

SkaterAid celebrates “ten years of shredding” to make a difference

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDeJtwoaWtc>

Art, music, charity and...skateboards?

Celebrating its tenth consecutive year since its start in 2005, the annual [SkaterAid](#) festival of Decatur, Georgia landed its final kickflip on Sept. 27, 2014. Patrons gathered to celebrate custom artwork, local music and a love for skateboarding, all in support of families affected by pediatric cancer.

“SkaterAid is unusual in that every single dollar we raise goes directly to parents whose kids are struggling with pediatric brain cancer,” said Patrice Eastham, SkaterAid founder and vice president of Business Communications at [Assurant Solutions](#). “Families use this money to pay their rent, utilities, or whatever is needed while their kids are in the hospital.”

In 2014 alone, the event raised nearly \$54,000, making it the most successful year overall. Over the course of its ten-year run, SkaterAid more than met its ultimate goal to raise \$200,000 in total—with about an \$18,000 surplus.

The fundraiser was started in memory of Ian Wochatz, a resident of Decatur who passed away from a severe type of brain cancer on July 4, 2005 at the age of 15. As a young man who understood the importance of living every day to the fullest, his passions sparked the themes for SkaterAid’s blueprint and foundation: good music, quality friends and lots of skateboarding.

The festival was littered with custom-made ramps built ready for shredding by skaters of all ages, and also featured a scavenger hunt with prizes and an assortment of food. Musical acts consisting of student bands from local high schools performed throughout the day. One of the biggest successes was found in the skateboard deck art auction, featuring the work of professional and amateur artists using, of course, skateboards as their canvases.

Assurant supported the cause from its very beginning, and the company’s charitable arm, the Assurant Foundation, also provided financial support. Beyond a fiscal commitment, the company also donated time and resources to the event. Assurant Solutions employees Laura Woods and Rich Maile painted skateboards and constructed face-in-hole displays, while Eastham created several “decked out” skateboards that were put up for auction as well. According to Eastham, the overall payoff of SkaterAid extends much deeper than simply the monetary successes.

“When something terrible happens to someone you care about, it creates an opportunity to step outside yourself and remember what’s really important,” Eastham said. “It doesn’t make the tragedy any less terrible, but it opens up a space for a silver lining. And those silver linings can be mighty beautiful.”

For more information on SkaterAid, its mission and its accomplishments, visit skateraid.net or [facebook.com/SkaterAidFestival](https://www.facebook.com/SkaterAidFestival).