

Meet the Pastor Who Aims to Win the Indianapolis 500 Race

On May 29, 2016, the 100th Indianapolis 500 Race will take place in Indiana with a high probability that for the first time ever in the history of the race, a pastor-led racing team will be in the starting lineup.

Marotti Racing, based in Wallingford, Connecticut, is raising sponsors and prayer support in their effort to be the first pastor-led Christian racing team to participate in the famous Indianapolis 500. Will Marotti is senior pastor of New Life Church in Wallingford, a congregation of 1,200 members that sits on a 56 acre campus that includes a daycare, a private school, a summer day camp, and various community-based programs.

“There has never been an Indy racing team led by a minister,” says Marotti. “It may seem unusual that a pastor would lead a racing team, but I have been a racing fan since I was a young boy and it’s a prime missionary field. My father took us to watch races at the Silver City Quarter Midget Track in South Meriden (where Daytona 500 Champion Joey Lagano raced as a boy). And I listened to my first Indy 500 live on the radio in 1969, the year Mario Andretti won. I attended the Skip Barber Racing School in 1979, and I attended my first 500 in 1982. The moment I walked into the speedway, I totally fell in love with Indy Car racing and have been ever since. Now, as a pastor, I see the race as a place to reach out with the gospel as well—and that is what my team is praying we can do!”

Marotti Racing is positioning to enter, compete in and win the 100th Indy 500. They are teaming up with Bryan Herta Autosport for racing operations. Bryan Herta Autosport is a well-respected leader in Indy Car racing. They won the 2011 Indy 500 with driver Dan Weldon. And in 2015’s Indy 500 race, Bryan

Herta Autosport driver, Gabby Chaves, won the 2015 Indy and Verizon Series Rookie of the Year Awards.

It's been 50 years (1966) since a rookie Indy 500 car owner (John Mecom Jr.) and a rookie Indy 500 driver (Graham Hill) won the race. Marotti feels it's time once again for rookies to repeat that historic win of 1966.

According to Marotti, "Indy has historically been a place of new beginnings for grass-roots teams. We want to bring back that raw, innovative spirit and help make the fan experience be the very best it can. After all, without the fans, none of us would even have the chance to race."

As much as Marotti loves auto racing, he's a pastor at heart, and wants to reach all those involved with the Indianapolis 500 with the gospel. And he is asking that Christians throughout the nation sign up to be prayer warriors by going to their website at [www.prayerwarriors.org](#). Besides prayer, Marotti said there is still a need for sponsors as well.

"We are looking for sponsors who are not just interested in getting the car team into the race but to also get countless millions to hear the gospel," said Marotti.

Not only is Marotti racing seeking sponsors, social media followers and prayer warriors, but they are also "paying it forward" with actively raising funds through their Indy 500 project for Fisher House Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides a "home away from home" for families of patients receiving medical care at major military and VA medical centers. The homes provide free temporary lodging so families can be close to their loved ones during a medical crisis. Since inception, the program has saved military and veterans' families an estimated \$320 million in out-of-pocket costs for lodging and transportation.

Marotti states, "Since 1990, Fisher House has been one of the most transparent and truly helpful charities for our veterans.

The Indy 500 is held on Memorial Day Weekend, and what better time or better way to honor those who have served and made the ultimate sacrifice, then by caring for their needs."

The Indianapolis 500 is the largest single-day sporting event in the world with more than 300,000 people in attendance; a television viewership of 7 million; and a radio listenership of 3 million.

For those interested in supporting or praying for this race team, they can go to .