

'Baja Turtle' visits Boys & Girls Club in El Cajon

By Britney O'Donnell

FOR THE EAST COUNTY CALIFORNIAN

Monday, June 24, Ken Kosiorek, otherwise known as "The Baja Turtle," packed up his dirt bike and gear to visit the busy Boys & Girls Club located in El Cajon.

Boys and Girls Club in El Cajon provides kids with a safe environment for them to interact and relax to just be kids. Open to children from ages 6-18, the fees for the club are low enough for most kids to be a member and there are interactive activities for the kids to participate in.

Kosiorek, who grew up riding dirt bikes on a farm in New York, said he did not start racing until he was 50. He said at that time he needed a new thrill so he decided to take on the task of soloing the Baja races that occur in Mexico every year.

He earned his name the "Baja Turtle" by arriving last in many of the Baja races. This is a huge compliment, he said, considering he accomplishes the race on his own, while the other race contestants are a part of a team.

Around 190 kids lined the bleachers in the gym of the Boys & Girls Club to hear about the exciting man who came to visit with his big motorcycle.

Gorgees Darraj, an 8-year-old boy who attends the club on a regular basis, had a few curious

questions for Kosiorek concerning this exciting hobby.

When asked if he now wants a motorcycle, Gorgees said, "My mom wouldn't let me have a motorcycle, it's too expensive."

Kosiorek kept the kids engaged by sharing exciting information regarding his bike and his fun hobby. He encouraged the kids to save money in a piggy bank, to use all the proper gear when riding and staying in school because education is vital to helping make dreams come true.

"Everything is math related in life," said Kosiorek. "Learning math is very important."

Kosiorek, who raced in 12 different races, eight of them in a row, received nine trophies, said what is unique about the license plate on his bike is that he rides his bike to the race, will finish out the race and then ride his bike back home.

"Whatever you start, finish it because you can do anything you want in life," he said.

When he is not speaking to kids about making their dreams come true or riding his motorcycle, Kosiorek is an industrial sales engineer at Airgas in El Cajon, a gases, welding and safety company.

Kosiorek said he usually speaks to children in L.A. for the Racers Who Care, Inc. program but was asked if he would like



Photo by Britney O'Donnell

Ken Kosiorek with 8-year-old Gorgees Darraj, a member of the Boys & Girls Club in El Cajon.

to speak in a local area closer to him.

After agreeing, he was shocked to find there were so many kids and that they responded to him in such a posi-

tive manner.

"The kids were so excited and interested, I was expecting them to be bored after 15 minutes, and I was pleasantly surprised," he said.

After his motivating speech to the kids, Kosiorek took the motorcycle outside and started it so the kids could hear the intense sound the motor made.

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