

Rotary
Club of
Charlotte



REPORTER

September 6, 2016

MARCUS SMITH

Speedway Motorsports...The Man with Racing in his Blood



The President and General Manager of Charlotte Motor Speedway and COO of Speedway Motorsports, Inc. (SMI) stepped to the MIC at Charlotte Rotary and from that moment on, he owned us. The scion of the mega-wealthy SMI founder and owner, Bruton Smith, could have been a bit of a braggart however he was anything but that. Humble and easy-to-like, Marcus Smith gave us an inside peek into why his company and his sport is so incredibly successful. "The things we do on a regular basis ~ all of us ~ make a bigger impact on others than we realize," he told us. It is this philosophy, coupled with his commitment to consistently remind himself that "What we do at SMI is so special to so many people" ~ along with an honest belief that customer service takes top ranking ~ that has made Marcus Smith a much-admired and much-respected businessman and a very good friend to many.

As one of four children, he spoke of the years of his youth and he laughingly shared a few personal stories that entertained us. For instance, at one point he and his brothers were told in no uncertain terms that they had to absolutely STOP printing money on the color copier ... a feat that tickled most of us. He then shared that during his growing years his father made and lost almost everything, and even went bankrupt before going into the business of selling cars and working his way back into an enormous fortune.

ENTER ~ THE NASCAR YEARS.

It was not long ago ~ as recently as 1996 ~ that Marcus had to explain to people exactly what NASCAR was. Most didn't know and many didn't care. Twenty years later it's a \$6 billion business with an economic impact of \$450 million on our region. He spoke of Bruton's hard work and savvy business decisions inclusive of his focus on the I-85 interchange at Exit 49 when no one really understood the compelling need. Now it feeds over 8,000 people to and from work each day. That planning has impacted so many lives that it's unimaginable that it may not have been built.

Marcus was quick to credit hard work, a dedication to customer service, and the understanding that it's not only NASCAR and racing fans who benefit from what SMI is doing that has made his business so successful. And it's the tourist trade that the sport generates for our area and the "welcome mat" that makes people from other cities and states want to move here and work here.

He spoke of the Motocross 2016 Monster Energy MXGP of the Americas event the speedway just hosted as well as the concerts, car shows and special events such as the Christmas lights that draw visitors and fans from hundreds of miles away.

HE INTRIGUED US WITH THINGS TO COME ~

On September 10th at SMI's Bristol Motor Speedway, the venue will be transformed into

the world's largest college football site pitting the Virginia Tech Hokies against the Tennessee Volunteers ~ with 165,000 (!) tickets already sold. This was an idea originally suggested to Bruton twenty-some years ago by the late Jeff Byrd, the longtime president and general manager of Bristol Motor Speedway. While it wasn't the right time twenty years ago - or even five years ago - Marcus said he feels the timing is right NOW. He talked of what it will take to make the modifications to the venue. Things such as building the largest 4-sided TV in the world which, in itself, is an engineering miracle with its 750,000 watt sound system. (We collectively murmured, "WOW!")

He told us about the Carolina Rebellion - a three day hard rock and heavy metal festival held at Charlotte Motor Speedway which attracts 120,000 people on each of those three days. He filled us in on the great effort that had been put forth in a bid for the 2017 and 2018 ESPN X-Games at Charlotte Motor Speedway and said he's hopeful to submit a re-bid to host the games for the 2019 and 2020 summer event. He gave a shout-out to Mohammad Jenatian, who was a guest at our Rotary meeting today, for the role he has played in potentially bringing to Charlotte.

HE TALKED ABOUT CHANGES IN SPORTS VENUES ~

Marcus commented that all sports facilities are experiencing changes because fans/consumers/sponsors ... all want variety in the way they watch sporting events. They're looking for amenities such as standing room, comfy seats and social areas. And although attendance is down in every sport, a weekend event that attracts 100,000 - 150,000 people is still amazing and probably the largest gathering in the nation at the time. Amazingly, even with those numbers 78% of all attendees have never been to the Speedway before, so there is a constant influx of new visitors at every event. SMI and Charlotte Motor Speedway are reaching out to non-traditional fans such as Formula One racing. The latest demos find that millennials are becoming NASCAR fans; race fans have more money than the average person and they will travel 300 miles one-way to attend a NASCAR race; hotels/camps/restaurants all see significant financial benefit when there's a NASCAR race in town; and NASCAR fans tend to have higher than average households with children.

Marcus told us that they're trying to appeal to the "good old boy fans" by offering more *Fun* passes and cheaper tickets (\$35/which Marcus told us is a great value and includes pre-race concert and the fan zone activities.) In addition, kids 13 years and under are now admitted for free. Responding to a question about the NASCAR Hall of Fame, Marcus replied, "This is NASCAR country. This is where the NASCAR Hall of Fame belongs." ... which was met by applause. In response to a question about sponsors, he cited Coca-Cola and the tremendous financial boost that Coke enjoyed when their name and logo appeared on drivers' jackets, racing cars, vending machines, billboards, etc. , and the superb result of branding experienced by NASCAR when it partnered with companies such as Coke, Procter & Gamble, Clorox, and various financial institutions, etc.

WE LISTENED AND WE LIKED WHAT WE HEARD ~

All-in-all, we lapped up everything Marcus told us and we loved having him speak to our club. He was warm, outgoing, candid, thoughtful and professional. He was very much "one of us."

Our own Travis Vance got a solid laugh when he shared his own experience as a native of Bristol, TN where, when the high school was found to be invaded with black mold, classes were held in the sky boxes at Bristol Motor Speedway and the physical education classes were held on the tracks. His line, "Jay Leno once referred to that in his monologue, 'If your high school classes are held at a Speedway, you might be a redneck'" and it got a huge laugh.

