A trend is developing in the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States to use Skydiving jumps as focal points for charity fundraising events. In a number of instances, these fundraisers are being performed by people who have had direct encounters with the malady, illness, institution or injury for which the funds are being raised.

One example is Jess Butterworth, a British college student who will be doing a fundraising jump in October. According to an article in the Buxton Advertiser, Jess has Multiple Sclerosis, and the funds she raises will go to the Multiple Sclerosis Trust. These monies will be earmarked to help underwrite the training of more Multiple Sclerosis Nurses.

But Jess is just one of a number of people who use a Skydiving event as a way to “give back” for the help they have received. Consider the case of 85-year-old grandfather John Gilmartin, also from Great Britain. The Burnley Express reports that John recently completed his first tandem Skydiving jump, benefitting Macmillan Cancer Support.

John said that he wanted to give back to the charity that provided “so much help” when he was diagnosed with stomach cancer 15 years ago. John’s jump has generated £4,000 ($5,433 US) for the charity so far, while placing a large check mark on his personal bucket list.

Some of the reasons for the Skydiving fundraisers are extremely personal. Charlie Jones was born 15 weeks prematurely, weighing less than two pounds. The Romford Recorder reports that “his chances of living were very slim.”

But young Charlie did live, thanks in part to the efforts of Britain’s Sick Children’s Trust, which provided Charlie’s parents with a place to stay near the hospital during Charlie’s surgical recovery and rehabilitation.

Charlie’s dad, Gary, wanted to give something back to the Trust. He organized a “… sponsored skydive for some of his friends and managed to raise an astonishing £10,786 ($14,610 US) for the charity.”

Stan Standing of Edmonton, Alberta was looking for a way to honor his aunt, Lynn Standing-Whiten, who died last year of ovarian cancer. Having recently taken up Skydiving, Stan thought about using a dive as the centerpiece of the fundraiser for Ovarian Cancer Canada he was planning in Lynn’s name.

Just before the event, Stan had a brainstorm, deciding to shave off his trademark bushy, red beard while conducting the dive. The decision was “impulsive and spontaneous,” he told CBS Edmonton, but he knew it was a “go” when his partner, jumpmaster Lyal Waddena, immediately bought in.

Stan’s “hop and pop” jump was accomplished from 10,000 feet in July, and he was clean-shaven by the time he touched down. Via a GoFundMe campaign, Stan’s efforts in support of ovarian cancer research have raised over $3,000 to date.
In addition to bringing joy directly to stricken children, one campaign wins the prize for heartbreaking cuteness.

This was the case when David McAlhany of Salt Lake City, Utah, jumped from 12,500 feet recently and wrestled with increased air resistance on the way down.

The reason? According to the Deseret News, David had “stuffed toy bears tied to his nylon jumpsuit” that created the extra drag. Once he and those bears landed safely, however, they took on the mantle of “Bravest Stuffed Teddy Bears in the World.” David and his fellow skydivers delivered them to hundreds of grateful kids at the Shriners Hospitals for Children in Salt Lake City.

The Salt Lake City campaign is not the only venue for skydiving teddy bears. It is based on the work of a Wisconsin-based nonprofit, Canopies for Kids. According to the Canopies website, the organization has supplied the inspiration -- and the bears -- to events at 32 locations throughout the US.

As the word continues to spread, Skydiving fundraisers seem destined to multiply. And why not! There are plenty of willing Skydivers around, and an unending list of worthy causes.

(Body Copy, 647 words; Headline, 7 Words)