

KM roller derby league looking for players

DAVE BLANTON
dave.kmherald@gmail.com

Brandee Kowalczyk doesn't think of roller derby as a hobby.

"I wish I could say it's a hobby," she said cheerfully. "But really it's an addiction. It's totally taken over my life."

Kowalczyk, a longtime enthusiast of the rough and tumble sport that has skaters going around a rink at high speeds, is the owner of the fledgling Kings Mountain Derby League and she's trying to raise awareness about the game in several public events in the coming weeks.

She will join her husband Joseph and other members of the league for a demonstration at Kings Mountain's Gateway Festival on Saturday, Oct. 11. And this weekend, the league is holding a fundraising car wash (\$5 a car) at Advance Auto Parts on King St. from 8 a.m. until about 5 p.m.

Kowalczyk says she and other participants are passionate about an activity that has given her broken bones, a black eye and many bruises, because it provides an escape like no other.

"Derby is that chance to be something you weren't (earlier in life)," she said about the sport she describes as football on skates without

the ball. "It's sort of like an alter ego."

And for Kowalczyk, who works as an office administrator in Gastonia, it's something of a celebration of life in general. Within about a year of graduating high school and getting married, she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer and trying times for the young family followed.

Although she describes herself as a lifelong skater, after recovering from cancer she plunged herself into derby.

She got started in a Gastonia league. Before long, she was playing for Spartanburg, Charlotte and other area leagues. Now she travels to competitions all over the state. But in the rink, don't call her Brandee. Like most in the sport, she has a game name ("Babee Dust") that is as much a part of her alter personality as some of the eye-catching face paint and costumes the players tend to wear.

"It's really saved me and helped me become a better person," Kowalczyk said, referring to the hard work and camaraderie she's gained through the sport.

The Kings Mountain Derby League, which has about 10 members, is in its first year and practices every weekend it a rink in



Brandee Kowalczyk #13 (aka Babee Dust) mixes it up in a recent roller derby bout.

Photo by DAVE BLANTON

Polkville. Kowalczyk and other members are trying to get the word out about the exciting sport, and they're making it easy for new members to join. They're also looking to move to a practice rink in Kings Mountain, where they think they'll be better able to attract new players.

The first practice is free, she said, and the organiza-

tion will supply all the gear a player needs for an indefinite amount of time. To join is just \$20 a month. Roller derby may seem like a lawless sport, but there are in fact closely adhered rules to protect both the integrity of the game and players' bodies. In fact, new players aren't allowed to make contact in a game until they pass a requirement test.

Although the sport is dominated by women teams and leagues, the sport is also played by men and the under-18 set. The Kings Mountain Derby League includes both a men's and youth team. And Kowalczyk's league - like most East Coast clubs - have their bouts on flat tracks, not the banked tracks you may have seen on television or the

movies. "Roller derby is (historically) a women's sport," she said. "But men have got in on it too. The men play ten times faster, but the women hit ten times harder."

For more information about the club, including how to become a sponsor, contact kingsmountainkrushers@gmail.com

Sears recognized for super sales!

Gateway Trail has something for everyone



Caleb Sears is congratulated by Mayor Rick Murphrey as No. 7 fundraiser in the nation for the second straight year among Scouts and first in the Southeast Region for "Council Youth Kernel," a popcorn project. Front row, Marco Vargas-Chichester, Estavan Vargas-Chichester, Caleb Sears, Mayor Murphrey, Caleb Norris, and Donovan Kiser. Back row, from left, Scoutmaster Estridge, Senior Patrol Leader Chase Stirewalt, Nick Matola, Payton Clark and Tom Matola.

Photo by ELLIS NOELL

Caleb Sears, 14, is a super salesman for Scouting projects. The Kings Mountain High School freshman, son of Jennifer and Chris Sears, ranks No.

1 in the Southeast and for the second year No. 7 in the nation among Boy Scouts participating in a Scout Support Campaign called "Council Youth Kernel."

Not only has Scout Sears excelled in salesmanship skills, taking his product (popcorn) door to door but he has taken the program to groups of 600 or

more. Sears is a member of Troop 92 at First Baptist Church. He joined Scouting as a Tiger Cub in first grade. Thirty Scouts belong to Troop 92.

Last year Caleb sold over \$15,000 worth of popcorn for the project which is conducted every Fall.

Tom Matola, a leader in the Piedmont Council Boy Scouts of America and assistant scoutmaster, said that this Scout Support Campaign teaches young men communication skills, public speaking, salesman-

ship and dedication. A straight A student, Caleb tithes his prize money that he has earned in "Council Youth Kernel."

This is the first year ever that the Council has been honored with a big winner. Caleb has made presentations to county councils in the region and is helping the entire troop by fund raising to help other Scouts who need monetary help to go to camp.

"What better way to teach our future leaders of tomorrow?" asks Matola.

The upcoming Gateway Festival Oct. 11 promises a wide variety of activities for the whole family.

One of the events that festival-goers will enjoy is the Gateway Trail and a shuttle will drop off visitors for events underway from 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

Shirley Brutko, a member of the Trail committed planning events for the Trail, said that bird feeders made from pine cones, gems and minerals by Charlie Padgett, crafts by Judy Ford, hot dog plates by Linwood Restaurant, live music, Smokey the Bear and information by the Forestry Service and park displays will be featured.



Ken Hagan will display and have for sale a number of his wooden items, including hand-carved birdhouses. Brutko said that t-shirts will also be available and festival-goers can have pictures made with Smokey the Bear and become a "Revolutionary hiker" by taking a walk on the Gateway Trail and discover the views of the Kings Mountain Range, wonder at the massive quarry (with the occasional feral goats bounding around) and see why this trail is a popular destination for hikers, runners, bikers and walkers, and the site of an early spring 5K, 10K, Run, Walk and Fun event.

Mitch Johnson, longtime treasurer of the Gateway Trails, will be recognized for his service.

The shuttle will drop festival-goers off at the Trailhead, a part of the Carolina Thread Trail and a National Recreational Trail site for the United States.

"You can smell hotdogs cooking and a band playing as you get off the shuttle which will be running all day to transport festival-goers to all the sites, so park your car uptown and enjoy all the fun," said Brutko.

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1st Annual
HARVEST FESTIVAL
October 4 • 7am - 5pm

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Flea Market Style
Set up your spot!
(no tables provided)
\$30 for 2 parking spaces
- includes lunch ticket

Car & Bike Show
12 - 2pm
\$25 Entry Fee/vehicle - includes lunch ticket

Auction!
2pm until items sold!

Breakfast sandwiches or BBQ sandwiches
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All proceeds will go to fund ministries at Family Worship Center

*If you would like to donate items for the auction please call 704-739-7206 for pick-up information. Donations are tax deductible!

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