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## Destination: Daytona, Fla.

### *Production business' racing season gets under way*

By Jonathan E. Coleman

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JHE employees and friends line N.C. 49 to watch the parade of 22 rigs pull out of town on the way to Daytona, Fla., for the first race of the NASCAR Sprint Cup season.

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That's where JHE comes in.

There's nothing dull about JHE Production Group. Everything the Harrisburg-based business does comes with all the pomp and circumstance of a Super Bowl halftime show.

So why should leaving for Daytona, Fla. - for the first NASCAR event of the 2008 season - be any different?

"This is our kickoff to the 2008 season," said Mishelle Holladay, sales and marketing manager for JHE. "Pretty much everybody that works in the NASCAR industry is gearing up for Daytona."

Racing has come a long way in recent years, with individual races now being expanded into week-long events.

From pre- and postrace shows to concerts and flyovers, if it's part of the pageantry of NASCAR, JHE probably had a hand in it, Holladay said.

The group works behind the scenes to make each race an event, creating extra excitement through events like the Speed Street and the Pit Crew Challenge. Doing so requires a dedicated team of hard-working, passionate individuals who are dedicated to their job, said Jay Howard, owner of JHE.

"They're the behind-the-scenes of the behind-the-scenes," he said. "Long hours and long days are part of what we do. Fortunately, success in the event is the reward."

But as a little added bonus, Howard launched the "Blast off to Daytona" campaign.

Aimed at getting his team excited about the upcoming race season, the "Blast off" event included breakfast for the drivers and a parade of more than 20 tractor trailers and buses as they headed out of Harrisburg down N.C. 49 en route to the year's first race in Daytona.

Many of the drivers will be on the road, away from home and family, for most of the 38-week race season.

"This is the first time we've had everything here," Howard said of his many production rigs. "It's the last time all of these guys will be here, in the same place, until after Thanksgiving."

"Blast off to Daytona" not only excites the drivers, but also many race fans as well, said Shep Lindsay, logistics coordinator and driver of the first tractor trailer in the caravan.

"They've been out for two months and basketball season is getting ready to wrap up," he said. "Fans are getting pumped."

It's not uncommon, Lindsay said, to be driving down the road and hear questions come across the CB

radio asking which cars the drivers are hauling.

"We're not hauling race cars," Lindsay responds. "It's all production."

And production has come a long way, he added. When he started driving with JHE two years ago, the fleet was half the size.

Even the production of the "Blast off" was a production in and of itself.

Harrisburg mayor Tim Hagler waved the green flag as drivers left the JHE parking lot. Reminiscent of NASCAR events, drivers were introduced by Cabarrus Regional Chamber of Commerce CEO John Cox.

Television cameras, driver's families and area residents and business owners lined N.C. 49 as the motorcade - and its police escort - made its way toward Interstate 485 and south towards Daytona.

"It's a lot of fun," Lindsay said.

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