger brother Liam enjoyed the things that most children do. Playing with toy dinosaurs, visiting Disneyland Paris, and drawing bumblebees. But in 2009, Saoirse was diagnosed with Batters Disease, a rare neurological disorder that left her prone to multiple seizures and robbed her of bodily functions. Sadly at age 5, she passed away from the condition.

Devastated, the family still found a way to make a positive impact for other families. In the midst of their grief, they channelled their energies and founded Saoirse Foundation to make positive life impacts for children, through its first project, Bee for Batters, to support affected children and families and to raise awareness for Batters Disease. In April 2013, the Heffernan's Saoirse Foundation extended its charitable objectives to help even more families and their sick children across the Island of Ireland. Their two new projects are Liam's Lodge—Ireland's first national respite centre for children with rare and genetic disorders and their families, Liam's Lodge will also be Ireland's 2nd children's hospice, and in September 2013, BUMBLEance—a state-of-the-art ambulance designed to safely transport Ireland's sickest children and their families to medical treatments while providing a warm and entertaining environment. BUMBLEance also provides "Angel Trips" for children making their final journey from hospital to home as they conclude palliative care.

As the four charities created awareness and support for families across Ireland, The Heffernan family experienced the unthinkable as Liam, who had also been diagnosed with Batters Disease, lost his battle in May of 2014, also at age 5. By now much of the public had come to know the story of the Heffernans through the Irish media and their grief was shared by many across Ireland and around the world.

Tony Heffernan now serves as CEO of the charity and speaks candidly about his family's experience. He has a firsthand passion for providing services to similar families in need.

"With the BUMBLEance experience kids come first, family comes first, and dignity is intact," explains Tony. "I remember our daughter Saoirse having to travel from the Dingle Peninsula to Dublin and back in a regular ambulance and it was a frightening experience. So we established the first BUMBLEance. When our son Liam died in May of 2014, he was first brought home by BUMBLEance. And our Bumble crew, as we like to call them, came in and brought us door to door, bed to bed. It was just like a little hug, you know, in a sad time. Three days later, our son died. But his final journey on earth was in a BUMBLEance."

The BUMBLEance medical transport experience removes fear for children. Equipped with a colorful interior, a TV, iPad, video games, movies, internet, music and three seats instead of the standard two so both parents can accompany a paramedic, the vehicle creates an entirely different type of transport for seriously ill children. Yet underneath the animated characters and the entertainment systems is a top-notch medical service equipped and staffed to handle the most demanding and delicate transports. All of this is provided to families across Ireland and Northern Ireland at no charge.

"It's exceptionally expensive in Ireland to do this, but we don't charge families for our service," says Tony. "As long as we can continue to fundraise to keep it going, we will do just that. The public has been very good to us, and now The Ireland Funds have been as well."

BUMBLEance is reserved for families with profound medical needs. "We've picked up a child who had multiple broken bones due to Brittle Bone Syndrome and they looked like a starfish in a big cast," explains Tony. "You can't transport a child like this in the family car/minivan. But BUMBLEance can. In that instance, the child didn't even know she was sick because she was watching a cartoon on the LED tv. She just came in, looked around to see the friendly bees, the bright colors, and our crew who made her feel at ease."

Each BUMBLEance costs €200,000/\$260,000 to build. Currently there is one serving the entire island of Ireland and demand for its use is high. Ideally, Tony envisions five BUMBLEances transporting children across the island someday and is actively fundraising to get BUMBLEance II on the road.

"Life isn't just a chore, or a function. It should be an experience," Tony says softly. "Most of the kids who will travel on this will have a shortened life so it's priority number one to fit as many positive experiences into it. There will be enough frowns and tears in their lives while they're here. Why not provide a smile rather than a frown?"



Jack

Jack was born with Osteogenesis Imperfecta which is also known as Brittle Bone Disorder. In October 2013, Jack was the first child from Donegal to use BUMBLEance. Jack's journey was much more comfortable when travelling on BUMBLEance and he spent it playing with the iPad, watching DVDs, singing and laughing. Jack's mum Ruth describes it saying they "arrived in Temple Street, stress-free and happy."



Sophie



Eva



Cian