



weSkate, Inc.

4403 O'Donnell Street Suite 104

Baltimore, MD 21224

www.weSkate.us | (301) 788-1843

Contact: Alexa Johnson via info@weSkate.us

Mission Statement

To foster community growth through diversity in skateboarding.

Boilerplate

weSkate is a Baltimore-based non-profit organization dedicated to fostering community growth by promoting diversity in the sport of skateboarding. Originally founded in 2005 by pro skateboarder Aisha McBride with the goal of bringing more women into professional skateboarding, weSkate has expanded its mission to embrace those of all races, genders and cultures, sponsoring hundreds of events and hosting thousands of classes across the U.S. For more information, visit www.weSkate.us.

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Talking Points

Below are suggested talking points for use in describing weSkate's purpose, as well as the benefits of skateboarding and current rates of diversity in the skateboarding community.

- **GENERAL SUMMARY:** weSkate is an organization dedicated to the bettering of the skateboarding community by increasing diversity on the local level and, as a result, in the professional skateboarding scene.
 - Founded in 2005 by professional skateboarder Aisha McBride
 - Chapters exist in more than 150 cities across the U.S., with additional chapters around the world
 - Classes are offered after school by experienced and trained skate coaches five days a week, giving young skaters a perseverance-based activity and safe environment to learn in.
 - Competitions are held on Saturdays to foster growth and encourage participants to challenge themselves while learning and recognizing the achievements of others.
- **SAFETY:** Skateboarding is a high-risk activity with the potential for injuries ranging from minor scrapes to broken bones and serious complications. weSkate is therefore dedicated to safety above all else.
 - Comparatively, skateboarding is a relatively safe sport, with injury rates far lower than those of basketball, baseball, or soccer¹
 - One-third of all injuries occur in a beginning skater's first week of skateboarding;² beginning skaters are supervised by professionally-trained coaches to ensure their safety
 - Irregular riding surfaces account for over half of all skateboarding injuries³
 - All weSkate classes and competitions take place in parks intended for skateboarding, which are routinely inspected and maintained
 - Protective padding is required in order to participate in classes and competitions; recommended gear includes elbow and knee pads, wrist guards, and helmets
 - Coaches provide extra protective padding for those who have not brought or cannot afford their own
 - Helmet use is enforced at all times, as helmets reduce the risk of head injury by 45% or more⁴

- **DIVERSITY:** The professional skateboarding scene is largely white and male. weSkate aims to remedy this by starting at the local level, encouraging those from all walks of life to skate.
 - While there are few demographic statistics on skateboarders, there is a clear gender divide: only 16.6% of all regular skaters are female⁵
 - Achievements of professional skaters not fitting into the typical “straight white male” skateboarding stereotype are advertised on the www.weSkate.us website
 - Participation in weSkate has led to the founding of numerous professional skateboarding teams also focused on diversity:
 - The Chips Gang, based in Philadelphia, PA, consists mainly of girls and those in the LGBTQIA+ community
 - The Gender Outlaws, based in Frederick, MD, consists entirely of skaters identifying outside of the gender binary
 - More teams are recognized on the www.weSkate.us website
- **MESSAGE FOR PARENTS:** Skateboarding has a reputation for being an unsafe, individualistic activity typically practiced by those with anti-establishment values, and the professional circuit has been known to be exclusive and non-diverse. weSkate combats this reputation by encouraging diversity and pushing messages of tolerance while enforcing the use of protective gear in order to maintain a safe environment.
 - Skateboarding provides benefits outside of simply being an athletic activity
 - weSkate provides protective gear at all sessions, and additionally provides donated boards and supplies to underprivileged members who otherwise could not afford to participate.
 - Skaters are encouraged to report incidents or comments by other skaters or community members that they find harmful or offensive; these reports are taken seriously by weSkate staff and all reports are investigated fully.
 - Classes and competitions are supervised by trained adult staff members in order to assure safe and respectful skating.
 - Questions regarding safety, mission, and other issues can be directed to info@weskate.us or (301) 788-1843.

¹ Thurman D, Alveson C, Dunn K, et al. Traumatic brain injury in the United States: a public health perspective. *J Head Trauma Rehab.* 1999; 14(6):602-613.

