

Charity needs donations to help kids need help to race for life

By TREY CHRISTY

trey.christy@newssun.com

SEBRING -- While they only make the trip to Sebring a few times a year, the Rev. Stephen Zoeller relies on the area for his charity work.

Zoeller, known to some as the "Race Rev," is the head of Zoeller Ministries, a non-profit Christian group out of Fort Myers that conducts the "Kids Racing for Life" event every year at the Sebring Raceway.

"We do this for the love of God and children," Zoeller said.

The event takes families that have terminally ill children to major racetracks, like Sebring International Raceway, and lets them experience the thrill of the track.

The child and their family get personally guided tours, including the master control center, communications center, pits and paddock area, and children get to take rides around the track in exotic sports cars.

"The highlight of the weekend is the hour they get to ride around the track," Zoeller said.

The event is centered around the track but the three days provide time for the families to socialize and relax -- which is much needed.

"These families are going through one of the most devastating events that a family could face, having a child dying from or fighting cancer," Zoeller said. "The cost of medical expenses devastates many families and they end up with marital problems, financial problems that includes losing their cars and in some case homes, so we try to provide them with a cost-free weekend of fun."

For some families, this is the only vacation they get all year, he said.

Like many non-profits, Zoeller Ministries is hurting for donations in the current economy. After vandalism of some of its equipment two years ago, the charity was able to rebound and take a group of nearly 200 to the track.

The weekend costs the nonprofit nearly \$26,000 in hotel costs, meals and other important things that add up -- like nurses and medical kits at the track.

As long as children are healthy enough to ride in the cars, they can participate -- there are no restrictions on faith, race, sex, illness or economic level.

Anyone who has a child or knows a child suffering from a terminal illness can contact Zoeller Ministries at (239) 945-3333 to take part in the program.

The next event is scheduled for Sept. 12-13.

The program is also desperate for donations and asks anyone interested to contact them at either the number above or by e-mail, at racerev@racerev.com.



"Kids Racing For Life" (by: *Stephen Clarke Zoeller* - 8/4/2009)

Thank you Trey Christy for a great article. A couple of comments that I would like to add: First, thanks to all the wonderful people of Sebring for the past 11 years for their support in helping us in doing a program that we have now been able to do, which we only had planned to do once. But because of your enthusiastic support and help we are now on year 11; Second, Thanks to Martin Mackay and the McGruff Group for the great banquet they do for the "Kids Racing For Life" cancer families on Saturday night. Third, A word of thanks to Tres Stephenson, Vivian McIntyre and Jan Shoop for their help over the years because without SIR we would have to take the "Kids" somewhere besides Sebring, and they would not get to stay at the Quality Inn Conference Center. Fourth, we have enjoyed the assistance of Linda Brann-Heier, Dee Dijon and now Jose Pomaes at the Quality Inn since 1999 and they really make the "Kids" feel special. Fifth, the PBOC (Porsche, BMW Owners Club) that provides the venue that the kids get to meet the drivers, and ride in cars that pulls it all together, Bob, Bob, Mark, JoAnne, Amy and their help before and during the event is priceless. Sixth, we also want to give thanks to the Olive Garden and McDonalds restaurants, for their promised contributions to help us out this year. The People of Sebring are great. And finally thanks to Almighty God for giving me the ability to pull all of these wonderful people together to make this event possible.

HarborPoint Network: [The Daily Commercial](#) • [The South Lake Press](#) • [News-Sun](#)
All Contents Copyright 2008,

HarborPoint Media and The News Sun.
2227 US 27 –
Sebring, FL – 33870

863-385-6155