

by Eddie Pettit

The fastest growing sport in America is not football, basketball, or baseball. The fastest growing sport is racing. Wow! Across the United States, people are flocking in droves to watch cars run around a track in circles, many hoping they will see an awesome wreck or a picture perfect finish. Race fans include people from every walk of life, from Christian families to lost families. In an effort to reach these lost people, Raceway Ministries emerged. It has expanded to every major track in America and many smaller tracks.

Countless Raceway Ministries volunteers give hundreds of hours each week to share their faith with people from every walk of life. "Raceway Ministries is open to anyone who loves people and loves the Lord," says Tommy DeWitt, a chaplain and Bring a Kid coordinator at Darlington Racetrack in Darlington, South Carolina. Bring a Kid is an annual event sponsored by Raceway Ministries.

"We have had a ministry to race fans since 1976 when Ed Quattelbaum (a former director of missions) began the ministry with youth from Calvary Baptist Church who set up a stand to hand out water and Kool-Aid. From there until now, we have been sharing Christ with people," says Tommy.

"We minister to the folks who work at the concession stands, the fans, and other support people, seeking to meet their spiritual needs," says Tommy. "We start two or three days before a race, ministering to the folks in campers who set up everywhere around Darlington. We involve the kids by having an RA Racer competition with cars the kids make."

"We give out water, we bring in clowns, and we do face painting," said Tommy. "We are eager to meet the spiritual needs of people, and so we begin before a race working with those who come in early."

Campers on Mission volunteers are involved as well. They arrive early to assist in ministering in the many campgrounds that spring up all over town. People are busy handing out tracts, sharing their faith, and making new friends in an effort to show people they care.

"We have chaplains at the care center at the racetrack where we can minister to families whose loved ones are sick or may have had a heart attack", says Tommy. "While there are chaplains who minister to the drivers, no one was ministering to the fans. That is where we come in. We provide a listening ear and a word of faith."

Many do not realize that in large crowds there are always people in need of first aid. Fans die every year from heart attacks at the big racetracks. Raceway Ministries is there to minister to family members and to provide assistance in whatever way a family needs it.

Raceway Ministries also assists the drivers' chaplains by providing assistance to the family members of the drivers as needed, even though their main ministry is to the fans.

For the past 24 years, Welsh Neck Baptist Association has offered a program called Bring a Kid Day where as many as 12,000 kids have attended. The association and Raceway Ministries provides a meal and offers a fun day for the kids.

Leading in chapel services, offering downloadable devotionals, and leading in prayer times all highlight the ministry of these committed volunteers.

Because of the ministry of the men of the Welsh Neck Association, tracks like Dover, Martinsville, and Charlotte are now offering events for kids and families. Locally, the men are now preparing to reach out to the smaller tracks like Dillon and Myrtle Beach.

“We see the need to reach beyond this track to impact other local tracks,” says Tommy. “We are trying to get enough men to do this now. It takes a lot of commitment because it takes a lot of time. We encourage churches to adopt these ministries so no one man is away from his family too much. When we share the load, no one person is overworked.”

Tommy dreams of the day when he will have enough volunteers to minister in every campground that springs up around town before every race. Every campground has unreached people who are waiting for someone to share with them.

Are you interested in beginning a raceway ministry in your area? If so, go online to the National Fellowship of Racetrack Ministries Web site at [www.racewayministries.com](http://www.racewayministries.com). They will be glad to assist you. Are you interested in finding out more about the Raceway Ministry at Darlington? Contact Tommy Dewitt at [Dewittpes1@aol.com](mailto:Dewittpes1@aol.com).

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