² Swope, Bob. Teach'n Beginning Skateboarding Free Flow Handbook. *Jacobob Press.* 2012; 6-10.

³ Kyle SB, Nance ML, Rutherford GW, Jr, Winston FK. Skateboard-associated injuries: participation-based estimates and injury characteristics. *J Trauma.* 2002;53(4):686–90. doi: 10.1097/00005373-200210000-00011.

⁴ Dellinger AM, Kresnow M. Bicycle helmet use among children in the United States: the effects of legislation, personal and household factors. *J Safe Res.* 2010; 41: 375-380.

Backgrounder

weSkate is a Baltimore-based non-profit organization dedicated to fostering community growth by promoting diversity in the sport of skateboarding. Originally founded in 2005 by pro skateboarder Aisha McBride with the goal of bringing more women into professional skateboarding, weSkate has expanded its mission to embrace those of all races, genders and cultures, sponsoring hundreds of events and hosting thousands of classes across the U.S.

HISTORY: weSkate was founded in Baltimore, Maryland in the year 2005 by professional skateboarder Aisha McBride, who is lauded as the first black female skater to make the cover of *Thrasher* skateboarding magazine. McBride's original goal in founding weSkate was to encourage more women to start skateboarding, but around 2007 the organization began to expand into other states and that initiative was altered to appeal to skaters from all walks of life. In 2014, the organization went international, opening a location in Madrid, Spain with the help of the women-focused Longboard Girls Crew. As of 2016, weSkate has chapters located in 150 cities across the U.S., with additional chapters in Madrid, Barcelona, Toronto, Sydney, and London.

INITIATIVES: weSkate is primarily focused on bringing diversity to the skateboarding scene; as a result, many of its initiatives deal with community outreach and development. These include:

- **Better Skaters, Better People:** As it is focused on diversity and welcoming all people regardless of gender, orientation, race, social class, or other status, weSkate does not tolerate hate speech. However, it approaches from an educational perspective, pushing an agenda of tolerance.
- **Anyone and Everyone:** weSkate provides boards and protective equipment to students and participants who otherwise might not be able to afford it. These supplies are collected via donations from the public, as well as skate and sport shops.
- **Beyond Just Teaching:** weSkate's coaches serve as mentors and friends to students; they are not merely teachers, but can have a positive effect on their lives.
- **Safe Riders:** Helmets and protective gear are required for all activities on weSkate grounds. The months of May, June, and July are "Safe Rider" months, in which helmet use is strongly advocated in order to decrease the number of crashes associated with that time of year.

KEY MEMBERS:

- Aisha McBride – aisha@wes skate.us – President. Professional skateboarder and founder.
- Shonté Tucker – shonte@wes skate.us – Vice President. Professional skateboarder and founder.
- Adrian Januszkowicz – Adrian@wes skate.us – Treasurer. Founding member.

To: Perl, Larry (lperl@baltsun.com);
Subject: Gender Outlaws, Chips Gang And More At The Kickflip-Off

Mr. Perl,

On Saturday, hundreds of Baltimore city youth will gather to express their passion and raise money for a sport they love: skateboarding.

weSkate, Inc.'s annual Kickflip-Off is the Baltimore-based non-profit's largest fundraising and donation drive of the year. The Kickflip-Off consists of competitions between skateboarding students and demonstrations by professional skateboarding teams. Prizes include special edition skate decks and complete boards provided by local skate shops. Donations go toward providing skateboards to underprivileged youth who could not otherwise afford them and purchasing protective padding for use in skateboarding lessons.

This year's competition takes place on March 21 at the O'Donnel Street skate park and begins at 11 a.m. The competition will feature demonstrations by weSkate alums The Gender Outlaws and The Chips Gang, two professional skateboarding teams currently taking the skateboarding world by storm. Also attending is weSkate founder and professional skateboarder Aisha McBride.

weSkate's mission is to foster community growth through diversity in skateboarding. The non-profit offers free skateboarding lessons and encourages inclusion and acceptance above all.

Considering your history of reporting on skateboarding-related events in the Baltimore area and that your work consists largely of in-depth feature stories, we think your readers would find weSkate's Kickflip-Off to be up their alley. If you're interested in learning more or arranging an interview, please contact me at alexa@weSkate.us or give me a call at (301) 788-1843.

