Friday 29 November 2019

**COUNTDOWN AS SANTAS GEAR UP FOR CITY DASH**

**7,000 Santas expected to take part on 1 December 2019**

**16th annual event is UK’s biggest festive 5K fun run**

**Arriva give Santas free Merseyside bus travel**

**Last chance to sign up as a dashing Santa**

Liverpool city centre will be transformed into a spectacular sea of thousands of red, blue and mini Santas this Sunday (1 December) with the 16th annual BTR Liverpool Santa Dash.

Highly regarded as the city’s kick-start to Christmas, the BTR Liverpool Santa Dash is the UK’s biggest festive 5K fun run.

This is the event’s 16th consecutive year after it was created by BTR Race Director Alan Rothwell and first staged in 2004. BTR Liverpool is the leading independent organisation for creating, managing and delivering headline race events across Liverpool City Region.

Thousands of Santas of all ages will walk, jog and run the 5K route, which starts at Pier Head Liverpool at 9.30am. The route then takes Santas through the Grade I Listed Royal Albert Dock Liverpool, replacing the Churchill flyover for the second year, and through the city centre.

The finish line at Liverpool Town Hall on Dale Street will feature Liverpool drum/percussion band Katumba drumming band, stilt walking festive characters and ‘real’ snow as Santas complete the dash and collect their commemorative Santa Dash finishers’ medal.

The Mini Dash 1K for Santas aged 12 and under – sponsored by The World’s Famous Grotto at St Johns Shopping Centre – starts in Castle Street at approximately 11am.

Time is running out for registration. The pop-up shop at Williamson Square, at St Johns Shopping Centre in Liverpool city centre, remains open until 3pm on Saturday (30 November). While the BTR office at 82 Market Street in Hoylake closes at 5pm on Friday (29 December), and is closed on Saturday for event preparation.

Special guests on the day will include Radio City Breakfast Show hosts Leanne and Dave; Lord Mayor Of Liverpool Councillor Anna Rothery; Everton in the Community Ambassador and Blues’ legend Graeme Sharp; Liverpool Football Club Chief Executive Peter Moore; and Liverpool Football Club legend Alan Kennedy.

They will be joined by original Big Brother winner Craig Phillips; Liverpool actor Kurtis Stacey; Miss Liverpool Finley Unsworth; Everton fans’ favourite Speedo Mick; as well as a small group of ever present Santas who have taken part in every previous Liverpool Santa Dash – making this their 16th consecutive event.

This year’s event has attracted international Santas travelling from the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Norway to take part, as well as others from Ireland and the Isle of Man.

Santas can enjoy free travel on the Arriva bus network across Merseyside throughout Santa Dash day. Arrival North West are supporting the event for third consecutive year.

To claim complimentary bus travel to or from the city centre, Santas must be wearing their Santa suit and race number on the morning, or their Santa suit and finishers’ medal when travelling home afterwards. There is no time cut off time post run.

Claire House Children’s Hospice is the event charity partner for 2019. The hospice has bases in Wirral and Liverpool. A large group will be pulling on their running shoes to help raise vital funds at a time Claire House is facing increased demand for its vital support and services.

Santas fundraising for Claire House Children’s Hospice include Neston Nomads Girls Under 14 football team, who have been committed to supporting the charity for the last 12 months. They have raised more than £4,500 so far. A team of 20 including players and parents will take part in the Santa Dash.

Laura Fallon, Running & Challenge Fundraiser at Claire House, said:

*“Claire House is thrilled to have over 150 runners in this year’s BTR Liverpool Santa Dash, including 20 from the Neston Nomads Girls football team, who have been fundraising throughout the year.*

*“We’re hoping our amazing team of runners raise an incredible £10,000 by taking part in this year’s Santa Dash – this will help Claire House to make Christmas special for families going through the toughest of times. We hope everyone taking part has a fantastic day – and we’ll see you at the finish line.”*

Each year, the BTR Liverpool Santa Dash acts as a platform for community groups, businesses and charities to use the event as a way of raising funds for good causes.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service is once again taking part, having first entered a team in 2008 and have returned each year since. This time, a group of 60 includes firefighters, support staff, and recruit firefighters who are just weeks away from completing training to become fully qualified firefighters serving to protect Merseyside communities.

It will be a poignant day for the Furlong family from Aintree. They are running in memory of their mum Jayne, who passed away suddenly in August. Jayne was a huge fan of the Liverpool Santa Dash, having taken part almost every year and she also volunteered for the dash two years ago when Scottish Power was a sponsor. A 30-strong group of Jayne’s family and friends will take part as a celebration of her life, including daughters Emma and Sophie; Emma’s 18-month old daughter Esme, and Jayne’s best friend Debbie Ashton.

St Johns Shopping Centre have a team of 25 taking part; Carpenters Solicitors in Birkenhead have 40 Santas; while charity Autism Initiatives have 50 fundraising runners.

The BTR Liverpool Santa Dash is supported by St Johns Shopping Centre; The World’s Famous Grotto; Arriva North West; Radio City; Royal Albert Dock Liverpool; Claire House Children’s Hospice; Everton in the Community; and Appreciate Group.

Full details about the BTR Liverpool Santa Dash can be found at https://www.btrliverpool.com/santa-dash