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Third-annual Great Holyoke Brick Race barrels ahead this weekend

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HOLYOKE -- Bricks will fly as Paper City Studios and the **Massachusetts Cultural Council** sponsor the third-annual **Great Holyoke Brick Race** this Saturday, June 8.

The race will take place in front of 80 Race St. in downtown Holyoke. Preliminaries for the race start at 11 a.m. and the official race starts at 1 p.m. The rain date for the event is Sunday, June 9.

First premiering in 2011 (see scenes from the first race in the gallery above and the video below), The Great Holyoke Brick Race was founded to unite people from Holyoke and its surrounding cities and towns in an exciting and creative way.

"Holyoke is a great place to be, and we're just really happy to be a part of Holyoke's growth and contribute to the arts district here," said event organizer Bruce Fowler.

In order to enter the race, participants must design and build a brick "race car" that is mounted on wheels and meets specific **qualifications**. The brick car is then raced down an inclined track, using only gravity to cross the finish line.

Fowler says the track is approximately 50 feet long and has a rather steep incline of 45 degrees that makes for an interesting race.

The idea for the race first came about when Fowler and other artists at **Paper City Studios** were trying to find a way to get the Holyoke community more involved in the arts.

Rob Kimmel, of Florence, and his son are both entering bricks the race this Saturday. Though still in the planning process, Kimmel is building a vampire-themed brick racer with a trio of bright green coffins and monster characters on top.

"I don't know if I'll get first place, but I'm hoping to win style points," Kimmel said.

He might have some competition though, as his son is building an Egyptian-themed car, equipped with boats and Ra, the ancient Egyptian sun god.

Holyoke resident and artist Carolyn L. Horan will enter her own brick design this year as well.

Horan competed in the race last year and will be using the same brick racing vehicle with a few modifications.

"It's based on Paper City Studios, which is a beautiful example of the Holyoke brick architecture. It's made out of stained glass and is a little bit like a train car, as we'll be getting a train station in Holyoke soon," Horan said.

Horan called the race, "a wonderful integration of people of all ages and backgrounds in the community," and "a beautiful combination of art and science."

People of all ages and from any city or town are encouraged to participate in the race -- however, only the first 50 people who register will be allowed to race. Around 40 of the slots are already filled, so those interested should act fast and sign up.

To reserve a spot in the race, participants can contact **Nancy Sachs, Bruce Fowler** or **Dean Nimmer** with their name, phone number and email address.

Members of the community that do not plan on entering a car in the race are also welcome to attend as spectators.

"Last year was so much fun, I didn't see anyone without a smile," Fowler said.

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05.14.2011 | HOLYOKE - Dean Nimmer shows off a brick racer created by his 7th-grade students at the Curtis Blake Day School of American International College.