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Contact: Kimberley Jackson
Andretti Autosport
(317) 872-2700, ext. 264

kimberley.jackson@andrettiautosport.com

Sage Karam – Rising Star On and Off the Track

By Ashley Wilson

August 12, 2010 – The Indy Racing League's USF2000 National Championship series has emerged with a leader both on and off the track. Andretti Autosport driver Sage Karam has won five of eight races so far this season, and he leads the series in championship points. He is a rising star within the racing world, having captured 35 national karting championships. At just 15 years old, Karam continues to inspire those all around him.

Karam has become involved with Operation Smile for the past year through his manager Michael Fux and The Michael Fux Foundation. Operation Smile is a children's charity that has been treating facial deformities such as cleft lips and cleft palates all around the world since 1982. More than 150,000 boys and girls have been treated since that time, with the help of many volunteers. Karam is one of many who have volunteered their time so that others may receive a lifetime of smiles.

He was chosen to speak at Operation Smile's 18th Annual International Student Leadership Conference, held on the week of August 1-August 5 in Denver, Colorado. The conference brought in 500 students from all over the world. Karam was selected not only based his dedication to Operation Smile, but also his perseverance on the track with Andretti Autosport. The theme of the conference was "Be the Change" and Karam's speech, titled "Life at ½ Speed is Life ½ Lived!," paralleled just that.

The sequence of his presentation was "Start, Pit Stop and Winner's Circle." While each of these are steps Karam takes at the track, they are also steps we should strive to achieve in our own lives.

He described that at the start of any journey it is important to stay focused. This pertains to a race, but also reaches beyond that.

"Do what you love and be who you are," Karam said. "I've never let my age stop me from doing what I enjoy, whether that is racing or helping others."

The next step is the "Pit Stop" where you should continue to surround yourself with the right people. Karam feels blessed to be a part of Andretti Autosport and to have met so many amazing people along the way. Many of them have helped continue his pursuit of racing, but also made him a better person.

"I see that racing should serve as a vehicle for me to contribute to a greater society," Karam said. "I have met some fantastic individuals through racing and appreciate the lessons and experiences that we've shared."

Finally, everyone should aim to end up in the "Winner's Circle." This is the primary goal of a driver on the track. However, there are many moments in life where we want to be the

victor. Karam stated that one of the most important aspects of this step is to remain humble. This will also allow you to use your gifts in order to help others.

A year ago, Karam traveled to Honduras with Operation Smile. He described the experience as life-changing.

"It was very emotional when you handed the babies back to their mothers," Karam said about the post-surgery experience.

Karam has proven to be a leader in all aspects of life. He continues to dominate the USF2000 series, while also working towards the betterment of others. He plans on using his talents to make many more trips in the future. Karam hopes that other kids can look up to him in a positive way.

"The whole theme was changing the world one life at a time, and that's what I am trying to do right now."