The Blind Poet gives first reading of children's book at hospice family event.

Monday 15 September, 2025

Dave Steele, The Blind Poet, an award-winning poet, author and advocate for the visually impaired was a surprise guest at the event in Didsbury.

Francis House provides care and support to the families of children and young people with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions.

For two days the grounds of Francis House Children's Hospice were filled with music and laughter after being transformed into a music festival site complete with large tent, food stalls, live bands and performances.

The Family Fun Day for children aged 13 and under, featured a magician, princess and Disney characters, culminating in the reading of Dave's new children's book.

The Unstoppable Duo is the second book in the Austin's Amazing Adventures series. Austin is a young boy slowly going blind and the character of Austin is based on Dave's own son. In this story, Austin meets a new boy in his class, named Josh who is a wheelchair user.

Being part of the joyful event was even more poignant for Dave, who was accompanied by his wife Amy and twelve-year-old son Austin.

Dave from Prestwich, said: "Francis House means a lot to us as a family and this book pays tribute to my nephew Josh, who sadly passed away from Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy just after his 18th birthday.

"Josh used to come here for respite care for many years. To be invited here today and pay tribute to the work Francis House has done for our family and so many other families over the years is a real honour.

"For anyone living with any kind of disability, any kind of challenges in life, to have a community on your doorstep where you can come and be around other people who are going through the same thing and really 'get it' is so important.

"It often feels like the world isn't designed for people like us, we live our lives where things aren't always accessible. To come to a place where the first thought is accessibility and support is a massive thing."

"My hope is that this book will not only provide much-needed representation for children with disabilities but also serve as a valuable tool for schools and families to teach inclusion and spark conversations around difference, empathy, and strength."

Dave also read a moving poem about Francis House written specifically for the occasion.

Rachel Ellis, member of the Francis House homecare team said: "So often our families' days are filled with hospital visits, treatments and worries. We felt it was important to provide a safe and accessible space where they could simply enjoy being a family, have fun and make magical memories.

"Francis Fest and the Family Fun Day are about lifting some of the weight they carry, even for just a day, and giving children and parents something positive to hold onto. It's been brilliant to have Dave join us on this special day, sharing his new book and beautiful poem. It is something that we will all remember for a long time."

The Unstoppable Duo is released on September 19, available in large print and braille version, PenFriend compatible and audio version from www.theblindpoet.net

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