

# VALLEY NEWS

Tuesday  
JULY 14, 2015  
\$1.00 •  
Volume 64 — Number 36



Orford's Ben Trussell, left, and Lebanon's Kyle Davis have built a demolition derby car to raise money for Norris Cotton Cancer Center. The car will also be on parade and in action at the upcoming Bradford Fair, where people will be able to donate money and put a decal ribbon on the car.

VALLEY NEWS PHOTOGRAPHS — JENNIFER HAUCK

# Cancer, Meet Crunch

# Pair Builds Demo Derby Car to Raise Funds, Eyebrows

## AUTO RACING

By **BILL PORTER**  
Valley News Sports Editor

**ORFORD** — If you're close enough to read the writing on the back of this car, you might think twice about trying to knock it into the next county.

But maybe not. We're talking about a demolition derby, after all.

The four-cylinder 2004 Pontiac Grand Am will be taking its best shot — and doubtless absorbing plenty in the process — in a drive to raise money for the battle against cancer when it takes to the track at the Bradford Fair this weekend.

The message above the bumper says this car is ready for war: "Dedicated to all those who have lost the fight and to those who won't quit the fight."

A cancer-fighting demolition derby car? Why not throw all that you can at the illness that, according to the American Cancer Society, strikes more than 1 million people in the U.S. each year.

"It affects everybody," said Ben Trussell, of Orford, who decided to take the battle to the track. "It affects not only the person but also your spouse, your kids, your relatives. It's awful to see people go through it."

He hopes his car will raise at least \$1,000 to give to Dartmouth-Hitchcock's Norris Cotton Cancer Center, but adds, "Any money we raise is going to be more than none."

The car, which will be driven by Kyle Davis, of Lebanon, in the derby on Sunday afternoon, will be part of a parade rolling through town to the fairgrounds on Thursday night, and

will be on display at the fair Friday and Saturday.

Donations can be made by signing one of the four big ribbons on the car's hood and doors for \$5 or by purchasing smaller ribbon stickers for \$10 each.

"They can write in a name or a message or whatever they want to put on it," Trussell said, referring to the smaller stickers. "There are various colors for different types of cancer. We didn't do all of them, but I've got about 25 different colors."

Davis, 23, has set up a Facebook page, "Think Pink Demo Car," which includes a post office box to which checks can be mailed.

If the car makes it through the Bradford derby and they're able to keep it rolling, Trussell and Davis plan to run it in the demolition derby for four-cylinder cars at the North Haverhill Fair the following Friday, July 24.

They hope to have all donations in by July 26 and plan to present a 3-by-2-foot lavender and purple check to the cancer center on July 31. The car might win some prize money and also could deliver as much as \$150 for scrap at the end of the road.

In the meantime, it will probably be difficult for fans not to notice the purple car with the lavender ribbons mixing it up on the track, at the intersection of charity and chaos.

"We'll definitely be the best-looking car there," Davis said.

It's probably one of the more colorful ideas to come along on the demolition track and in the fundraising world, and it has wheels.

"I love it," said Jean Brown, executive director of Norris Cotton Cancer Center

**SEE CANCER — B4**



Trussell and Davis are making their intentions plain, offering ribbon decals, above, for people to sign and place on their car, whose mission is made clear on the rear quarter panel, below.

**"I love it.... It's terrific, as long as nobody gets hurt, except the car."**

Jean Brown, executive director,  
Friends of Norris Cotton Cancer Center





# A Unique Way to Fight Cancer: Build a Demo Derby Car

CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1

tive director of The Friends of Norris Cotton Cancer Center. "There's a passion for cars and a passion for fighting cancer. So let's put them together. ... It's terrific, as long as nobody gets hurt, except the car."

Trussell, 49, works for the town of Norwich in buildings and grounds maintenance. "Three years ago I went through a divorce, so I had more time on my hands," he said. "I was bored."

So he entered a demolition derby at the North Haverhill Fair in July 2013.

"Basically," he said, "you just wreck the car until it doesn't run. I said I really want to get hit, so I painted it up as a police car. And I got hit."

He injured his wrist and back, but not too badly. "I wasn't in the hospital or anything, but I was really lame for like a month," he said. "I'm too old for this stuff."

A Dartmouth basketball game that featured breast cancer awareness provided inspiration.

"It was just a cool event to go to, and I said, 'We can do this too. We can build a cancer car,'" he said.

Trussell's 15-year-old stepson, Michael Churchill, who will be a sophomore at Hartford High this year, has done 90 percent of the work on the car, beginning in March.

"He tore the interior of the car apart, took the

airbags out of it," Trussell said. "I had to cut the exhaust off and move the gas tank. I didn't want him underneath the car."

Trussell bought the car from a friend for \$1000 and said about \$350 has been spent on it. Some have donated their time to the cause, including co-worker Bob Barden, who painted it, and childhood friend Andy Moore of M&M Graphics, who did the decals, Trussell said.

Alice Tanguay, whose late husband, Philip John Tanguay, died of brain cancer last year, was the first to sign it. There's a tribute to Mr. Tanguay on the hood. Alice Tanguay also has helped in many ways including by getting the word out.

"Everyone knows someone who has died of cancer," said Davis. "The thousand dollars doesn't sound like much, but it might be the thousand dollars that pushes them toward a cure. You never know."

Davis said the Bradford event will be his sixth demolition derby.

"The biggest thing is hitting someone without

**"The thousand dollars doesn't sound like much, but it might be the thousand dollars that pushes them toward a cure. You never know."**

Demo derby driver  
Kyle Davis

damaging your car too much," he said. "You can't go out there and just throw it all around. You have to have some kind of game plan."

The ideal hit is your trunk straight onto the nose of the other car. "It usually doesn't happen that way, but that's the goal," he said.

Some hits are frowned upon.

"There's pretty much two main rules in a demo," Davis said. "You don't hit the driver's side door, and when someone's nose is against the Jersey barrier, you don't hit him from behind, because there's no give."

Davis was injured three years ago when the battery in his car was knocked loose and hit him in the side of the face, dislodging one tooth and breaking another in half. Last year, he sustained a dislocated shoulder.

Will people have mercy and pull their punches for the cancer car?

"He thinks so," Davis said, with a nod toward Trussell. "I don't think so."

*Bill Porter can be reached at [bporter@vnews.com](mailto:bporter@vnews.com) or 603-727-3225.*