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SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

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News Release

NWC alum finds ministry in NASCAR

Nov13, 2003

More About Motor Racing Outreach

- <http://www.gospelcom.net/mro/fitness/info.html>

Eric Quinn '98 has a grueling job. He's on the road five to six days a week, 38 weeks out of the year. His weekend is Tuesday - maybe.

But the benefits of his job make up for the hard work and long hours. As fitness and rehab coordinator for Motor Racing Outreach (MRO), he "fine-tunes" the aching muscles of NASCAR's elite while ministering to their hearts and souls.

When Quinn was a student at Northwestern College, he kept an article on his dorm room wall that set the stage for where he is today. "It was from the racing trade papers about a group of doctors and trainers working with NASCAR," he recalls. "That's what I wanted to do someday."

"Someday" happened two years after receiving his degree in physical education/sports studies/sports medicine at Northwestern. After establishing contact with MRO through an e-mail prayer list, he contacted the program director. "I said I was interested in what they did and would like to talk with him. I sent him my resume," Quinn says.

He met with the director at a Las Vegas race in March 2000 and soon after began working with MRO in the Busch Series. After a few races he heard about an opening in the Winston Cup Series and was soon hired fulltime. When his boss left the program last year he took over as director.

MRO's mission is to introduce the racing community (racers and fans) to a personal faith in Christ, growth in Christ-likeness and active involvement in the church through relationships that provide care, sharing knowledge of God's Word, and assistance in developing their leadership skills.

The ministry includes chaplaincy, counseling, discipleship, leadership development through biblical principles, visitation, prayer time, chapel services at the track and a

Bible Club for children. A traveling community center serves as a safe haven for children, houses classroom space, recreational facilities and counseling rooms, and provides a venue for special events, family fun nights, marriage enrichment seminars, etc. The ministry also partners with local churches and parachurch organizations, such as Raceway Ministries, to meet the spiritual needs of the fans.

The facets of professional motor racing are many and varied, Quinn explains. There's so much more to the sport than the driver, pit crew, fuel and tires. "Approximately 30 people support one driver," he says. "MRO works with and ministers to the PR people, crewmen, media."

The fitness and rehab center offers drivers and crew the sports medicine and physical therapy services they need on the road. The program provides fitness equipment at the speedways so the racing community can maintain the healthy lifestyle needed to compete at the top level of motor sports. The outreach utilizes a mobile treatment trailer along with a fully transportable workout gym, quality sports medicine and personal wellness.

"We do about 1,000 treatments per year among 500-600 individuals," Quinn says. "It provides the opportunity to share, talk, discuss."

Among his "clients" are the big names of NASCAR: Jeff Gordon, Mark Martin, Terry LaBonte, Bill Elliott, Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Tony Stewart. "I also work with safety people, drivers, teams and crews in sports medicine, athletic training and making equipment safer and better, like seats and devices inside the car."

A TYPICAL WEEK FOR QUINN begins Wednesday or Thursday when he arrives at a race locale, where he will be through Sunday or Monday. "Tuesday is my weekend. I don't fly too much; I usually drive the motor home or truck, which is the training room," he says. "I work with sports teams that never have home games. Winston Series is the longest season of all professional sports, from Feb. 1 to Thanksgiving."

Quinn admits the NASCAR community is different because it's very closed. "The trust element is difficult. So many people and organizations want their attention or want something from these guys: charities, advertisers, fans wanting autographs, the paparazzi. MRO does not ask for anything of the drivers. We are here to give to them."

"It takes about three years before you are entrusted into the community. The first two years I felt I didn't have any friends," he says. "Because the job turnover is high (long hours, hard work, being on the road so much), people don't last and they don't want to put too much trust into someone who's going to leave soon."

"But I've developed their trust. Drivers call me by name; they want to talk and do stuff. You build a trust quicker because you're hands-on. You do something well, they get better. They come to me with problems, but don't want to people to know they are hurt or what their problems are. We're all under a microscope, so we have to trust each other."

"There personalities are here, sure. You may see them fighting on TV, but by the next week their motor homes are parked four feet from each other. You have to learn to live with one another and get along. We are a family."

He experienced that "family" recently when his father had open-heart surgery back home in New York. "Tony Stewart was in to see me. I knew he had a private jet going to the area, so I asked if there was an extra seat for me so I could go see my dad. Tony told me to take his jet."

Quinn, who is 35, isn't afraid to admit he's single. "I got this job because I was single. Now I'm single because I have this job," he quips.

NORTHWESTERN COLLEGE ATHLETIC TRAINERS Dave Hieb and Sara Mortensen have worked with Quinn at a few NASCAR races. Hieb worked the races in Loudon, NH; Brooklyn, MI and Joliet, IL.

"I was not a race fan. I did not know any drivers or cared to watch auto racing. In my mind, I felt that auto racing was nothing more than, 'Drive Fast and Turn Left.'" Hieb admits. "The only way Eric talked me into going a race was by taking me to Cooperstown, NY, to see the Baseball Hall of Fame. I agreed to work the race, but the whole time I was thinking, 'I can't wait to get to Cooperstown.'"¹

What he experienced standing on "Pit Road" during a race was amazing, Hieb recalls. "The experience is similar to standing on the sidelines during the Super Bowl. Every race has 100,000 people. The noise, the flyover, the roar of the crowd, the excitement and the energy that is developed at each race is incredible."

What amazed Hieb were that the pit crew got injuries typical of any other athlete. "Many of these guys are former football players or other very agile and large people. The timing is impeccable and one mistake by one member of the pit crew can cause the team a race. The energy and intensity is stronger than any team sport we have at Northwestern."

He was impressed by the way MRO ministers to not only the support staff, pit crews, garage crews and officials, but to the families. "They are tireless workers sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Their vehicle for ministry also involves vehicles."

After the first race, Hieb was hooked. "Years ago, I vowed I would never watch a race on TV. Now I look forward to the races and pay more attention to individual racers, especially those who are involved with MRO."

Mortensen worked the Chicagoland and Phoenix races. "It was a great experience to see God work through Eric and the others in MRO, to share the Gospel and just to be there for prayer. Before the race MRO will have a chapel for pit crew, drivers and family. There is a pretty good attendance. When I attended, a couple guys from Third Day were there; it was great to see their support of NASCAR and drivers."

She said that before the race Quinn and another trainer go down pit road and pray with any of the drivers. "It is amazing to see how open every driver is to it! God is

truly moving in this ministry. I can see why God has Eric in this position; he values all the relationships that he has established with the drivers. You can tell he loves where he is and that is reassuring to the drivers and pit crew as well. God is moving everywhere - even in NASCAR - we need to keep praying for them."

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