



To: West Akron Board of Trade

From: Megan Gongaware

Re: Donation for Soapbox Derby Participation

My family and I have been involved with the Akron Area Soap Box Derby ever since I was 9 years old, and I will be turning 16 in late September. Throughout my many racing seasons I have accomplished many things, met amazing people from all over the world, and made countless memories I will carry with me for the rest of my days.

My racing career started through a coworker of my Fathers, Kevin, at the Stark State College automotive department in late fall of 2006. Kevin approached my Father and was wondering if I would be interested in trying it out. I agreed, and later that week I got my first ride in a derby car in the college parking lot. Even though it was only a little push across flat ground, I instantly fell in love. Ever since that day I have dedicated my life to the soap box derby. Whether it's racing, endless hours of volunteer work, or just spending time with the other derby families, my family and I are a very dedicated at what we do. I have even gone to the extremes of missing my freshman year homecoming, my cousin's first birthday party, and my sister's wedding in order to compete in a soap box derby race.

I have managed to make it into the world championship twice in my career. It does not sound like very many considering how long I have been racing, but it is not an easy thing to do in the slightest ,racing as a local car, which means you have to win the race in June held by your local race city and ultimately have the fastest car in your area. From there you advance to the championships held at the end of July. The first time I went to the All American I was 12 years old and won the world championship. The second time was this past July and I raced in a separate division, finishing 10th. The weather effects how the cars run greatly. The day of the All American it was cold and rainy the whole day. Most cars strive in the hot, dry weather, which made it an entirely different game that day. Cars that aren't usually too competitive became competitive, and the lanes were very unevenly calibrated. Many aspects go into a car and drivers performance on race day.

In addition to racing my own soap box derby car I also race with special needs children in a series of races around the world just like the regular derby that can be known as "Super Kids". This could not be a better name. I get great joy out of working with these kids and learning their stories. I have raced as a co-pilot for 4 years for a few different qualifying races. Not just anyone can drive a special needs child down the hill, you have to be specially picked, and trusted by the race director, and most importantly the parents of the children who should be able to feel reassured that their child will be safe and cared for the entire time. The whole purpose of this is to make the kids feel like they have purpose and can do anything everyone else can do.

Over the years I have been in several newspaper articles, local news stations, radio stations, and online articles and videos. I have managed to make the front page of the newspaper 3 times since 2010. I have definitely had my 15 minutes of fame and not went unheard these past few years. But unfortunately none of this attention has lead to financial help. Times are hard and my family and I are fortunate enough to have a sponsor who provided and built 2 out of the 3 cars my brothers and I race. One soap box derby car can range anywhere from 565 to 662 dollars per car depending on division. The car we will be building this winter is one that will cost \$662 as it has to be customized for my height, weight, and comfort. This does not include the cost of wheels, helmet, dolly to carry the car, weights, paint, decals, entree fees, hotel rooms, gas, trailer, tent and chairs, or food and drinks for the weekend. As you can see soap box derby gets very expensive very quickly, but my parents do everything they can to keep my brothers and I doing what we love.

Finally, I thank you for putting my family and I under your consideration. This would help us immensely.

Megan Gongaware
2010 Stock Local World Champion
2013 Akron Suburban Local Super Stock Champion