

“Making Children and Adults Smile:” Honda Launches the SMILE RIDER PROJECT - SANRIO CHARACTERS × Honda Kumamoto Racing to Participate in the Suzuka 8 Hours

Honda will launch the SMILE RIDER PROJECT, a new initiative with Sanrio Co., Ltd. (Sanrio) aimed at communicating the appeal of motorcycles, motorsports, and the importance of road safety to people of all ages.

Honda and Sanrio have previously collaborated on motorcycles and parts featuring Sanrio characters. Building on those efforts, the two companies are launching a joint project under the concept of “Making Children and Adults Smile.” By combining the strengths of both companies, the project will work to expand interest in motorcycles and motorsports among younger generations. In addition, Honda promotes its global safety slogan, “Safety for Everyone”^{*1}, with the goal of realizing a society free from traffic collisions for all road users. Through this project, Honda will continue road safety education activities not only for riders and drivers, but also for elementary school students who will become future participants in traffic society.



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Campaign visual for the SMILE RIDER PROJECT

As one of the project’s key activities, SANRIO CHARACTERS × Honda Kumamoto Racing will participate in the 2026 FIM^{*2} Endurance World Championship “Coca-Cola” Suzuka 8 Hours Endurance Road Race 47th Edition (Suzuka 8 Hours), to be held at Suzuka Circuit in Mie Prefecture on Sunday, July 5.

For this collaboration, the Honda Ryokuyokai Kumamoto Racing comprised of employees from Kumamoto Factory - Honda’s domestic motorcycle manufacturing base- will be supporting the project. This is to mark the factory’s 50th anniversary since beginning of its operation in 1976 as well as in recognition of the CBR1000RR-R FIREBLADE Suzuka 8 Hours racing model which is developed and manufactured in Kumamoto, Japan.

The racing bike will feature special livery inspired by Sanrio’s popular character Kuromi. In addition, Hello Kitty, Kuromi, and Pompompurin will appear on helmets, racing suits, team wear, and inside the pit area, bringing colorful Sanrio character themes to the circuit.

Through these activities, Honda aims to attract new audiences to motorcycles and motorsports.

*1 A vision of creating a society free from traffic collisions where everyone who uses the road can travel safely, whether driving, riding, cycling, or walking.

*2 FIM: Fédération Internationale de Motocyclisme (International Motorcycling Federation).

■ SANRIO CHARACTERS × Honda Kumamoto Racing Team

Number	Team name	Racing bike	Riders
43	SANRIO CHARACTERS × Honda Kumamoto Racing	CBR1000RR-R FIREBLADE	Kazuhiro Kojima
			Yosuke Ide
			TBD



CBR1000RR-R FIREBLADE design image of SANRIO CHARACTERS × Honda Kumamoto Racing



Image of the SMILE RIDER PROJECT support flag

To offer more fans the opportunity to experience the excitement and atmosphere of the Suzuka 8 Hours firsthand, the companies will offer 150 SMILE RIDER PROJECT Supporter Seats. The package includes reserved V2 grandstand seating overlooking Suzuka Circuit’s home straight, providing excellent views of the race start, finish, and pit works, along with exclusive supporter items including a commemorative baseball jersey and support flag created for the project. Tickets will go on sale through MobilityStation, Suzuka Circuit’s official online ticketing service, at 11:00 on June 8 (JST)

In addition, the “16–23 ZERO Yen Pass” for visitors aged 16 to 23 will also offer a SMILE RIDER PROJECT support flag.*³ Through this initiative, more fans will have the opportunity to support SANRIO CHARACTERS × Honda Kumamoto Racing and experience the excitement of motorcycle racing firsthand at Suzuka Circuit.

At the Honda RACING Gallery inside Suzuka Circuit Park, visitors can also enjoy a special exhibition featuring past Honda vehicles created in collaboration with Sanrio characters, character greeting events, and limited-edition collaboration merchandise. The exhibition is designed to be enjoyed not only by racing fans, but also by Sanrio character fans.

*3 Support flags are available in limited quantities and will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis while supplies last.

■ For more information about SANRIO CHARACTERS × Honda Kumamoto Racing, please visit:
URL <https://global.honda/en/motorcycle/SmileRiderProject/>

■ For details about the SMILE RIDER PROJECT support seats, please refer to the Suzuka Circuit official website.
URL <https://www.suzukacircuit.jp/8tai/ticket/fan-seat/> (Japanese)

Another key objective of the project is to promote road safety awareness among elementary school students.

Since 1970, Honda has actively conducted road safety education activities through its Traffic Safety Planning Department, targeting not only drivers and riders but also children, senior citizens, and all members of traffic society.

Statistics show that seven-year-old children account for the highest number of pedestrian traffic casualties by age group*4. In response, Honda will work with the City of Suzuka, including its Board of Education and Traffic Security Division, to distribute Road Safety T-shirts featuring Sanrio characters and road safety messages to approximately 1,400 first-grade students across 28 elementary schools in Suzuka City.

A presentation ceremony for the T-shirts is scheduled to take place at a Suzuka elementary school on June 24.



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Road Safety T-shirt

Suzuka City will also hold road safety class at elementary school in Suzuka City using educational materials developed by Honda, including Ayatorii*5 Hiyoko and the Digital traffic Safety Karuta, providing opportunities for children to learn about traffic safety and develop greater awareness. Through these initiatives, the project aims to help create the kind of traffic society envisioned by the SMILE RIDER PROJECT—one where children and adults alike can smile.

*4 Source: Institute for Traffic Accident Research and Data Analysis (ITARDA), 2015.

*5 Ayatorii is derived from the Japanese phrase meaning "explaining safety simply to help people understand."