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Unique auction drives fund-raiser

MARTY NIEDBALA

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ROYAL OAK - There are auctions. There are car auctions. Then there is the driver auction.

A unique event among charity auctions, the annual driver auction for Royal Oak Grand Na Tuesday at Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle here, provides a social setting for area business money for worthy causes.

It also provides professional auctioneer Jim Miller a chance to use his skills to sell some u premiums. After doing it for eight years, he's good at it, too.

"This is so unique among charity auctions," said Miller, who conducts a few dozen such ev profit groups and private schools throughout the year. "We're selling drivers - and they're r

Actually, a few were in attendance. Looking as cool as a veteran driver, 12-year-old driver Plotkowski barely broke a sweat in the spotlights' glare as bidding for his services reached In the end, the Boys & Girls Club of South Oakland County "bought" Plotkowski's driving s second attempt at the race of quarter-scale remote-controlled cars held in conjunction with Dream Cruise.

Doug McCallum of Lapeer also did not seem intimidated by the pressure of having his abil a live auction. The Clawson Chamber of Commerce put \$800 worth of pressure on the ass worker at General Motors' Lake Orion plant.

"It's cool," said affable McCallum, who also thinks driving radio-controlled, quarter-scale, fi car models is cool too.

"I've been driving all my life," McCallum said. "I used to drive stock cars. Then, I started dr cars and then began with these in the early '90s.

"I'm really competitive."

So are Steve Gillette and the rest of the agents at Real Estate One. For the fourth consec bought the rights to seven-time-consecutive Grand National winner Roger Newell of Winoi

"We just want him," said Gillette of Newell. "It's great publicity for a great cause."

The auction raises money for the Give-A-Christmas Year Around fund. The fund, sponsore season by the Daily Tribune, provides money for nine area agencies - Boys & Girls Club o Oakland County, Common Ground Sanctuary, Community Services of Oakland, HAVEN, , Salvation Army of Royal Oak, South Oakland Shelter, South Oakland YMCA, Troy People

Yesterday, bids for 21 drivers garnered over \$11,000 for GAC. Last year, 26 car sponsors \$13,000 for their drivers.

This year, Ucoat It Garage won the awards for the best NASCAR-like and most creative c: Manager John Carafelly says Mike Steiner did all the work on the No. 98 model with NASC of sponsors.

"This is pretty fun," said Carafelly of his firm's second auction. Last year, the company bid Brent Gottfried of Toledo. He came in second place behind Newell. So there's nowhere to time. The company bid \$650 for David Dawkins of Butler, Ind., who finished 12th last year

Grand National takes place in the parking lot of Northwood Shopping Center, at 13 Mile ar Avenue from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday during the Woodward Dream Cruise.

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