

GREENFIELD/MONTAGUE



FOR THE RECORDER/DAN LITTLE

Ivy Muller takes a ride on her 10-year-old soapbox cart Poison Ivy with a push from her father, Mik Muller, during a building workshop held in August for the upcoming Greenfield and Montague soapbox races.

Soapbox races return for first time since 2013

By JULIAN MENDOZA
Staff Writer

Soapbox racing in Franklin County is kicking back into gear for the first time since 2013, with events on Sept. 12 in Greenfield and Sept. 19 in Turners Falls.

The races, which involve customizing gravity-propelled carts, were held for four years in Montague as a fundraiser for Montague Community Television. In November 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, organizer Mik Muller had an enthusiastic discussion with Montague Town Administrator Steve Ellis about reviving the races, this time as a fundraiser for recreational endeavors.

"It's my goal to bring this sport back to not only Franklin

County, but everywhere," Muller said previously. "It's American. ... I think you could heal the country."

Muller recalled that at their peak, Turners Falls' annual soapbox races would attract around 55 people. After saying he anticipated "at least 20" racers to show up for the comeback, he said that as of Thursday, 31 racers had registered for the Turners Falls race and 14 had registered for the Greenfield one.

Eight years removed from the most recent race, Muller said registrants are mostly "a new crew of racers." He added that the return of familiar faces would be nice, too.

"I'm working really hard to get two of the best looking carts to come back," Muller said before explaining how

significant maintenance would have to be done to get the vehicles back in racing shape.

Muller is optimistic that each race's fundraising focus can help garner a higher turnout. Greenfield's race will support the effort to build a new skate park, while the Turners Falls race will fund Montague Parks & Recreation Department scholarships.

"If it's a fundraiser that people can get behind, you get more (participation)," Muller said previously.

Muller said that even spectating a soapbox race can be a special experience, cherishing "the look on people's faces when they get into the cart for the first time."

"Seeing beautiful sculptures rolling down the hill is a true expression of art and

American spirit," Muller said.

Both races are sponsored by Greenfield Savings Bank.

The Greenfield soapbox races will take place on Sunday, Sept. 12, at noon on Nash's Mill Road. The entry fee is \$30. Rules, entry forms and other information can be found at greenfieldsoapboxraces.com.

The Turners Falls soapbox races will take place on Sunday, Sept. 19, at noon at the Unity Park hill on First Street. The entry fee is \$25. Rules, entry forms and other information can be found at montaguesoapboxraces.com.

Advance registration is preferred for both races.

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