Best,

Alexa Johnson
PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR



weSkate, Inc.
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact: Alexa Johnson, Public Relations Director

Direct: (301) 788-1843

Email: alexa@weSkate.us

Riding For Diversity

Professional and amateur skateboarders prepare to make a difference at the Kickflip-Off

BALTIMORE March 16 2016 – This Saturday, hundreds of skateboarders will gather at the O’Donnel Street skate park to compete and show off their skills as part of the annual Kickflip-Off.

The event on March 21 is a fundraiser organized by weSkate, Inc., a non-profit organization that aims to foster community growth through diversity in skateboarding. The organization offers free lessons with direct coaching and provides skateboards to aspiring students who could not otherwise afford them. Proceeds go toward purchasing skateboards and protective padding for students who cannot otherwise afford them.

Beginning at 11 a.m., weSkate’s student skaters will engage in various trick competitions. Prizes include special edition skate decks and complete boards donated by local skate shops.

Professional diversity-oriented skateboarding teams The Chips Gang and the Gender Outlaws will give demonstrations at the event. weSkate founder Aisha McBride, one of the first black female professional skateboarders, will be in attendance as well.

“I’m really proud of how far it’s come,” McBride said of the organization’s success. “When it started, it was just me trying to teach a handful of girls in my neighborhood how to skate. Now, we have chapters across the U.S. and around the world.”

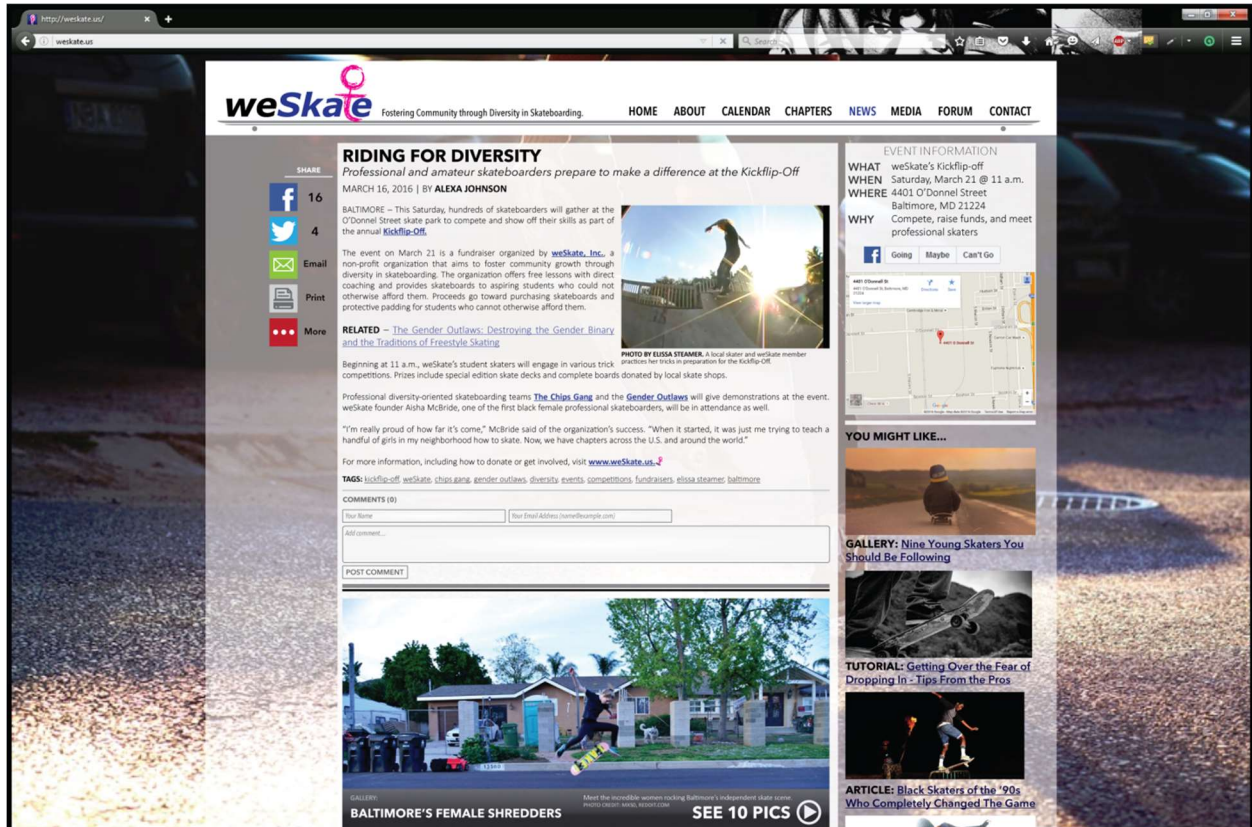
For more information, including how to donate or get involved, visit www.weSkate.us.

