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Top News

Local man to race for cancer fundraiser

By Al Christensen

10/19/2007

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For Copperfield resident Jack Cruz, La Carrera Panamericana 2007 represents an open road of possibilities for he and the '66 Mustang he will be behind the wheel of. For the Candlelighters Childhood Cancer Family Alliance, it represents hope.

Cruz, a member of CCCFA, which provides emotional, educational and practical support to children with cancer and their families, is helping the foundation by racing the classic car in the 20th annual Pan Am race in Mexico - a 2,000-mile trek that begins in Oaxaca at the southern tip of Mexico and ends in Nuevo Laredo, which borders Southern Texas.

"This is the first time I've done anything like this," Cruz said.

"It will be challenging to race against professionals driving in Jaguars and Ferraris, but the money we raise is going to a great cause. I'm pumped up and ready to go."

The goal of Cruz's race team, Pony Up Racing, is to raise \$50,000 for the CCCFA during the Oct. 26 to Nov. 1 event.

"I've gone through the pain of having someone very dear to me go through cancer and saw firsthand what it does to an able-bodied adult," Cruz said. "To see some of these children handle their situation with such grace and resiliency is inspiring."



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The pledge program, "Miles for Smiles" will accept donations of any amount for each mile raced during the seven-day event.

Gexa Energy is sponsoring the race team, where Cruz and Vice President Jay Beasley work in commercial sales.

"This is something me and Jack had talked about doing before," Beasley said. "To put this event together and get sponsors lined up took a lot of hard work and dedication. This will be our first time our team competes in the Pan Am race. Our goal is to take in the experience, so next year we'll be in a stronger position to raise even more money for a good cause."

The race began in 1950, when the Mexican government decided to showcase their new highway system to improve tourism and commerce. The course drew world champion drivers such as Phil Hill and Juan Manuel Fangio to test their cars, skills and stamina.

This year's pro rally is expected to bring 150 competitors from across the world. The rules stipulate all cars must be built prior to 1966.

The Ford Mustang is being restored by Classic Rides Auto Restoration in Katy. Sponsors such as Kam Racing Engines and Yokohama Tires donated nearly \$35,000 in parts to overhaul the American classic.

"The help of our 26 sponsors has been pivotal," Cruz said. "This hot rod has 401 horses with 331 pounds of torque and a 120-point roll cage for safety. On straightaways, I'll approach speeds of 150 mph. This is going to be an exciting ride."

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