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MARIO ANDRETTI TO BE HONORED BY RRDC AT LONG BEACH

Firestone returns as presenting sponsor

HILLIARD, Ohio (March 7, 2014) - Mario Andretti, the world's most recognized race-car driver, will be honored by the Road Racing Drivers Club at the "RRDC Evening with Mario Andretti presented by Firestone" in Long Beach, Calif., on Thursday, April 10, prior to the running of the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach. This is the RRDC's sixth consecutive annual banquet honoring auto racing's most influential leaders.

Previous honorees were Dan Gurney, Parnelli Jones, Roger Penske, Jim Hall and Brian Redman. These "RRDC Evenings" are acknowledged as one of the highlights of the auto-racing social calendar, drawing fans and luminaries from all forms of motorsports.

The Firestone brand will return as presenting sponsor of the RRDC banquet for the fifth straight year.

"Firestone has a long-standing relationship with Mario Andretti and is honored to be part of this year's Road Racing Drivers Club banquet recognizing his unequalled achievements," said Lisa Boggs, Director of Bridgestone Americas Motorsports. "He is certainly deserving of this recognition because it wasn't just the winning that made him a champion, but the way he did it. His legacy represents the essence of racing."

The dinner's proceeds will help support the RRDC's young driver initiatives, including its groundbreaking SAFEISFAST.com program and the Team USA Scholarship, which the RRDC has backed since 1997.

The RRDC Evening with Mario Andretti presented by Firestone will be held on Thursday, April 10, at the Hilton Hotel, 701 West Ocean Blvd, Long Beach, Calif., with cocktails at 6 p.m., and dinner at 7:15 p.m. Tickets are \$200 per person (\$175 for RRDC members), if purchased in advance, and space is limited. Sponsor packages are also available. This event is expected to sell out quickly. Early reservations are recommended. Please contact Jeremy Shaw at rrdc2@cox.net.

Widely regarded as the greatest race car driver of all time, Mario Andretti was born in Montona, Italy, in 1940. When World War II ended, the Andretti family found themselves trapped inside a communist country. By 1948, the family was living in a refugee camp, where they remained for eight years. Once U.S. visas were granted, the family of five left to begin a new life in America. With \$125 and virtually no English language skills, they set sail to New York Harbor in 1955. They soon settled in Nazareth, Pa., where an uncle lived.

By 1959, Andretti began racing stock cars in his adopted hometown. That was the start of an illustrious 36-year career that saw the versatile driver compete and win in every discipline he entered – midgets, sprint cars, dirt track cars, stock cars, Indy cars, Formula One, Formula 5000 and sports cars.

Over the years, he's won 111 major events, including the Indianapolis 500 and the Daytona 500. Among his many titles, he captured four national Indy Car championships (1965, 1966, 1969 and 1984), the Formula One World Championship (1978), was named Driver of the Year in three different decades (the '60s, '70s, and '80s), Driver of the Quarter Century (in the '90s) and was selected by both the media and fans as America's Driver of the Century. He is also enshrined in the Indianapolis 500 Hall of Fame, the Motorsports Hall of Fame, the Italian-American Sports Hall of Fame, the Sprint Car Hall of Fame, the International Motorsports Hall of Fame, the Sebring Hall of Fame and the Automotive Hall of Fame.

While Andretti retired from active competition in 1994, many of his records still stand. He is the all-time leader in Indy Car pole positions (67), all-time Indy Car lap leader (7,595), all-time leader in Indy Car race starts (407), all-time leader in wire-to-wire Indy Car victories (14) and the oldest race winner in Indy Car history at age 53. He is also the first driver to win both Indy Car and Formula One championships and the only driver to win Indy Car races in four decades.

Today, his legacy continues with the Andretti Winery in California, a petroleum distributorship and other business interests. In 2006 he received the title of Commendatore from the Republic of Italy, a result not only of his spectacular racing career, but also his epic life story as a classic example of the immigrant who made good in America. In 2008, the Library of Congress added him to its Living Legends list. The Living Legend award honors artists, writers, activists, filmmakers, physicians, entertainers, sports figures and public servants who have made significant contributions to America's diverse cultural, scientific and social heritage.

"There is no question that the name Mario Andretti is a household word worldwide," said Bobby Rahal, president of the RRDC. "He is truly the quintessential race-car driver with accomplishments that are legendary. It is a privilege for the RRDC to honor him."

About Firestone Racing:

The Firestone brand has appeared in world-class motorsports events across the globe since its first documented victory in the inaugural Indianapolis 500-Mile Race® in 1911. Since 2002, Firestone has served as the Official Tire of the IndyCar® Series and the Indianapolis 500-Mile Race®, which has been won by a Firestone-equipped driver 64 times in its 97-year history.

About the RRDC:

The Road Racing Drivers Club was formed in 1952 as a way to give champion drivers a say in their sport, particularly in the areas of safety, and has evolved to serve the future of road racing by mentoring new drivers on both amateur and professional levels. The Club's membership includes leading industry professionals, race officials and motorsports journalists, in addition to prominent racing names.

In 2011, the RRDC launched a free on-line training seminar – www.SAFEisFAST.com – featuring more than 30 RRDC members and other industry experts in high-quality videos covering subjects from physical and mental preparation to driving techniques, driver safety to car setup and sponsorship. The videos are updated regularly. Each week, a professional from the world of motor racing answers readers' questions on the site in a feature called "Ask a Pro."

Bobby Rahal is President, John Fergus is Vice President/Treasurer, and Tom Davey is Secretary.

The RRDC presents three annual awards: the Phil Hill Award, the Mark Donohue Award, and the Bob Akin Award, and supports the Team USA Scholarship, which has been assisting young Americans in the early stages of their careers since 1990.

Membership in the RRDC is by invitation only. Additional information on the organization may be found at www.rrdc.org.
