

Enthusiasm accelerates as young racers prep for sold-out Soapbox Derby



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Drivers Nathan Yanew, Charlotte Lorrain, and Oliver Anderson get ready and set before going during the last annual Father's Day Soapbox Derby in 2019. The action is ramping up again for June 2022. FILE PHOTO/St. Albert Gazette

The action is going to be bigger, better, and a day earlier than it has ever been when the Soapbox Derby returns after its pandemic hiatus.

For the first time since 2019, young drivers will take to the hill of St. Vital Avenue for a day of friendly competition on the Father's Day weekend. The race is set to take place on Saturday, June 18, for logistical reasons surrounding how long the road can be blocked off.

According to organizing representative Bob Fisher, this year's sold-out slate of gravity-fueled contenders will make the day well worth the three-year wait.

"The reason it got moved to Saturday was that on Sunday, it's a pretty busy spot at the top of the hill, and the city was only able to block off the road for half a day. On Saturday, they were able to block it off for the full day," he explained.

From the sounds of it, organizers will need to keep the racers rolling to fit them all in. Moving things up by a day allowed them to sign up more little speeders, and the roster of names is already a lengthy one. There will be more community involvement this year as well, and signing up some business sponsors has allowed 20 spots to be filled by the St. Albert Family Resource Centre.

"What that does is focus on families and young racers who would not have had the opportunity to either build a cart, or the funding or the technical skills to build the cart," Fisher continued.

"They will get sized up in a cart and they'll compete just like all the other racers: they'll go down the hill three times and swerve and cross the finish line or do whatever they want to do and have a great time."

Organizers also entreated the wood shop crew at the St. Albert Seniors Association to build more race cars, which they did in exchange for accepting several spots to give out to some of their younger friends.

While the next two months might seem to go slowly as people anticipate race day, right now the organizers are hoping to sign up more volunteers. People can visit stalbertsoapboxderby.ca and check out descriptions of all of the jobs waiting to be filled on race day.