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Stanwood Camano News

Back on track

Soap box derby returns with day filled with sun, speed and smiles
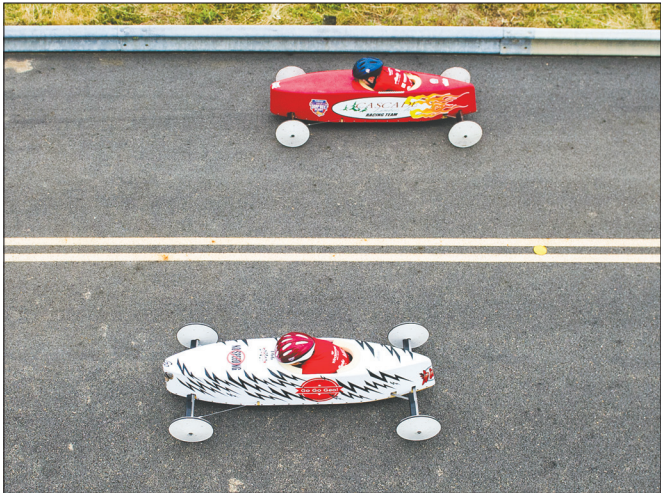
PHOTOS BY EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

Spectators cheer on a racer during the 14th annual Windermere Stanwood-Camano Soap Box Derby on Saturday at Arrowhead Ranch on Camano Island. See more photos on Page A9 and online at SCnews.com/gallery.

By EVAN CALDWELL
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Virginia Sanita popped out of her soap box derby car wearing a giant smile.

"I love this. Just love it," the 9-year-old said. "I'm usually nervous at the top, but I'm exploding with excitement while I'm going down the track."

Sanita was one of 76 racers to battle two-by-two down the derby track Saturday at Arrowhead Ranch on Camano Island. Though she placed eighth in the stock division, she also earned the derby's largest trophy: the Harry Brown Sportsmanship Award for demonstrating true sportsmanship throughout the day.

The 14th annual Windermere Stanwood-Camano Soap Box Derby returned this year after COVID-19 forced the popular race into the pits. Nearly 1,500 people returned to Arrowhead Ranch this year to watch a full day of racing at the largest derby west of the Mississippi River.

■ SEE DERBY, A9

Board honors retiring schools chief

Board also swears in new superintendent

By EVAN CALDWELL
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A changing of the guard occurred at the Stanwood-Camano School Board meeting this past week.

Past and present board members and school staff honored Superintendent Jean Shumate and Assistant Superintendent Lloy Schaaf, who both retire June 30.

Then, Deborah Rumbaugh was sworn in as the new superintendent by School Board President Natalie Hagglund. Rumbaugh will officially start July 1.

"I quickly learned you were a very strong, capable superintendent," former board member Roger Myers said of first meeting Shumate. "The School District was in a poor financial state, and you saw this as a challenge and stepped in as a chief financial officer as well as superintendent. Within a year, the district was on a road to solid financial footing."

Shumate started as superintendent in 2001, when the district was about $500,000 in the red, prompting her to immediately dive into a budget crunch and cut $1.4 million to build back the general fund.

Shumate's retirement will mark the end of a 44-year career in education. During her time as superintendent, the district passed all Educational Program and Operations levies since 2002; passed a $147.5 million dollar bond measure in 2017 to build a new Stanwood High School,

■ SEE SCHOOL, A5

Spotlight falls on local artists

Camano creators reopen studios this weekend for popular art event

By PEGGY WENDEL
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After a year's hiatus, a modified Camano Studio Tour is back for one weekend, June 25-27.

Three galleries and a palette-full of artists started this event in 1999. They were so successful that they formed the Camano Arts Association to keep it going. Now CAA has developed the tour to be a key regional event, and the organization has more than 100 members.

During this popular event, artists open their studios or gather in galleries and invite art lovers in. The tour

COURTESY PHOTO

Artists will throw open the doors to their studios this weekend for the Camano Arts Association's Camano Studio Tour.

gives people an opportunity to meet the artists and see the work in the environment where it was created.

