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Racing Cars for a Cause: Romeoville Officer Steps into the Driver’s Seat

Detective Tom Dorsey is the School Resource Officer at Romeoville High School. In a few weeks, he’ll add race car driver to his resume. He’ll be representing Spartans Racing at the “Five-0 @ the Dirty O” race at the Dirt Oval @ Route 66 on Saturday, July 21st. The event raises money for Special Olympics and is part of a full evening of entertainment, which also includes figure 8 races and demolition derby. The Five-0 race raised \$75,000 last year and looks to have a strong outing in 2018, with 19 different agencies and 21 cars already signed up.



So how did Dorsey end up behind the wheel? “I was a spectator last year,” he explained, “and my kids asked why I wasn’t racing. I said ‘I don’t know. Should we get a car together?’ and they said yeah.” One of the events Dorsey watched was a figure 8 race that anyone can enter. The figure 8 championship winner that year was Pete Morris, the auto shop teacher at Romeoville High School. “Pete saw the squad cars going around the track that night, knew he wasn’t going to race anymore, and came to me after the race,” remembers Dorsey. “Pete said ‘The kids are going to need a project, so let’s build you a squad for next year.’ I didn’t think it was really going to happen, but in the first week of school, I had kids coming up to me saying ‘Morris said we’re building you a car!’ So I went up to Pete and I said ‘We’re really doing this?’ and he said yeah.”

Chief Turvey and the village administration were on board with it, so Dorsey purchased two Romeoville squad cars from the Clinton Auto Auction. The students at Romeoville High School, under the supervision of Morris, used parts from both cars to put together one functioning racer. "They were given the cars in late February and we had the car, race ready, at our May 18 Cop on Top event," said Dorsey. Since then, the racer has been to a variety of area car shows, all in the name of fundraising for Spartan Racing and the Special Olympics. The more money the teams raise, the further forward in the pack they start. People can donate directly to Spartans Racing by going to soill.org/event/FiveORacing and clicking on "Support a Driver." Then type "Tom Dorsey" in the search bar. "We also have shirts that we made with the Spartans Racing logo. It was designed by one of the graphic arts students at the high school and we're selling those for \$15 each." If you would like to purchase a shirt, contact the police department at 815-886-7219 and leave your contact information for Detective Dorsey at extension 3030.

Dorsey says he's had nothing but support from the village, the kids in the auto shop, and the school administration. "It's been a very positive experience and has been a unique way to bring the police department and the kids from the school together. The kids that helped build that car can actually watch it go around the track in July." He's also received tremendous support from local businesses, including Chicago Tube and Iron, Reza's Auto repair and Detailing in Romeoville and Crest Hill, CPC Powder Coating, Car Reflections, and Surefire Auto Parts. These businesses donated supplies and services like car parts, material for the roll cage, and graphics and powder coating work.

"It is wonderful to see the community coming together for a great cause," noted Mayor John Noak. "The police, the students, local businesses... it's a phenomenal display of team work."

"I've never raced cars before," confesses Dorsey. "This will be my racing debut and hopefully I'm able to make everybody in Romeoville proud." Regardless of how he finishes, the community can surely be proud of Detective Tom Dorsey and the efforts of the Romeoville High School auto shop. Raising money for the Special Olympics, whether you race a car, run with a torch, or take a swim in freezing water, is always an honorable cause.