



## 2023 Stafford Soap Box Derby Race Press Release

In 1997, Fredericksburg city council member, Ralph “Tuffy” Hicks, suggested bringing back the Soap Box Derby to the Fredericksburg area. The race had been run on William Street from 1951 to 1972, ending after the loss of Chevrolet as national sponsor. City Council agreed that the derby would be an excellent community event to bring back to the area and that the running would be the responsibility of the Fredericksburg Parks & Recreation Department. Many local business owners stepped up and purchased cars and donated what was needed to get the race started.

In 1997, the Fredericksburg Soap Box Derby ran 85 drivers in two divisions, Stock and Super Stock. By 1998 the number of participants had increased to 125. By 2001, Fredericksburg was the largest race in the country with over 180 drivers.

The Master’s division was added in 2004, increasing the number of Fredericksburg area champions sent to the All-American National race at in Akron, Ohio from two to three.

In 2018 Fredericksburg Parks and Recreation Department felt they could no longer sponsor and run the event, so Spotsylvania County stepped in and moved the event to Dominion Raceway in Thornburg. In 2018 there were over 60 racers. The race was run in Spotsylvania from 2018-2021 except for 2020 due to the COVID pandemic. After the 2021 race, Spotsylvania was unable to continue funding for the Soap Box Derby and alternate “free” locations were researched by the Rappahannock Regional Soap Box Derby Committee. The committee looked for a location with a long enough and straight hill that would provide ample spectator space and comfort. One of the locations that had been utilized by many families as a practice site is Reservoir Road in Stafford County directly in front of the Rocky Run Elementary School. The committee reached out to the Tour Stafford County office and this new location for the Soap Box Derby was decided upon. We were very excited to have the opportunity to run the race in Stafford County for the first time in its local history.

The Soap Box Derby is a family event that benefits the whole community and teaches kids STEM skills, as well as sportsmanship. The 2023 race will be held on June 10th for the second time at the Reservoir Road location in Stafford, VA and would not be possible without the help of our sponsors and volunteers.

There were three build clinics held on March 13<sup>th</sup>, April 3<sup>rd</sup> and May 1<sup>st</sup> at the Fredericksburg Elks Lodge #875 located at 11309 Tidewater Trail, Fredericksburg, VA 22408. Parents and drivers were encouraged to attend a build clinic to allow one of our inspectors to look at the car and provide advice and to weigh their car. Inspection and Impound of the cars occurred on May 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> at Brandonbilt, one of our greatest sponsors since coming to Stafford.

**Our race day this year is on June 10, 2023. Racers and families assemble early, and at 8:00 AM attend pre-race ceremonies with the race starting at 9:00 AM. The track at Rocky Run Elementary School is a fast track with speeds approaching 25 mph.... pretty exciting especially for kids! The three winners from our local race will travel to Akron, Ohio in July to represent Stafford County at the All-American Soap Box Derby race.**

For additional information please visit our Facebook page: Rappahannock Regional Soap Box Derby or e-mail us at: [info@rrsbd.org](mailto:info@rrsbd.org).

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The International Soap Box Derby® is a non-profit youth education and leadership development organization whose mission is to build knowledge and character, and to create meaningful experiences through collaboration, fair and honest racing competitions, STEM curriculum, and other community-focused activities.

## **CORE VALUES**

- Youth Education and Leadership Development
- Family Engagement and Enrichment
- Honesty, Integrity, and Perseverance
- Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- Teamwork and Collaboration
- Mentoring
- Volunteerism
- Commitment to Community

## **HISTORY**

The idea of the Soap Box Derby® grew out of a photographic assignment of Dayton, Ohio, newsman Myron Scott. He came across a group of boys racing their homemade cars in the summer of 1933, and was so impressed with the event that he acquired a copyright to Soap Box Derby and went in search of a corporate sponsor to establish a national program.

Chevrolet liked Scott's proposal and agreed to sponsor the first official All-American Soap Box Derby® in Dayton in 1934. The following year, the race moved to Akron because of its central location and hilly terrain. The first race in Akron was run on Tallmadge Avenue.

In 1936, Chevrolet and Akron civic leaders-including legendary journalist John S. Knight-recognized the need for a permanent track site for the youth gravity racing classic. That year, through the efforts of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), Derby Downs became a reality in the southeast section of Akron.

The Soap Box Derby ran continuously from its inception until the onset of World War II. After a four-year hiatus, the All-American Soap Box Derby resumed in Akron in 1946 and has been held at Derby Downs every year since. From its inception through 1970, the Soap Box Derby was open to boys only. Girls began racing in 1971.

In the fall of 1972, Chevrolet officials decided to withdraw from sponsoring the Derby program. All trademarks and copyrights for the event were transferred to the Akron Area Chamber of Commerce. After initial attempts to secure a new national sponsor were unsuccessful, the Chamber announced that its organization would assume financial and administrative responsibilities for the 1973 All-American Derby program.

Early in 1974 the Chamber's Derby corporation assigned rights for the All-American program to the Akron Jaycees, which established International Soap Box Derby Inc., to operate the Derby. The corporation's affairs are administered by a board of directors of community leaders from Akron and other cities.