



SPEEDWAY CHILDREN'S CHARITIES CELEBRATES \$10 MILLION MILESTONE AT ANNUAL TREE LIGHTING & GRANT CEREMONY

- **Ceremony Included Fireworks Spectacular And Lighting Of 'The Tallest Living Christmas Tree In Texas'**
- **Foundation For The Callier And Communication Disorders At UT-Dallas Honored With Founder's Grant**
- **TMS, SCC Partner With Do It For Durrett Foundation To Provide Special Christmas For Two Families**

FORT WORTH, Texas (December 1, 2015) – Speedway Children's Charities–Texas Chapter continued its legacy of giving to North Texas non-profit organizations during Tuesday evening's annual tree lighting and grant ceremony at Texas Motor Speedway and in the process surpassed the \$10 million milestone in grants distributed since the organization was established in 1997.

The organization, created to assist non-profit organizations in improving the lives of children in North Texas, celebrated the historic mark in grand fashion by awarding \$300,000 in grants to local organizations, illuminating the North Texas sky with a spectacular fireworks display and lighting "The Tallest Living Christmas Tree In Texas" presented by Ben E. Keith Foods. The 66-foot tall Douglas fir tree from Montana was decorated with 10,000 LED lights, oversized ornaments and topped with a 4'x4' gold star to officially signify the start of the holiday season at Texas Motor Speedway.

Texas Motor Speedway President Eddie Gossage received some assistance in lighting the tree from Santa Claus and children representing some of the non-profit organizations that SCC services. Earlier, Santa made a grand entrance as he showed up on a pallet of money representing the \$10 million Speedway Children's Charities has awarded through the years that was on a forklift guided to the stage by the "The Great American Sweethearts!"

The Foundation for the Callier and Communication Disorders at the University of Texas at Dallas was honored as the 14th recipient of Speedway Children's Charities' prestigious Founder's Grant. Since 2009, Speedway Children's Charities has awarded the Founder's Grant to assist North Texas non-profit organizations with capital improvement projects.

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This year's Founder's Grant, totaling more than \$146,000, will help transform how the organization serves children with communication disorders. The grant will provide funding for the construction of a state-of-the-art sensory motor gym at the new Callier Center in Richardson. The facility is scheduled to open in August of 2016.

"This structured space will be a specially designed area for children with speech, language and hearing disorders to develop sensory, communication and motor skills in a fun, non-threatening environment," Executive Director of the Callier Center for Communication Disorders Dr. Tom Campbell said. "With bright, colorful walls, covered swings, ball pits, and climbing walls, this stress-free place will be a remarkable benefit for our delivery of therapy to children. We are tremendously grateful to Speedway Children's Charities for making this possible."

In addition to the Founder's Grant, Speedway Children's Charities distributed additional grants ranging from \$9,500 to \$46,000 to the following:

- Camp iHope (Plano)
- Cook Children's – Fort Worth
- Kiwanis Children's Clinic of Denton
- Mary Crowley Cancer Research Center (Dallas)
- PediPlace (Lewisville)
- University of North Texas Science Center (Fort Worth)

Speedway Children's Charities had several media personalities that have helped the organization over the years present the additional grants including KXAS NBC-5 Sports Director Newy Scruggs and veteran radio personalities Norm Hitzges of 1310 AM and 96.7 FM The Ticket, Jody Dean of KLUV 98.7 FM and Justin Frazell of 95.9 FM The Ranch.

In a salute to longtime Dallas/Fort Worth sportswriter Richard Durrett, who passed away suddenly last year at the age of 38, Speedway Children's Charities and Texas Motor Speedway will be providing Christmas for two families impacted by the newly created Do It For Durrett Foundation. TMS and SCC announced that it will handle Christmas preparation in its entirety for two families by decorating the inside and outside of their homes, providing gifts for under the tree and a gift card to purchase an expansive holiday meal.

The first family surprised was that of Jason Dugger, a long-time employee of the *Dallas Morning News* who passed away in 2014 leaving behind his wife Lauren and two small children. The second was Kelly Durrett, Richard's widow, and her three children.

Kelly has been instrumental in the creation of the Do It For Durrett Foundation, which focuses on raising funds for North Texas working-class families that have been impacted by a sudden loss. Richard was a sportswriter at the *Dallas Morning News*, serving as a beat writer for motorsports and the Texas Rangers before moving to ESPNDallas.com and ultimately

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advancing to co-host a daily sports talk show on KESN-FM ESPN Radio.

Speedway employees will be decorating their homes next week.

The Christmas festivities also included performances by members of the Doubletake Dance Studio in Hurst and Speedway Children's Charities-Texas Chapter President Scott Murray presenting the Dick Cerza Award and President's Award during the program. Texas Motor Speedway Vice President of Operations Mat Stolley and his staff earned the Dick Cerza Award for their continued support of the charity and Corey Polinsky received the President's Award as the organization's top volunteer.

The evening of giving culminated with the distribution of 100 bicycles and helmets to children representing A WARM Place and A Wish With Wings. The bikes were presented as an early Christmas present compliments of Speedway Children's Charities board members Chalmer and Karen McWilliams, George and Linda Campbell and Cherie and Ron Rodenburgh.

Speedway Children's Charities-Texas Chapter has continued to touch the lives of children across North Texas by raising funds primarily during the speedway's three major race weekends. To illustrate the Speedway Children's Charities impact on North Texas, the grandstands of Texas Motor Speedway could be filled 18 times with the number of children that have benefited from the organization's support.

For more information on Speedway Children's Charities, please visit www.speedwaycharities.org.

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