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Social Media Release



The full resolution version of this release can be viewed here:
<http://imgur.com/cO05Ksr>

Op-Ed

The summer months are approaching, and with the coming of summer more and more people head outside to enjoy the sun and weather. As you and your family trade boots for flip-flops and long sleeves for t-shirts as you begin biking, roller blading, skateboarding, or riding scooters, it is critical that you don't forget an important piece of gear necessary for any high-risk activity: a helmet.

All of us have heard the "helmet lecture" at some point, and many of us have actively ignored it time and time again. There's no doubt about it—helmets aren't cool. They're bulky. They're often ugly. A lot of professional skateboarders and roller bladers never wear them. And, as many a childhood friend told me, they "make you look like a geek." For a long time, those arguments made sense to me, and I went for a long time without even considering wearing a helmet, despite my mom's constant demands for me to put one on before I went out skating.

But crashes are possible, and they can happen to anyone at any time.

I got in a bad crash on the night before my 18th birthday: I was on my longboard, riding down a hill I'd traversed a hundred times, when I hit a patch of gravel at the bottom that I hadn't noticed before. I was thrown off my board and hit my head hard on the pavement. I then had the privilege of spending my very last night as a minor in the pediatric ward of the hospital, under supervision for a serious concussion.

For as long as I've been skating and riding bikes, I thought it couldn't happen to me, but the risk of crash and injury is very real. I was extremely lucky that I didn't suffer any permanent brain damage from my crash, but others haven't been so lucky. According to studies from the New York City Department of Transportation, 74 percent of fatal bicycle accidents between 1996 and 2005 involved head injuries. Ninety-seven percent of those killed weren't wearing helmets.

Helmets don't stop crashes, but they do prevent the chance of further, more serious injury. Safe Kids Worldwide reports that helmets can reduce the risk of head injury by 45 percent, facial injury by 27 percent, brain injury by 33 percent, and fatal injury by 29 percent. Some studies even say they reduce this risk by up to 85 percent. The exact value of the statistic is a moot point, though: helmets reduce injury, and not wearing one makes the risk of severe injury much, much higher.

The problem and solution both start young. A national survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that only 48 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 14 wore bicycle helmets when riding, and older children were less likely to wear helmets than younger children. However, additional research on helmet use has found that children who ride with

companions or adults who are also wearing helmets are more likely to independently use helmets. While children often have to discover that they are not invincible for themselves, positively encouraging the use of helmets can lead to good helmet habits, reducing the risk of injuries and preventing serious tragedies from occurring.

If your children are in need of helmets but you are unable to provide them, there are organizations that can help. weSkate, a Baltimore-based non-profit focused on skateboarding, provides free helmets to members of its community who cannot supply their own. These helmets are donated by skate and sport shops, as well as the community at large, and are inspected to ensure that they are fully functional before they are given away. If your children have outgrown their helmets, consider donating them so that others can benefit from them and stay safe.

The summer months are the most popular times for children and adolescents to be involved in crashes. Helmets don't outright prevent these crashes, but they can severely lessen the consequences. To get the most benefit out of helmets, make sure they are up to par. Ensure that they fit properly, and replace a helmet after a bad crash or fall. Positively encourage helmet use and wear them yourself to influence others to do the same.

Alexa Johnson is the public relations director for weSkate, a Baltimore-based non-profit dedicated to fostering community growth through diversity in skateboarding. For more information on helmet safety, donating protective equipment, or acquiring free helmets for your children, visit www.weskate.us/safety.

"Bicycle, In-Line Skating, Skateboarding Safety--Injury Statistics and Incidence Rates." *Stanford Children's Health*. Stanford Children's Health, 2016. Web. Accessed 5 May 2016.

