

MICHAEL JOHNSON TO SUPPORT WHEELCHAIRS 4 KIDS AT ST. PETE

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MOUNT MORRIS, MICH. -- Paralyzed racer Michael Johnson and his team, JDC MotorSports, will again support nonprofit organization Wheelchairs 4 Kids during the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg, the season opener for the 2014 Pro Mazda Championship Presented by Cooper Tires.

Michael will provide the organization with prime advertising space on his #54 JDC MotorSports Pro Mazda entry as he has done already in 2013 when he competed in the Cooper Tires USF2000 National Championship Powered by Mazda.

"We are so excited that Michael has chosen to support Wheelchairs 4 Kids again for this year's race," said Madeline Robinson, Wheelchairs 4 Kids Executive Director. "When we meet him a year ago I simply could not believe what he is doing -- racing with hand controls only. He is an amazing young man and such an inspiration to our kids. We are really grateful that we can continue to have his support for our organization."

"I had a blast working with Wheelchairs 4 Kids last year when I was racing in USF2000," said Johnson, "so there was no question I wanted to continue supporting them when we race at St. Pete again in Pro Mazda this year."

Based in Tarpon Springs, Fla., north of St. Petersburg, Wheelchairs 4 Kids is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Its mission is to improve the lives of children with physical disabilities by providing wheelchairs, home and vehicle modifications as well as other adaptive devices. Many children in the U.S. faced with these issues are in wheelchairs that are too small, in disrepair, or do not fit the child's needs.

In addition, families are faced with trying to care for their special needs child in homes that have not been properly modified. Imagine trying to lift your teenager in and out of bed or a bathtub without assistive devices or a modified bathroom. Picture a child in a home where they can't get upstairs. Children outgrow their wheelchairs before government or insurance programs will allow for a replacement. Would you want to sit all day in a chair that was too small resulting in pressure sores? Wheelchairs 4 Kids is prepared to address these much neglected needs.

About Michael Johnson: Twenty-one year old paralyzed racer Michael Johnson is the first and only paralyzed licensed IndyCar driver. Michael was on his way to becoming a professional motorcycle racer, having won races and championships at regional and national level, when, on August 13, 2005 he was involved in an on-track racing accident which left him paralyzed from the mid-chest down. After several years of recovery he has started racing and winning again and now has set his goal to become the first paralyzed driver to compete in the Indianapolis 500. Michael drives his specially modified race car with hand controls and he became the first paralyzed racer to win in an open-wheel formula car during Round Two of the Skip Barber Summer Series at Watkins Glen International Raceway in 2011. He went on to claim two further victories at Road America, and finished the 2011 season with three wins, one pole position, four third place podiums and several top-five finishes. In 2012 Michael moved up to the Cooper Tires USF2000 Championship Powered by Mazda with championship winning team JDC MotorSports. This is Step One of the "Mazda Road to Indy" program. In his first year as a professional licensed IndyCar driver Michael had several top-10 finishing positions in qualifying and races on his way to 15th position overall in the series. Michael is once again competing with JDC MotorSports in the 2014 Pro Mazda Championship Presented by Cooper Tires.

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