

P-p-picking up a prize from Noel

SCHOOLBOY Dylan Ward jetted to South Africa as a Christmas present from TV presenter Noel Edmonds.

The 11-year-old was able to fulfil his dream of seeing penguins in the wild thanks to Sky's Noel's Christmas Presents show.

Producers were so impressed by his efforts to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support through selling paintings of penguins and other animals that they flew him and his family to Cape Town.

They visited Boulders Beach and the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds to help tend to rescued penguins.

Mum Annmarie, who accompanied Dylan with his dad Stephen and brother Jordan, 13, said: "It was his dream to see penguins in the wild so he was absolutely amazed. He was shocked because at first the show filmed him at Scarborough where he has adopted a penguin. He thought that was his surprise. He didn't know we were going to South Africa until we went to Heathrow. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

"It's something we would have never been able to do. At the conservation centre, Dylan got to help look after the baby penguins which is something they never normally let members of the public do."

Dylan, of Ayton, Washington, is no stranger to the spotlight.

Last year, he was named as Britain's Kindest Kid in a Channel 5 show and he has also won a Pride of Weasdale award for his charity work.

The Blackfell Primary School pupil was inspired to pick up his paintbrush after the death of his grandfather, John Pearson, who died from cancer in 2009, aged 53.

John was cared for by Macmillan Nurses, who Dylan decided

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to help. He set about selling his paintings for charity. His efforts snowballed with orders coming in from abroad, galleries interested in showing his work and a meeting with Prime Minister David Cameron, who owns one of Dylan's paintings.

As well as raising £3,000 for charity, Dylan makes arts and crafts boxes, called Wonder Boxes, which he donates to children in local hospitals.

Annmarie, a teaching assistant at Dylan's school, said: "I wrote to the show to tell them about Dylan. He never asks for anything and takes all that happens to him in his stride. He just gets on with doing his paintings, it's all he ever does."

"But I thought it would be great for him to have some recognition. He's a very quiet little boy and isn't one of those who jumps around, but he had a twinkle in his eye when he got to meet the penguins. It was so special."

Noel's Christmas Presents, which runs every December, sees the presenter giving out gifts and recognising and rewarding the country's most deserving individuals. The show airs on Sunday, at 6.30pm, on Sky1.

Twitter: @sunechokaty



PENGUIN DAFT: Dylan Ward with part of his penguin collection.

How to buy a painting

If you would like to buy one of Dylan's original penguin canvasses, you can visit his exhibition running at The Biscuit Factory, Newcastle, from December 19 to January 8.

Special edition prints are available to buy from www.thebiscuitfactory.com during the same period. All profits from

the sales of Dylan's work will be directed to Macmillan Cancer Support.

For more information on the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds or if you would like to support this voluntary organisation by adopting a Christmas Chick visit: www.sanccob.co.za