

Fundraising for 8-year-old Tameside Paralympic hopeful

A FUNDRAISING event is set to spread the seasonal spirit of goodwill in Dukinfield as locals rally to raise money to fund a local young girl's quest for Paralympic gold.

Raffles and activities will take place at Raja Brother's Express Convenience Store on Cheetham Hill Road, from 13th December in the run up to Christmas, in a bid to subsidise promising 8-year-old Anya Waugh's wheelchair racing training.

The series of fundraising will accumulate in an afternoon community event on Christmas Eve, with face-painters, raffles, mince pies and fancy dress from 12-5pm. Among treats available for the children, Father Christmas could also be making a special appearance.

Organiser Susan Kellett said: "Although Anya is paralysed from the knees down, she does not let this hold her back and fundraising is the best way to keep her on track doing what she loves."

Anya from Stalybridge, who was born with Spina Bifida, is the youngest racer signed to Stockport Wheelchair Racing, of which she has been a member for almost two years, after being spotted by Paralympic Team GB coaches at the tender age of seven.

According to her coach, Rick Hoskins, Anya would currently rank in the top ten fastest in the country if she could be classed as an athlete, a title she can assume once she turns 12.

Mr Hoskins said: "She's shown a hell of a lot of promise for someone so young.

"Anya's a good little athlete, she listens, she focuses-I have to pull the reigns in a bit to stop her doing so much, you've got to remember she's only 8 so I have to tailor the training to her. For someone so young it's fantastic. She holds her own against the boys and always wants to race on the same level as the older ones."

The dedicated youngster trains on track four times a week with older racers signed to the Stockport Club and has special "rollers" at home, which act as a treadmill for wheelchair users, designed to build upper body strength and muscles.

Her proud father Chris Waugh said the money will go towards a new set of racing gloves which cost around £150 per pair and the fee for entering the competitions, which can be anything from £5- £25. The funds will also finance hotel and travel expenses as she competes all over the country and club membership fees.

He added: "I'd like to say a big thanks to Susan, she's always supported Anya since she started."

Talented Anya, who won the Stockport Harriers Rising Star Award in November, has plans to become one of the youngest athletes to compete for her country at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics and her coaches are hoping she will participate in 100 and 200m races in Bedford and Scotland next year.

Anya will be making appearances at the fundraising events and will be present at the closing event on Christmas Eve. She has her own Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/AnyasUpdates> and website <http://www.anyawaugh.co.uk/> for you to keep up to date with all her racing achievements and news.