



Rick Hendrick

Owner, Hendrick Motorsports

Full name: Joseph Riddick Hendrick III

Birth date: July 12, 1949

Birthplace: Warrenton, N.C.

Hometown: Palmer Springs, Va.

Born July 12, 1949, in Warrenton, N.C., Joseph Riddick “Rick” Hendrick III was raised on his family’s farm, a stone’s throw from the small Virginia community of Palmer Springs. It was there, south of Richmond near the North Carolina border, where his father instilled the value of a hard day’s work and a pure passion for the automobile.

Under the watchful eye of “Papa Joe,” that love of cars led Hendrick into the world of auto racing. At age 14, he quickly made a name for himself by setting speed records at a local drag strip with a self-built 1931 Chevrolet. Two years later, the self-described “gearhead” won the Virginia division of the Chrysler-Plymouth Troubleshooting Contest, a competition for engine builders. He was just 16 at the time.

A standout athlete at Park View High School in South Hill, Va., Hendrick considered an opportunity to play professional baseball before pursuing a co-op work-study program with North Carolina State University and Westinghouse Electric Company in Raleigh, N.C.

Hendrick Automotive Group

While on Tobacco Road, Hendrick’s deep-seeded automotive passion led him to open a small used-car lot with Mike Leith, an established new-car dealer. The success of the venture soon convinced Leith to name Hendrick the general sales manager of his new-car import operation at the age of 23.

In 1976, the 26-year-old Hendrick took a chance by selling off his assets to purchase a struggling franchise in Bennettsville, S.C., thus becoming the youngest Chevrolet dealer in the United States. His influence sparked a dramatic sales increase as the once-troubled location soon became the region’s most profitable.

Bennettsville’s success was a precursor to the Hendrick Automotive Group, now encompassing more than 80 franchises and 6,000 employees across 10 states. Headquartered in Charlotte, N.C., the company generated revenue in excess of \$3.5 billion in 2009 after selling nearly 100,000 vehicles and servicing 1.5 million cars and trucks. Hendrick leads the organization as its chairman.

Hendrick Motorsports

As his automotive business prospered, Hendrick was enjoying an equal amount of success in the realm of motor sports. In the late 1970s, he founded a drag-boat racing team that won three consecutive national championships and set a world record of 222.2 mph with the boat “Nitro Fever.”

But Hendrick soon transitioned back into car racing, sponsoring and co-owning a limited number of NASCAR Late Model Sportsman Series (now NASCAR Nationwide Series) entries, which included a 1983 victory at Charlotte Motor Speedway with the late Dale Earnhardt Sr. as driver.

In 1984, Hendrick founded All-Star Racing. That year, the fledgling outfit fielded a single NASCAR Winston Cup Series (now Sprint Cup) team with five full-time employees and 5,000 square feet of leased workspace. With Geoff Bodine driving an entire 30-race campaign in the No. 5 Chevrolets, All-Star Racing finished ninth in championship points after earning three victories and three pole positions in its first season.

Rechristened Hendrick Motorsports in 1985, the organization today is headquartered on more than 100 acres of North Carolina property straddling Cabarrus and Mecklenburg counties. The 600,000-square-foot facility houses complete engine- and chassis-building areas to support four full-time teams in NASCAR’s top division – the Sprint Cup Series.

Now one of the sport’s premier operations, Hendrick Motorsports has garnered a NASCAR record 12 owner’s championships and 13 overall: eight in the Sprint Cup Series, three in the Camping World Truck Series and one in the Nationwide Series (driver’s title only). Its roster of stock-car drivers includes Mark Martin, Jeff Gordon, Jimmie Johnson and Dale Earnhardt Jr.

Hendrick currently is second on NASCAR’s all-time Cup win list (1949-present) and leads all owners in modern-era victories (1972-present). His Cup-level teams have won at least one race each year since 1986 – the longest active streak – and averaged nearly 10 wins annually during the last decade.

The Hendrick Marrow Program

In 1997, Hendrick chartered the Hendrick Marrow Program, a nonprofit fundraising organization that works with the Be The Match Foundation to support the National Marrow Donor Program. The initiative raises funds to add volunteers to the Be The Match Registry, which helps patients find a marrow match, and provides assistance to recipients with uninsured transplant costs.

