



ABOVE: Two of his fans give thumbs up with their coloring books in hand as they share a moment with Dylan at a Lakeland Raiders Indoor Football game at The Lakeland Center. RIGHT: Dylan with his parents, Staci and Michael, at the Citrus County Speedway.

Dylan, the youngest of three children born to Michael and Staci, began showing interest in all things mechanical around the age of four. With the support of his family behind him, he started in motocross at 6 and loved the thrill of bike racing. He originally thought that he would eventually go professional in the sport; by the time Dylan was 10, a wreck and a broken femur forced his mother to rethink his hobby.

"My mom was very concerned when I got hurt," Dylan admits. "She said I needed to start racing on four tires instead of two."

The teen's grandfather initially helped to facilitate his desire to race. "My family really got behind me on racing and always have my back," said Dylan. From motocross he moved into quarter midgets, then onto cars and trucks. Regardless of the four wheels that he has under him, those close to Dylan all agree that focus is the best word to describe him.

Enter Kim Scheffler, a former driver herself and fellow Polk Countian and "track mom" who has become Dylan's guide through the complex world of racing.

"His parents came to me in 2012; I've had some experience in the industry... and I'm from Auburndale," said Kim. "They wanted to see their son do well. He had raw talent and needed someone to guide him. This family has touched my heart; it's incredible the positive impact Dylan has given kids through racing."



He's learning racing etiquette every day and is earning his rookie stripes as a young professional driver."

While he is often found on the track, the teen also has other important items on his daily schedule.

"Dylan stays busy all year," said Kim. "When he's not racing, he's studying for school, testing or visiting with kids. He wants to race more than anything, but he also wants to make a difference."

Indeed, Dylan makes time for some very important work; as a regular on local and statewide tracks, he's become a role model for young fans. Dylan regularly takes the time to walk up into the stands after a race to greet fans, sign an autograph or pose for a photo. Still, he seems to take this all in stride.

"I'm not a movie star," said Dylan. "I just love what I do and think it's great that other people can enjoy watching how fun racing is."



ABOVE: Dylan signing an autograph for a young fan in the stands at the Citrus County Speedway. LEFT: The young driver after speaking to a class at Futurecare Learning Center in Auburndale.



PHOTOS BY KIM SCHEFFLER

"I get a lot of hugs from kids," said Dylan, who won't earn his civil driver's license until later this year when he turns 16, "and parents who are grateful that their children are willing to buckle up after they have heard me speak. That's such a big deal."

Dylan also gets his positive message out through a coloring book he distributes; one that he puts forth simply to promote safety through organizations including the Shriners, Anchor House, and the Sunshine Foundation.

With success on the track and a desire to give back to the community through racing, Dylan has been able to do what many drivers find to be most challenging: secure sponsorships from companies that believe in his future success.

"His parents' company, Blackwater Integration, is just one of several local and national sponsors that believe in Dylan," said Kim. "There is still room on the hood."

Although it's a tall order in a competitive world of racing, Dylan's big goal is to make it to NASCAR before the decade is out.

"If I start winning big races, and the right people see it happen at the right time; it's going to happen," said Dylan.

A legend, as they, may already be born. ❖

In tandem with having an influence on youngsters at the track, there are some special kids far from the track that also get Dylan's attention. The young driver is a spokesperson for T.A.D.D. (Teens Against Distracted Driving), and he regularly speaks to kids about the dangers of texting and other negative behaviors while behind the wheel. This year he will speak at over 75 schools and hospitals, hoping to have a positive effect on kids and encouraging them to fasten their seatbelts in the car and wear helmets when on a bike.

"I'm not just a spokesman or a driver; if I can do this, they can, too," Dylan said.

Kids seem to be attracted to the fact that he is their age, offering a voice of reason to which they can relate. Dylan's commitment to integrity on and off the track has brought him a great deal of respect among fellow racers, educators and fans alike.