

The Cedar Rapids Corvette Club & the Soap Box Derby "a rewarding Corvette Club story."



In 1968, the Cedar Rapids Corvette Club decided it would become involved with the All-American Soap Box Derby in cooperation with the Cedar Rapids JayCeers. The Club decided to sponsor a boy named Kevin Malloy in the local derby. The sponsorship fee was put up and a band of dedicated Corvette enthusiasts found the place and tools for Kevin to work.

A car was built with advisors, such as Lowell Phelps, Gary Toomsen, Jack Gilmour, Lee Regal and Craig Rambo helping guide Kevin along. The club also became involved by furnishing the convertibles for the derby parade in Cedar Rapids, and working at the bottom of the hill on race day.

Kevin went on to win a heat race in 1968, and then in 1969 and 1970. A new car was built which finished in the money in 1969.

In 1971 a new boy, Mike Heffern, eleven years old, was picked to drive under the Corvette Club sponsorship. Mike built a radical, new "lay-down" type car in 1971 with advisors Lee Regal, Lowell Phelps, John Myers, Don Johnson, Gary Toomsen, Bob Bowen and Roger Kuhn carrying on the project.

Mike started off with bad luck and no wins in 1971. Then in 1972 the car was rebuilt, only to have Mike break a leg and have to put a substitute driver, Rich Heffern, in the drivers seat. The car, however, won one race and performed well. During the year 1971, Mike had won a Soap Box Derby Button Rally Campaign by selling an all time number of buttons. He was awarded a new 5-speed bicycle only to have it wiped out in an accident with a car in 1972, causing his broken leg and a broken bike — along with of course, a broken heart.

At the Christmas Banquet of 1972, the Cedar Rapids Corvette Club awarded Mike a brand new 3-Speed bike, bought with a collection taken from the club's members. This helped mend the broken heart.

Mike's big success came this summer, July 1973, as he raced his car, the Patriotism Special. He rolled through seven races to a tremendous fifth place finish, earning a beautiful trophy and a savings bond. He became a celebrity to his friends and all the Corvette club members. Mike never gave up and proved to be one of the young men who is on his way to a successful life through participation in the Soap Box Derby.

The Cedar Rapids Corvette Club again provided convertibles for the derby parade and workers for the bottom of the hill. They also furnished a savings bond, bought with donations from the club members. Dave Reid (NCCC Governor), Bill Neuman, Lowell Phelps, John Myers, Bob Bowen, Herm Hap, Roger Kuhn, Lee Regal and many more club members helped to make the Derby a success.

Next year the club will again sponsor Mike, who is building a brand new car. With his Corvette-type spirit and drive, who knows, maybe Mike will win it all next year. But win or lose, Mike will always be a champion with us.

By the way, we asked Mike about his favorite car — his answer, "CORVETTE!" naturally.

By Lowell Phelps
Cedar Rapids Corvette Club