

WATKINS GLEN – Thursday, Aug. 31, will be Mario Andretti Day in the Village of Watkins Glen.

Andretti, considered by many to be the greatest driver in the history of racing, has a special place in the hearts of fans of The Glen, village officials said.

At their regular meeting on Aug. 21, the village board of trustees enacted a proclamation honoring Andretti of Nazareth, PA.

“Mario Andretti spent many years racing at the Watkins Glen Race Track and getting to know many of the Watkins Glen local residents,” the board’s proclamation states.

“Mario Andretti has been considered one of Watkins Glen’s ‘Home Town Drivers’ for many years,” it continues.

The proclamation declares Aug. 31 as Mario Andretti Day and also recognizes Andretti as an honorary citizen of the village.

Mayor Sam Schimizzi will present the proclamation to Andretti on Thursday evening before Andretti receives the Cameron R. Argetsinger Award for Outstanding Contributions to Motorsports from the International Motor Racing Research Center.

The IMRRC, located at 610 S. Decatur St., Watkins Glen, is a motorsports archival and research library. The annual award honors Cameron Argetsinger, founder and organizer of the first races in Watkins Glen.

The sold-out dinner will be at the Corning Museum of Glass. It is presented by Watkins Glen International, NASCAR, International Speedway Corp. and IMSA and supported by Sahlen’s.

Andretti’s debut at The Glen came in the 1968 United States Grand Prix for Formula One. He was the fastest qualifier, but left the race early with a failed clutch, according to IMRRC Historian Bill Green.

Andretti’s most well-known appearance at The Glen was in 1978, when he came to town as the Formula One World Champion, only the second American to earn that crown. He was fastest qualifier for the race and led the first two laps. But he had to retire after only 27 laps with engine trouble, Green said.

Andretti raced in six different series at The Glen in a career that spanned five decades.

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