"Bicycle, Skate and Skateboard Fact Sheet (2016)." *Safe Kids Worldwide*. Safe Kids Worldwide, March 2016. Web. Accessed 5 May 2016.

"Head Injuries and Bicycle Safety." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 28 January 2015. Web. Accessed 5 May 2016.

Richards, Patty. "Statistics for Helmet Safety." *Livestrong.com*. Demand Media LLC, 11 November 2015. Web. Accessed 5 May 2016.

Benjamin and Jillian Smith
3333 Orlando Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21234

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Smith,

Since I was a young girl, I have been in love with the sport of skateboarding. In my youth, I spent countless hours in local pools and skate parks, practicing tricks over and over and over again until I found success. I had a true passion for it, and I loved what it did for me: not only did it make me physically stronger, but it also fostered creativity and a dogged sense of perseverance that is the sole reason why I have gotten to where I am today.

Unlike other skaters, however, I couldn't look to the media and larger community for validation. As a young woman of color growing up in a poor neighborhood in Baltimore, there were few heroes or heroines for me to find in skateboarding media and videos. I was told by everyone, from the boys at the parks I constantly skated at to my teachers, friends, and parents, that I could never be a professional skateboarder. There were no black female pros, so there was no way I could become one. In the face of this adversity, I strove to be what I didn't have— I wanted to be a heroine for young girls like me who had a passion for something, but lacked any role models or representation.

When I was 19 years old, I received my first major sponsorships and achieved my dream of becoming a professional skateboarder. However, I knew my work wasn't done. Even though I had come so far, I still struggled to achieve more sponsorships and places in competitions. There simply wasn't enough recognition for female skaters to convince major skate companies that women are worth sponsoring. I realized that to combat this, I had to start from the ground up. By reaching out to other women and convincing them that they, too, could skate and have their abilities recognized, we could turn the industry on its head.

It was this realization that led me to found weSkate along with 10 of my friends in 2005. Since then, my little group of 11 women who refused to give up has grown into an organization that has locations all across the U.S. and around the world, now with a focus on inviting those from all walks of life to try skating. It is something I only could have dreamed of as a little girl: weSkate is a tight-knit community focused on acknowledging each other's strengths, combating prejudice, and becoming more than we were told we could be.

Your donations are what allow us to keep our organization alive and thriving. Donated funds and supplies help us provide skateboards and protective gear to children who otherwise would not be able to afford to skate. These materials allow our youth to skate and grow with each other, learning the value of perseverance and building the strength required to get back up when they fall. Life-long friendships are born at skate parks, and weSkate coaches serve not only

as instructors but as mentors to our youth, guiding them through turbulent teenage years and troublesome times in their lives.

Last year, we received more donations than we ever have before and have been overwhelmed by the support our chapters have been shown. Thanks to people like you, we raised over \$1,150,000 and were able to provide skateboards and protective gear to more than 2,400 students and 150 chapters of our organization across the globe. We also began the construction of four skate parks in cities that lacked them in order to allow even more youth to take part in the thrilling sport we love.

We ask you to donate in order to keep reaching out to youth in need of reassurance and support. A donation of as little as \$5 goes a long way, buying griptape or hardware for new boards. Twenty dollars can buy a set of bearings, or go toward purchasing protective gear. A \$50 donation can purchase a full set of protective gear, an extremely protective helmet, or a new skateboard deck. A donation of \$100 can pay for a whole new board, which will then be given to a child who otherwise could not afford one, allowing them to start skating and better their life.

By supporting weSkate, you are not only supporting an activity that provides countless benefits to all who participate, but also supporting the bettering of a community. weSkate's focus on tolerance and inclusion leads our skaters to better understand their individual strengths and the strengths of others who, at first, might seem wholly different from them. Our push for diversity has brought life, color, and culture to the sport while simultaneously doing more to quash homophobia, sexism, racism, and other offensive behaviors grounded in stereotypes. Supporting weSkate means you support creativity, passion, and acceptance.

Donations can be sent by mail or online at [www.**weSkate**.us/donate](http://www.weSkate.us/donate). To donate via mail, please send a check or money order to:

weSkate, Inc.
4403 O'Donnell Street Suite 104
Baltimore, MD 21224

We greatly appreciate your support and consideration of our cause. Thank you, and happy skating!

