

Ferrari dealer gives kids Rides to Remember

By Doug DeLoach
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Ferrari, Maserati, Lamborghini, Porsche, Aston Martin, Jaguar — these are the exotic sports cars that young boys, and more than a few young girls, dream of riding in and driving. Throw in a Chevrolet Corvette, Dodge Viper or Shelby Cobra and you have accounted for most of the posters on the bedroom walls of adolescent gearheads across America.

So, to honor those dreams, **Ferrari Maserati of Atlanta** has created “Rides to Remember.” This unusual charity event, which benefits **Camp Sunshine, Atlanta Ronald McDonald House Charities** and **CURE**, will celebrate its sixth year running on Saturday, June 4.

Rides to Remember pairs up the owner of an exotic car, such as a Ferrari Italia or Daytona, a Maserati Gran Turismo or Lamborghini Gallardo, or a customized vehicle, such as a hot rod or Monster Truck, with a young person beset by life-threatening cancer for a cruise along a planned route around Atlanta.

“These kids have had tough lives and it hasn’t been fun for them or their families. They deserve the best we can give them.”

Craig Forbes

Ferrari Maserati of Atlanta

This year, event organizers are anticipating around 100 participating vehicles and drivers who will provide a police-escorted ride to deserving children and their siblings. The convoy will start at **Seasons 52** at Perimeter Mall and end up at Ferrari Maserati of Atlanta in Roswell.

“This is the event that we work on the hardest every year,” said Craig Forbes, general manager of Ferrari Maserati of Atlanta.

As one of the event’s founders, Forbes said the inspiration for Rides to Remember



For the kids: Rides to Remember pairs up the owner of an exotic car or a customized vehicle with a young person with cancer for a cruise around Atlanta.

came from within the dealership’s family when the daughter of one of the principals spent several years fighting cancer.

“These kids have had tough lives and it hasn’t been fun for them or their families,” Forbes said. “They deserve the best we can give them.”

According to Forbes, the original event (which was called “Dream Ride”) involved around 18 cars and 15 children. Everyone met in the parking lot at Turner Field and proceeded by different routes to the Ferrari Maserati showroom.

“It was done on a shoestring budget, but we saw the huge potential of the event,” Forbes said.

Aside from eliciting ear-to-ear smiles from the young participants, Rides to Remember is focused on raising the awareness level about the ongoing battle against childhood cancer and inspiring others to contribute to the event’s beneficiary organizations.

“I originally envisioned maybe 50 cars in a convoy,” he said. “A parade of these bright red, orange, green and all kinds of crazy-colored cars, which would make people stop and wonder, ‘What’s that all about?’”

Lindsey Monroe, special events coordinator at Camp Sunshine, which has been providing recreational activities and educational programs for children with cancer

and their families since 1983, said Rides to Remember represents a unique and thrilling experience for her “campers.”

“We have kids, especially little boys, who look forward to this event all year long,” Monroe said.

She recalled a 9-year-old named Jarrod who chose to ride in a Monster Truck during last year’s event. “When he saw the Transformer symbol on the truck, he asked, ‘When do you think it’s going to transform?’”

This year, Dr. Randy Slovis, who practices internal medicine at **Peachford Hospital**, will be at the wheel of his 2010 Ferrari 458 Italia, which he purchased last July.

“I consider this event a personal priority,” Slovis said.

One of the original participating car owners, Slovis recounted his experience with a young girl who was on her last round of chemotherapy treatments. Riding next to him in the car, Slovis noticed the girl’s chest port through which chemo drugs are administered was still in place.

“I can’t get over the bravery of these children,” Slovis said. “During our ride, when her eyes lit up, that put it all in perspective for me.”

When the convoy of exotic vehicles crosses the finish line at the Ferrari Maserati dealership, three award winners will be announced. One award is given to the car the kids think is the “coolest,” another is given to the driver who makes the largest charitable contribution (also known as “Bribing the Judge”), and a third award is based on the judgment of a small group of hand-picked enthusiasts using a

set of more traditional car show criteria. Visitors to the Roswell showroom will also be able to wander around and dream about getting behind the wheel of some of the world’s most beautiful, exclusive, high-performance automobiles.

Among Ferrari’s latest offerings is the California, which, as its name implies and like its namesake from the 1960s, was designed by the Maranello factory with the American market firmly in mind. The California comes equipped with a mid-front mounted V8 that puts out about 460 horsepower and 357 pound-feet of torque, a retractable steel convertible roof, stability and traction control, special accommodations for luggage, and an assortment of creature features you would expect in a car with a MSRP in the \$200,000 range.

“We’ve seen a surge of interest in the California during the past six months,” Forbes said. “Currently, there is about a one-year waiting period for the car.”

Rides to Remember

What: Rides to Remember is an annual charity event benefiting Camp Sunshine, Atlanta Ronald McDonald House Charities and CURE

When: Saturday, June 4, 2011

Where: Starts at Seasons 52 at Perimeter Mall, finishes at Ferrari Maserati of Atlanta in Roswell

More info: Drivers with high-end exotic cars who are interested in participating can register at <http://ridestoremember.org>

Another enthusiast’s dream machine is the Ferrari 458 Italia, which was named “Car of the Year” by the Robb Report and “2011 World Performance Car of the Year” by an international jury of automotive journalists. With a mostly aluminum chassis, the Italia is powered by a 4.5-liter V8 with 562 horsepower and 398 pound-feet of torque. Using a seven-speed, dual-clutch automated manual transmission, the Italia can transport its passengers from 0 to 60 mph in 3.4 seconds.

Despite all the visceral thrills, technological richness and automotive exclusivity that surrounds Rides to Remember, in every discussion the organizers and drivers took pains to keep the focus on the primary purpose of the event.

As Slovis said, “There’s nothing cooler than giving a child a better day.”



Rides for a purpose: Aside from eliciting ear-to-ear smiles from the young participants, Rides to Remember is focused on raising childhood cancer awareness.



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