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# First Gear

**NEBRASKA REGION'S ANDREW ANDERSON HAS PROVED TO BE A QUICK STUDY AT AND AWAY FROM THE TRACK**

Like many teenagers, Andrew Anderson juggles a lot of responsibilities and activities—school, sports (baseball), honors classes, friends, civic obligations and sometimes, just plain adolescent goofing off.

To that list, he adds one more item. Anderson, 15, is a valuable member of the Nebraska Region. At Regional and National races, he works tech. At rallies and Solo events, he helps with timing and scoring.

The son of Mitch Anderson and former Showroom Stock racer and 1980 GSI Solo National Champion Molly Riley Anderson, Anderson became involved with the SCCA through Patt Buell, a family friend and the editor of the Nebraska Region's *Exhaust Notes*.

"She took me to some races and Solos, and because I was so interested, and having so much fun, she gave me my first [SCCA] membership as a present for my 13th birthday," Anderson explains.

Anderson attended his first Nebraska Region race at the Mid-America Motorplex in Pacific Junction, Iowa, in April 2003. Since that first encounter with sports car racing, he has acquired Regional and Divisional scrutineering licenses, attended a national scrutineering seminar at Heartland Park Topeka and begun fulfilling his requirements for a National license.

"I love the cars," Anderson says. "I also enjoy the science—the physics—behind racing."

In addition to Buell, who got him interested and involved, other Nebraska Region members have lent a hand, including Mark Ross, Mark Beacom, Greg Jensen, and Chris and Frank Safranek, Anderson says.

"Candy and Jan Gerber let me work on their pit crew, and Candy taught me timing. Everyone has been great at



**"I ENJOY THE SCIENCE—THE PHYSICS—BEHIND RACING" ANDREW ANDERSON**



including me and letting me participate and learn."

His parents are also pleased, Anderson adds. "My folks are happy to know where I am and what I am doing, and who I am with. My mom is really supportive. She petitioned my school to accept the [SCCA] volunteer hours I work as part of my community service

requirement for graduation."

His school, Westside High School in Omaha, has approved the request, Anderson explains.

"Andrew is a great kid," says Ross, who is also the Nebraska Region's membership chairman. "I knew him for several years before he became involved in the SCCA. When you first meet him, he comes across as a quiet, shy kid. That could not be farther from the truth. Once Andrew gets to know you, he will open up, and he is a ball of energy."

At the track, Anderson is a vital part of tech inspection and a quick study, Ross says. "At our last Regional/National in August, he was working on math homework in the tech shed and signing in drivers at the same time. There is no way I could go from doing calculus to doing a gear tech and back to calculus the way he was."

**Andrew Anderson pushes a car onto the scales while working in tech.**

Away from the racetrack, Anderson contributes to *Exhaust Notes*. He is also on track to obtain his Nebraska Learner's Permit, which, by next season, may pave the way for some seat time at region autocrosses. Turning 16 next June will also provide Anderson an opportunity to explore other race specialties, particularly flagging and communications. "It's something I'd like to try," he notes.

Long term, "I would love to write for a living," Anderson says. "I also want to drive and race in the SCCA."

"Many of us who have known Andrew for a long time have always wondered if he would follow in his mom's footsteps," observes Ross. "It appears he probably will."

That the region has extended a helping hand to Anderson and its other First Gear members is no accident, Ross adds. "The Nebraska Region takes great pride in its First Gear members. We want to involve young people in our sport. The only way the SCCA can continue to survive is if we get our young folks involved as soon as possible. In my opinion we are no different from any other organization in any community. We have to keep our programs accessible to young people if we want them to succeed."

In addition to mentoring young members at the track, the region also strives to highlight the activities of its First Gear crowd, Ross says. "We try to make sure our First Gear members get all of the recognition they deserve."

The reason is straightforward, Ross adds. "They are the future of our Club."

In Anderson's case, the future seems secure.

"Most folks probably don't consider motorsports or racing as a family event or outing, but I do," he says. "You just become a member of a bigger family. And because my folks let me do it on my own, with a family friend, it really is my own thing. No one treats me like a kid; so I keep learning more, and I get to do more."