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aisha McBride".

Aisha McBride
PRESIDENT

weSkate Purpose and History Speech

[This speech is primarily to be utilized at fundraisers and for the openings of contests, with the goal of encouraging future participation or donations from listeners and contestants alike.]

Aisha McBride is a professional skateboarder from Baltimore, Maryland who has been celebrated as one of the first women of color to achieve mainstream success in the sport. McBride went pro in 1993 at the age of 19 and was featured on the cover of Thrasher magazine in July of that year, becoming the first (and thus far, only) black woman to do so. Founding weSkate in 2005, McBride has personally given and hosted thousands of lessons and competitions to skaters from all walks of life, hoping to bring more diversity to the world of skateboarding.

Thank you. Thank you to everyone in attendance today. Thank you to each and every one of you who came out to listen or learn about what we can do to bring more life and personality to a sport we love. My name is Aisha McBride and I've been a professional skateboarder since I was 19 years old. Today I'm going to tell you a little bit about myself, how I came to found weSkate, and about what weSkate is and what it does for communities around the world.

I grew up in Baltimore in the '80s, when skate culture was really starting to come into its own. However, there was a problem: in the midst of all of the creativity, passion, and the growing sense of community present in the early days of skateboarding, there still was little diversity. The majority of the skate scene at the time was white and male, so as a young woman of color, I had few people to look up to. Pros like Mark Gonzales, Tommy Guerrero, and Steve Caballero thankfully brought some color to the sport, but there still were few to no places for women. My mom was my champion, seeking out skateboarding magazines, videos, and newspaper clippings featuring women to keep me inspired. I still remember the joy I felt when she gave me a photocopy of LIFE magazine's May 1965 cover. It featured Patti McGee, one of the first female skaters in the world, and I remembered thinking "if she can do it, I can do it. That could be me."

It is this quest for representation that led me to found weSkate. Created in 2005, my original goal was to attract women—and specifically, women of color—to the sport. However, as time has gone by, weSkate has expanded its mission to reach out to those of all walks of life. Skateboarding has an unfortunate reputation of being exclusive, and racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia have been real issues barring those who want to learn from developing a love of skating. weSkate exists to provide what I lacked when I was a young skater:

a diverse and representative community with passion for the sport and support for all of those who ride.

Now, unlike a lot of organizations based around diversity in skating, weSkate starts with novices and amateurs, building a local community and focusing on teaching both how to skate and how to recognize and encourage diversity in order to build a more accepting, close-knit, and talented skating community. Meetings are held up to six days a week at local skate parks, typically starting after school ends. On weeknights, there are skating lessons and group skate sessions, while we typically host competitions on weekend. Skaters can upload photos and videos of their tricks and lines to the weSkate website—weSkate.us, for those of you with your smartphones already out—where other users can then share and comment on them. This builds representation and recognition, helping young skaters see what others just like them are doing and what they themselves can do. We also offer online film classes, helping students learn to document the things they have worked to achieve and recognize each other’s skills and talents. These editing and filming skills are beneficial outside of skateboarding, too; some of our alums have built portfolios and gotten jobs with the skills they learned from weSkate. We couldn’t be more proud, and we highly encourage all of our kids to get behind the camera and learn about the filming and editing process.

In all of its efforts, weSkate adopts the traditional “DIY” attitude that is endemic to skateboarding, encouraging skaters to start their own chapters and reach out to those in their community that might benefit from skating. It runs entirely off of donations from participants, spectators, skate shops, and other companies. These crucial donators help supply free skateboards and protective gear for underprivileged kids who might not have been able to afford one otherwise, providing them with a safe outlet for meeting others who share their interests. We could never thank these generous groups enough: without them, there’d be no us.

By supporting weSkate, you support tolerance. By supporting weSkate, you support acceptance. By supporting weSkate, you support friendships, creativity, and passion. You support the growth and expansion of a sport that for so long has focused on one gender, one race, one type of person, and you are encouraging fair representation. You are encouraging the construction of a community built on trust, friendship, and close ties that will prove beneficial for years to come.

My name is Aisha McBride and I would like to thank you for your participation in helping area youth make the sport they love into one of tolerance, acceptance, and inclusion. Thank you for supporting weSkate.

Now, let’s do some shredding!