Because of the intimate nature of bringing people from near and far

into homes, studios and galleries, the Studio Tour was canceled in 2020.
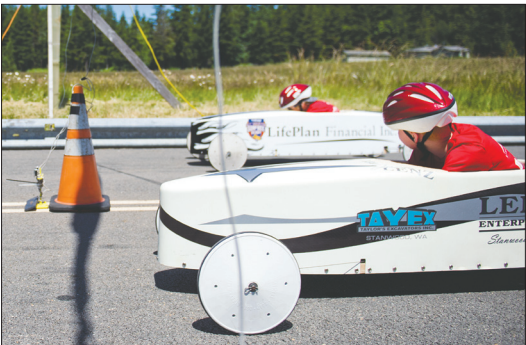
■ SEE ART, A10

ONLINE: See many more photos from the derby at **SCnews.com/gallery**

A racer's hair whips in the wind as spectators cheer and film along the track.

Kids were greeted by a few of the 200 volunteers at the bottom of the track.

A racer peeks over at the competition at the finish line.

PHOTOS BY EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

Spectators cheer and film soap box derby racers as they fly down the track Saturday at Arrowhead Ranch.

A racer awaits the start at the top of the track.

Two drivers cross the finish line and prepare to brake.

Derby

At the end of a long day on the track, Camden Tatarian won the stock division title, and Avery Rochon took the super stock division trophy. Their prize? A trip to the annual All-American Soap Box Derby Race Week, taking place July 24, where racers compete for the title of world champion and more than $36,000 in college scholarships.

"We believe that this was the best year yet," said Marla Heagle, who with husband Randy owns the local Windermere offices. They are the derby's lead sponsor.

"The year off gave us time to add a few improvements to the ranch," she said of the upgrades that included a silo at the base of the track for announcer Ed Bednarczyk and statistician John Swanson. "The Arrowhead Ranch also grew from 20 to 50 acres in 2020, so we were able to have onsite parking, making it easier for spectators, racers and their families to navigate. The food trucks were a new addition to the event also, and all of them sold out."

But all eyes were on the track, where racers said the key to speed is fairly simple.

"The trick is to look out as far as you can to go as straight as you can," said Leo Saylor, 10, who was participating

Winners

Stock division
1st: Camden Tatarian
2nd: Priscilla Siddle
3rd: Adelaide Holmes
4th: Titus Placzek
5th: Ian Shrock
6th: Ryko Falk
7th: Timmy McCann
8th: Virginia Sanita

Super Stock division
1st: Avery Rochon
2nd: Sydney Jarvis
3rd: Bellita Siddle
4th: Reid Timmerman
5th: Karsten Nichol
6th: Isabelle Placzek
7th: Naomi Placzek
8th: Lil Swanson

in his fifth derby event. "Oh, and never look at the person you're racing."

Cyler Granston, 7, traveled to Camano from Solana Beach, California, for his first-ever race.

"The speed! First time down, I went faster than I thought," he said. "But each time down it gets easier."

The local soap box derby event incorporates science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills, while encouraging active mentorship and family collaboration throughout the derby car-building process. Most racers and family members have spent the past few weeks attending driving and building clinics in addition to working on their cars, many of which are paid for by local businesses.

In the stock division, the combined weight of the stock car, wheels and driver cannot exceed 200 pounds. For the super stock division, the combined weight cannot exceed 240 pounds. Stock division drivers must be ages 7-13; super stock drivers must be ages 9-17.

Later this summer, Arrowhead Ranch will host the Summer Classic Rally Races, a stop on the soap box rally circuit where racers can advance to Akron by accumulating points in a series of races.

About 200 volunteers helped make the derby possible, led by volunteer coordinator Myra Reinhard from Coastal Community Bank, Heagle said.

The derby's two largest trophies — the Harry Brown Sportsmanship Award and the Pat Richardson Positive Impact Award — are named after long-time volunteers.

Brown, who died in 2017, volunteered at the local derby since it started, helping with everything from assisting a family build a car to arriving at 4:30 a.m. on race day to put on the event, Heagle said.

Richardson, who died in 2019, was enormously generous to so many causes in the community — especially those that had a positive impact on kids, including giving his time, money and equipment to help the race, Heagle said.

Derby racer Titus Placzyk won the Pat Richardson Positive Impact Award for encouraging other racers and helping the volunteers without being asked.