

UW-Milwaukee: Alum Kulwicki honored with 'thinkerspace' as he enters NASCAR Hall of Fame

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MILWAUKEE – On Feb. 1, 2019, Alan Kulwicki, a Greenfield, Wisconsin, native, NASCAR racing legend and graduate of UW-Milwaukee's College of Engineering & Applied Science, will be inducted into the NASCAR Hall of Fame.

Kulwicki received his Bachelor of Science in mechanical engineering in 1977. He started his racing career at local short tracks before moving to stock car racing and onto the national NASCAR stage. In 1986, Kulwicki was named NASCAR Rookie of the Year and won the 1992 Winston Cup Championship. Kulwicki's career ended in a tragic plane crash in 1993; five years later he was named one of NASCAR's 50 greatest drivers.

One of the few NASCAR drivers at the time who had a college education, Kulwicki was on the leading edge of the now common practice of using technology to make his car run faster. He remains influential, according to a NASCAR.com story: "He is having a very real impact on the future because of his unique past. Equipped with a college degree in engineering, Kulwicki used a different path to his racing success. At various times and junctures in his career Kulwicki was the lone driver on the grid, even a rare mechanic in the garage, who had formally studied engineering and received a college degree."

Kulwicki once summed up the impact of his UWM experience: "Getting the education may have put me behind schedule a few years with my racing career, but it is paying off...It has definitely been essential in the success of operating my own

team. It's an asset that I'm proud of."

At UWM, Kulwicki's legacy lives on through the Kulwicki Pit Stop, a meeting space in the UWM Engineering & Mathematical Sciences building, and the Alan Kulwicki Memorial Scholarship, awarded to UWM undergraduate engineering students with financial need and a demonstrated interest in mechanical engineering and/or motorsports. The funds for both initiatives were established by Kulwicki's stepmother, Thelma H. Kulwicki.

Honoring Kulwicki's induction into the NASCAR Hall of Fame, the College of Engineering & Applied Science is reimagining and remodeling the Kulwicki Pit Stop and revealing it under a new name – the Kulwicki Garage. The new Kulwicki Garage will be a space for students in engineering and other disciplines to collaborate and innovate as a "thinkerspace," and nontraditional classroom-style room. The Kulwicki Garage also has potential to be used for public events and thought-provoking programs including pop-up workshops and speaker series, entrepreneur-in-residence "office hours" and student meet-up sessions.

Replacing the front wall with a garage door will expand the capacity – and invite more students, visitors and industry partners to stop in. The Kulwicki Garage will have tools for creative thinking and collaborative problem-solving, such as massive wall-mounted whiteboards, low-resolution prototyping materials for conceptual design and idea sharing, audio-video equipment for sharing design research and ideas and movable flexible furniture allowing for various room configurations.

The reopening of the Kulwicki Garage is set tentatively for Fall 2019. While 75 percent of the funds have been provided by the Thelma H. Kulwicki University Charitable Lead Annuity Trust, UWM's College of Engineering & Applied Science is raising funds for the remainder. To support this project or to share a personal story about Alan Kulwicki, visit uwm.edu/engineering/alankulwicki.