

Celebrity Speeders Race For Kids

29th Annual Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race

(NAPSA)—Being a celebrity has its privileges and driving a high performance Toyota sports coupe over 100 mph through the streets of Long Beach, California is one of them. For the past 28 years, more than 300 fan favorites such as Cameron Diaz, George Lucas, Ashley Judd, Lil' Kim, Sean Astin, Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin, Gene Hackman, Clint Eastwood, Woody Harrelson, Cuba Gooding Jr., Kelsey Grammer, Jay Leno, Matt LeBlanc, Queen Latifah, Joe Montana, Tony Dorsett, John Elway and dozens of others, have settled in behind the wheel at the Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race and roared through 10 laps of hair-raising fun—all for the benefit of children's charities.

The race is a highlight of the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach and has become the largest celebrity racing event in the world.

Preparing for the race involves a little more than just showing up. Participants commit to eight days of charity involvement, car preparation and actual racing, including an intensive four-day session that teaches stars how to handle the complexities of a grand prix track. Once training is completed, they endure a practice session on the seaside street course in Long Beach, followed by the actual race (April 9), played out in front of tens of thousands of screaming fans, and a national television audience.

"Lots of adrenaline flows out there," said Les Unger, national



The 2004 drivers get together for a final, "friendly" group photo before heading out to mix it up on the track at the Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race, held in conjunction with the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach. Participants included Sean Astin, Lil' Kim, Frankie Muniz, Andrew Firestone and Melisa Joan Hart among others.

motor sports manager at Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A. "The celebrities we host are no strangers to challenges and new experiences, but every single one of them steps out of their cars with hearts beating a million times a minute. It's always fun to hear them try to explain the feeling—it's not easy to describe."

Beyond thrilling both race fans and themselves, the star-studded group raises money for a national organization called "Racing for Kids" that benefits children's hospitals. Each year, the celebrities travel to Miller Children's Hospital

in Long Beach to spend time with sick and recovering children, evoking smiles, laughter and inspiration. Since 1991, the race has raised more than \$1.1 million for charity. Donations are split equally between Miller Children's and Children's Hospital of Orange County.

"Oftentimes I can't tell who gets more out of the visit, the celebs or the kids," said Unger.

Twisting through the streets of downtown Long Beach, Calif., the Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race is broadcast nationally. The 2005 Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race will take place on Saturday, April 9.