

History of the SBD

The idea of the Soap Box Derby® grew out of a photographic assignment of Dayton, Ohio, newsman Myron Scott. He came across a group of boys racing their homemade cars in the summer of 1933, and was so impressed with the event that he acquired a copyright to Soap Box Derby and went in search of a corporate sponsor to establish a national program.

Chevrolet liked Scott's proposal and agreed to sponsor the first official All-American Soap Box Derby® in Dayton in 1934. The following year, the race moved to Akron because of its central location and hilly terrain. The first race in Akron was run on Tallmadge Avenue.

In 1936, Chevrolet and Akron civic leaders-including legendary journalist John S. Knight-recognized the need for a permanent track site for the youth gravity racing classic. That year, through the efforts of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), Derby Downs became a reality in the southeast section of Akron.

The Soap Box Derby ran continuously from its inception until the onset of World War II. After a four-year hiatus, the All-American Soap Box Derby resumed in Akron in 1946, and has been held at Derby Downs every year since. From its inception through 1970, the Soap Box Derby was open to boys only. Girls began racing in 1971. There was a stoppage due to COVID in 2020.

The SBD and its connection for Ohio

- Akron, Ohio is known **worldwide** as the host of the world championships
- The SBD has touched almost every school in Ohio and in many other states for their influence in STEM education.
- At Barberton City Schools we have racing teams in High School and Middle School and the 4th grade participates in a mini car program.