



“Kids Racing For Life”® recap from 1997 thru 2013

Zoeller Ministries “KIDS RACING FOR LIFE”® actually was birthed on the way home from a Twins baseball game where we had been taking the Candlelighters (Children with Cancer and Blood Disorders) for the past few years for a fun night out. Stephen thought that the children would probably love to go to the racetrack for a weekend race. A year or so later in 1999, we arrived at Sebring International Speedway with 48 Candlelighters in tow, a card table, some Visqueen® and a few coolers. The children were beside themselves with all the excitement the track and the races had to offer. We made sandwiches several times that weekend on the tailgate, fought off a few fire ants, and just soaked up the smiles on the children’s faces. We were so impressed to see how loving and protective the children were to each other. They hardly shared a cross word among them. They were just too excited to think about differences or anything other than the Formula Vee car skating around the corner just missing the FV they had just sat in. Or the Austin Healy they just rode in, coming in first place in its race.

We were only going to do it just this one time. Here we are now celebrating our **15th year!** The children said they couldn’t wait to do it again, and so there was another year and then another. We are so excited to have reached this point, and look back at the wonderful events we have had in the last 14 years. Each year we tried to outdo the one before. We started picking up all the expenses (through the generous donations of our supporters) so that the families did not have to pay for anything at all out of their own pockets. We found a nice motel for them to stay in for the weekend and planned wonderful meals for them. We’ve always had a pizza party on Friday night during registration. We’ve had t-shirts made for them each year with a theme picture and/or names of our sponsors. We worked all year fund raising and collecting trinkets and toys the kids might like. We’ve had a wonderful lady who made the most beautiful autograph books for them, and who would sit with the kids making necklaces and bracelets. The drivers and their crews started getting in on the fun and would bring toys, candy or some special treat to the children. The times we had the event on Halloween weekend, several of the drivers would decorate their RV’s and trailers, and have the children come in to see and to fill their bags with candy.

Throughout the years we have taken the “Kids Racing For Life”® Event from Sebring, to Moroso, to Homestead, and back again to Sebring. We started this program by attending races sanctioned by SCCA-CFR, then moved to SCCA-FL Region, and then to PBOC - who saw the vision and has been a major supporter of this program. This is our 22th event. We have brought in special speakers who have survived Cancer and other illnesses, to encourage and inspire the children and their parents, along with professional racecar drivers and the flight director from NASA. Several times we had Eagle Flight come in and take the children for airplane rides. And we have been blessed to have people in Sebring who are so willing to help.

The McGruff organization have gone out of their way to decorate and cook for as many as 300 of us at the event for our big Saturday night party! We have had DJ’s and bounce houses, special photographers, and news people come in to help us build more memories of the events. Each and every Sunday of the “Kids Racing For Life”® weekend we have a special Worship Service, where the children help lead Praise and Worship by lifting up their beautiful voices in song. We have been blessed with many volunteers and contributors who make this weekend possible for these children. One year we had to cancel the big event due to Hurricane Wilma and the children were so disappointed. We had a small event later that year at the track to try to make up for the cancellation, and held 3 the next year, but there’s nothing like having hundreds of smiling happy children and their parents eagerly waiting for what surprises come next, or around the next turn! Victory is measured many different ways. We measure it in smiles. 15 YEARS completed, only because people like you have listened to God’s voice and have stepped up to help support the program. 2013 marks the official passing of the torch to Stephanie as the C.O.O. of the “Kids Racing For Life” program.

Thank you.

Stephen and Stephanie Zoeller and Staff of many, many hard working volunteer’s want and need to thank you one more time.