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Going with the flow at Soap Box Derby rally

Emily Seftel
The Arizona Republic
Apr. 7, 2005 12:00 AM

On Sunday, 13-year-old twins Karla and Krista Osborne will race their cars down Superior's Main Street while fans cheer them on.

Except these cars are only a few feet long. And they run on gravity, not gasoline. That's because the Gilbert sisters will be competing in the Central Arizona Soap Box Derby Family Rally.

"We see this rally as a big opportunity for youth to have something positive to do, especially in the rural areas," said Yvonne Kube, one of the event organizers.

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Participants will be competing for points to qualify for this summer's All-American Soap Box Derby in Akron, Ohio. The rally has three divisions: stock, super-stock and masters. The shape and weight of the car determine in which division the racers compete.

The rally is for youths 8-17, but adults are welcome to try their

hand at driving. For \$10, anyone can enter an adult race, judging for themselves just how easy - or difficult - the sport is.

Superior resident Curtis Long, 11, who will be competing, thinks people might be surprised to realize just how fast the racers go, and how little control they have.

"I think the speed is around 20 to 30 miles per hour," he says. "It's a little different than a car. It's almost like a train ride. You have a little handle and you have to keep it straight."

Like all participants, Curtis assembled his car from a kit (which cost \$415-\$535). Racers in each division use the same kit, and this uniformity helps to ensure that driving skill plays as big a role as possible.

"How you sit, how you position your weight, how far you lean - all that makes a difference," Kube explains. "Girls seem to have an advantage. They're so flexible, they can put their bodies in such a way that there's almost no wind resistance."

By the looks of the cars, no one would guess that they come from the same kits. Racers in the super stock and masters divisions are allowed to paint their cars, and it's not uncommon for families to spend thousands of dollars on the paint jobs.

"Parents or mentors help the kids assemble and decorate the cars," Kube says. "This is an activity that really helps build strong relationships."

The Osborne sisters agree. Since they started racing two years ago, they say, the family has gotten much closer.

"It's a fun way for us to spend time together," says Karla. "Before we didn't really see our dad because he was working a lot, and now we get to spend time with

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Central Arizona Soap Box Derby Family Rally

WHAT: A kit-car race for youths 8-17. Adults can participate in adult races. Guests include 1983 Indianapolis 500 winner Tom Sneva and former Minnesota Vikings running back Bob Reed.

WHERE: Main Street in downtown Superior, about

65 miles east of central Phoenix. Take U.S. 60 east to Arizona 177 south.

WHEN: 9:30 a.m. to approximately 6:30 p.m. Sunday.

ADMISSION: Free.

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him on the weekends."

Does the fact that the twins compete against each other ever put a strain on the family?

"When we lose to each other, we don't feel that bad because we're pretty close," says Krista.

"But sometimes we're really competitive when it's just me and her," adds Karla.

Reach the reporter at

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