Marcus acknowledged several of our Rotary Club members with whom he has enjoyed close friendships for many years. He credited Rex Welton for teaching him valuable financial lessons (including stocks) and for getting him involved with Junior Achievement. He smiled when he thanked Luther Fincher who had kept him from getting into trouble during the years of his youth. He summed it all up in seven short words, "I'm blessed to do what I do." We felt we were blessed to have Marcus Smith address Charlotte Rotary today.

Speaker Write-Up: Marilyn Bowler

Head Table: Tom Blocker, Natalie English, Tim Newman, Mitzi Ellis; Invocation: David Anderson; Centennial History: Ed Wadsworth; Guests & Visitors: Steve Eanes; AV: Jessica Dupree, Pete Marriott; Photos: Bert Voswinkel; Piano: Em Syrewicze

CLUB NEWS

Golf Raffle Ticket sales start next week. Items have been put together in 5 impressive packages ranging from a stay in Linville Falls to sporting/dining/wine/jewelry/training/theatre opportunities. Tickets are 1 for \$10; 3 for \$20. Cash and checks (payable to Charlotte Rotary Club) will be accepted. Proceeds benefit the public safety scholarship fund. Thank you sponsors: **Belk, Donald Haack, The City Club, Johnson & Wales University, Sam Ryburn, Vulcan Materials, Wil Bosbyshell, Dale Halton, The Knights, WBT, The Teagarden Group, and Queens University.**

Foundation Chair **Robert Freeman** recognized the following and thanked them for their continued support to The Rotary Foundation: *Paul Harris Fellow: Street Brewer, Kay Peninger; Level One: Kip Kiser, Matt Joyner, Jim Kothe; Level Two: Jeff Searcy, John Snyder; Level Three: John zumBrunnen; Level Four: Brian Gibson; Level Five: Neil Burkhead; Level Six: David Anderson.*

100 SERVICE PROJECTS – 69 projects completed

NEW PROJECTS

School Tools – a donation barrel will be set up at Rotary meetings through mid-September. Bring a new backpack stuffed with pencils, colored pencils, crayons, notebook paper, rulers, glue stick, 2 pocket folders, and composition books. A \$20 contribution will buy 87 pencils. Or, Amazon's online store: <http://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/S5MWQOPXF6KA>. Please report if you've donated to Sandy (sandy@charlotterotary.org).

Victoria A. Bowler CPCC Memorial Scholarship – September 14 at Rooster's/SouthPark; 5:30-9PM. Admission \$25 per person (hors d'oeuvres, 2 drinks, music). Donations/admission to CPCC Foundation, Inc., Attn Ginny Hastings, PO Box 35009, Charlotte, NC 28235.

Hope Haven (3815 N. Tryon St.) is building a KaBOOM! Playground – September 17. Volunteers needed anytime between 8AM-3PM. Lunch is provided and no expertise needed. Registration is available here: <http://www.hopehaveninc.org/events/kaboom-playground-build/>. Rotary contact is Alice Harrison, aliceharrison@hopehaveninc.org.

Annual Duck Race and Youth Services Social – September 18 at Tailrace Marina, Mt. Holly; 2-6PM; Adopt a Duck: 1 duck for \$10; Quack pack for \$25; Flock for \$100. Chance to win \$2500 and a 2016 Chevy Camaro. See Sandy to purchase your tickets.

2016 Walk to End Alzheimer's – September 24 at Symphony Park; registration at 9am; ceremony and walk at 10am. Contact Joan Wright (joan@osullivanwright.com). http://act.alz.org/site/TR/Walk2016/NC-WesternCarolina?pg=entry&fr_id=9139

Prescription of HOPE with Mitchell's Fund – September 28 at Charlotte Convention Center; 11:30AM-1PM; www.mitchellsfund.org

ONGOING

-**Allenbrook Elementary School:** North Star Reading Partners with a commitment to read to a 3rd grade student one hour a week. Eric Davis: eric.davis@wellsfargo.com.

-**Platelet Donation:** Register at the American Red Cross or Community Blood Center of the Carolinas to donate platelets. **50 donations to date!**

-**Cotswold Farmers Market:** <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0548afaa2da5fe3-volunteer>. This group REALLY needs help with set up/take down each and every weekend. Please think about lending a hand.

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS (09/09/16 – 09/16/16)

09/09 Colleen Brannan, Tom O'Brien, Mark Crockett

09/11 John Armistead, Bryan Adams, Harry Daugherty

09/13 Cheryl Banks

09/14 Bryan Mermans

09/15 Ron Campbell, Rich Campbell, Katie Tyler

09/16 Gray Langley

UPCOMING ANNIVERSARIES (09/09/16 – 09/16/16)

09/09 Robin & Tom Gibson

09/10 Libby & Alan Simonini

09/11 Meg & Bryan Adams

09/12 Linda Gallehugh & Elly Clary, Quincy & Mike White

09/14 Elsie & Will Barnhardt

09/16 Kaye & Lamar Thomas

Visitors & Guests	13
Club Members	139
Total	152 (52%)

GUESTS: Mohammad Jenatian, Jennifer Braun, Lynne Priestley, Kelly Wollinger, Martin Welton, Robert Troutline, Gabrielle MacLatchie, Marshall Staton, Colin Revels, Byron Revels, Firoz Peera, Mike Burch

MEMBERSHIP

07/01/2016 318

09/06/2016 319

Net Increase: +1

New Members:

Resignations:

UPCOMING LUNCHEONS

(www.charlotterotary.org and click on the events tab)

09/13 – John Merrino, President, Olde Mecklenburg Brewery

09/20 – Governor Pat McCrory

09/27 – Golf Tournament...NO CLUB MEETING

Photos from our luncheons and other events can be found on Flickr [Click here](#)





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