Since its inception, the Hendrick Marrow Program has raised millions of dollars, added nearly 100,000 potential donors to the Be The Match Registry and eased the financial burden of more than 5,000 patients with grants from the Hendrick Family Fund for Patient Assistance.

Hendrick and wife Linda were honored in 1999 with the Be The Match Foundation's Leadership for Life Award, which recognizes individuals who have made an extraordinary commitment to serve marrow transplant patients. Past recipients include U.S. Rep. C.W. Bill Young, baseball great Rod Carew and former Postmaster General William J. Henderson.

Hendrick takes a personal approach to the cause after being diagnosed in November 1996 with chronic myelogenous leukemia, better known as "CML." He has been in full remission since December 1999.

The Hendrick Foundation for Children

Another of Hendrick's passions is the Hendrick Foundation for Children.

Established in 2004 by Hendrick's brother, the late John L. Hendrick, the Hendrick Foundation for Children supports programs and services that benefit youngsters with illness, injury, disability or other hindrance. Continued in John Hendrick's memory, the organization has raised millions of dollars toward community-oriented initiatives that improve the quality of children's lives.

The Foundation committed \$3 million in 2005 to assist in the establishment of Charlotte's 12-story, 234-room Levine Children's Hospital, a world-class facility dedicated to the needs of children and their families. In recognition of the gift, the hospital dedicated its pediatric intensive care centers in honor of Rick Hendrick's late son, Ricky. The hospital opened in October 2007.

The Joe Hendrick Center for Automotive Technology

In April 2004, Hendrick Automotive Group donated \$1 million toward the construction of the Joe Hendrick Center for Automotive Technology at Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC).

Located on the Matthews, N.C., campus of CPCC, the largest community college in North Carolina, the facility provides cost-effective, state-of-the-art training to prepare students for future careers in the automotive industry.

Named for Hendrick's late father, the Joe Hendrick Center opened in the fall of 2006.

The Horatio Alger Award

In April 2006, Hendrick was honored with the prestigious Horatio Alger Award at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C.

Each year, the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans bestows the Horatio Alger Award on truly outstanding Americans. Association members are dedicated community leaders who demonstrate individual initiative and a commitment to excellence as exemplified by achievements accomplished through honesty, hard work, self-reliance and perseverance.

In accepting the award, Hendrick joined a group of prominent Americans that includes former U.S. Presidents Dwight Eisenhower, Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan; Hall of Fame athletes Hank Aaron, Julius Erving and Wayne Gretzky; entertainers Waylon Jennings, Quincy Jones, James Earl Jones and Oprah Winfrey; author Maya Angelou; astronaut Buzz Aldrin; and Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

Other Honors

On Dec. 4, 2009, at the Sprint Cup Series Awards Ceremony in Las Vegas, Hendrick was presented the Bill France Award of Excellence by Betty Jane France, widow of former NASCAR chairman and CEO Bill France Jr. Given only on rare occasions, NASCAR's highest honor recognizes significant contributions to the sport.

Gov. Jim Hunt acknowledged Hendrick in 1996 with The Order of the Long Leaf Pine, North Carolina's highest civilian honor. The award is bestowed upon citizens of the state who have a proven record of extraordinary service. Past recipients include award-winning journalist Charles Kuralt, Rev. Billy Graham, artist Bob Timberlake and Hendrick's late father, Joseph Riddick "Papa Joe" Hendrick Jr., who was presented the award by Gov. Mike Easley in 2004.

Hendrick also offers his time to multiple boards and other business-related ventures. One of five dealers to be selected for the national planning committee for General Motors' Saturn Division, he also served on the GM President's Dealer Advisory Council and has taken on other various roles with automobile manufacturers.

A resident of Charlotte, Hendrick is vice chairman of the North Carolina Motorsports Association, a nonprofit group that acts as a proponent of the motor sports industry throughout the state, and recently helped lead the region's successful bid for the NASCAR Hall of Fame.

Hendrick even has a film credit to his name after serving as a technical advisor on the 1990 motion picture "Days of Thunder" starring Tom Cruise. Inspired in part by the real-life relationship between crew chief Harry Hyde and driver Tim Richmond, the film netted more than \$80 million at the box office.

In 2009, Cruise narrated "TOGETHER: The Hendrick Motorsports Story," a documentary-style film chronicling Hendrick's first 25 years in NASCAR. It is now available on DVD and Blu-ray Disc.