

INTERNATIONAL BREAST CANCER PADDLERS' COMMISSION



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\$200,000 Raised in One-Day Event

By **Carol Mutton**, Peterborough Festival Chair

Survivors Abreast, Ontario, Canada

Dragon boat regattas are now found worldwide, and in Ontario, Canada, it seems there's one in every large town. So, what's special about Peterborough's event?

Well, it just might be the largest one-day, community based dragon boat festival—one that raises more than \$200,000 for breast cancer diagnosis and treatment. All the teams (80 to 100) are local and cover all sectors: business, health, education, finance, service clubs and not-for-profits, all levels of government, and sometimes simply a crew of neighbours, friends and relatives. Many are paddling for a survivor, or in memory of someone. It's the cause that draws people. On average, 25 new teams register each year.

And it's not just the cause that is appealing. Employers love that the sport builds camaraderie and brings the community together. The clincher is the "fun" factor. Most people try it once and are hooked.

How It Happens . . .

The community has rallied to support the festival since its start in 2001. The annual grassroots event is hosted and overseen by breast cancer home team, *Survivors Abreast*. A year after the team formed in 1999, its founder, Meredith Cosburn, with the support of former coach Len Minty persisted in carrying out their vision— a successful community festival to raise awareness and funds for breast cancer. A standing committee of about 25 volunteers from *Survivors Abreast* and the community organize the event.

The Results of the Day . . .

What is most remarkable is that this one-day festival is able to donate at least \$200,000 to the hospital foundation for a predetermined piece of equipment for diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer. The list of what the festival proceeds has helped to purchase over the past 14 years is impressive.



The real reward . . .

What does this mean for the breast cancer program? It means that men and women can feel confident they can get accurate and timely diagnostic tests and the best treatment options without having to travel outside the community.

Festival accolades include two Civic Awards for Community Betterment (2007 and 2014), and a Philanthropy Award in 2008. In the same year the PRHC foundation named the Breast Assessment Centre after *Survivors Abreast* in recognition of our efforts.

It's lovely to receive formal recognition for hard work and a job well done, but for me personally, it's something less tangible that is more rewarding. Every year, when I hear the cheers, see the hugs, feel the energy, the spirit and emotion, I say to myself, "Yes, this is a very special day and I always want to be a part of it."



ELECTIONS Who are they? Where are they from?

The deadline for submission of nominees for the election of five directors for the IBCPC Steering Committee closed on August 24, 2014. Eleanor Nielsen, Returning Officer for the election has announced those elected to office are the following:

President,	Jane Frost , Vancouver, Canada
Vice-President,	Meri Gibson , Christchurch, New Zealand
Secretary-Treasurer	Jenny Yule , Vancouver, Canada
Membership Director	Betty Solley , Philadelphia, USA
Communication Director	Carol Mutton , Peterborough, Canada

IBCPC By-laws state: "In the event there is only one name placed in nomination that person will be elected by acclamation." Accordingly, Eleanor also announces these people have been elected by acclamation. You can read their biographies on the website www.ibcpc.com.

Note to Congress Attendees. Agenda item #7 "Election of Steering Committee" will be removed from the Second Congress agenda.

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Double loss meets a dragon boat

Cancer took my child and my breast, but I rediscovered my joy by racing on the water with a team of survivors

By **Pam Birrell**, *Survivors Abreast* Peterborough, Canada

For twelve years, I have lived amid the wreckage we call grief. In December 2001, our eight-year-old son James died of neuroblastoma, a rare cancer. Before that, in 1996, I was diagnosed with an aggressive breast cancer. My treatment ended just four months before James's diagnosis in 1997.

Re-constructing my life since James's death has been a slow, slow journey. Sometimes I travel a straight course like a sailboat in a steady wind, and sometimes I spin in circles like a rudderless ship.

Bereaved parents must survive for the sake of their remaining children. And so I have for Rebecca and Ben. But in the last five years, I have given birth a fourth time. To a competitive athlete. To me, Pamela Jane, who was the once quiet, gangly girl who loved calculus, books and music. I am now 50 years old and I race competitively in the extreme sport of dragon boating.

I am grinning ear to ear as I write about races. Remembering last season's grueling races in the shallow, weedy water of Port Perry fills me with extraordinary joy!

I discovered dragon boating after I was invited to share my sad double-barreled cancer story: - the loss of a breast, the loss of a child – with a group of racers that included Survivors Abreast, who were soon to be my team. I tell my story as an invitation to

listeners who often tell their stories in return; it's a therapeutic exchange, a lightening of heavy baggage. The day after I spoke I went to watch my first race and, as a survivor, was invited to get into a boat and join the racers on the water for the flower ceremony.

Flower ceremonies are the poignant interlude on race days whenever breast cancer survivor teams compete. The boats link up and competitors become soul sisters. The names of teammates who have died are read out. All survivor paddlers wave pink carnations. After a minute of silence, they toss the carnations into the water and dry their tears. Quietly the boats drift apart, and the race day continues.

Those first few moments in a dragon boat, participating in a flower ceremony, changed me. I wanted to be on this team.

It was eight months before I was brave enough to attend a team meeting in a church basement in Lakefield.

I was afraid! It was like trying out for the Grade 9 basket ball team, all over again. And with tendonitis in one shoulder, a mastectomy on the other side, I wondered if I could do this extreme sport. And the women! How to describe 40 breast cancer survivors, aged 40 to 80, linked only by a disease. All I can say is that the women are passionate, hard-working, opinionated, loving, and sometimes, a little crazy!

I wonder if they knew how fragile I was as I stepped into the long narrow boat for the first time. When your child dies, you feel like

The first race was terrifying and exciting.

I paddled to the starting line with heart pounding, stomach somersaulting, mouth dry. - And then the magic words of the starter – “Attention please” – followed by the coach shouting – “Paddles up!” – before the starting horn.

an utter failure. You have failed to keep your child safe. There is no logic in these thoughts. But they are overwhelming the reality for anyone who belongs to the society of broken parents.

Would my attempt at sport be another failure?

After each practice that first summer, I exited the boat on Jello legs. Every night I slept with an ice pack on my shoulder.

But I loved every practice – the challenge, the escape, the exhaustion, the connection to a team.

The first race was terrifying and exciting. I paddled to the starting line with heart pounding, stomach somersaulting, mouth dry. - And then the magic words of the starter – “Attention please” – followed by the coach shouting – “Paddles up!” – before the starting horn.

Then two minutes of full-body exertion begins. Unity is key. There are no stars in a dragon boat. Twenty paddlers propel the boat forward, their paddles entering and exiting the water at the same instant.



Illustration by: *Rachel Idzerda*



Continued from page 2...

We won! We didn't win often that year, but we won my first race. And I was hooked.

I am now in my sixth season of paddling. I work out at least three times a week. I am stronger than I have ever been – in every way. I hop easily out of the boat after practice, legs strong and confident.

The team also grows stronger. We are winning more races. I am now captain of the team. My friends listen kindly as I chatter on about new techniques and upcoming regattas.

The elephant will always be in the room and in the dragon boat. We all dread the next mammogram. But in the boat, we dare to face our demons.

When James died, my life was shattered. Very slowly, I have rebuilt a new life. I have rebuilt a career as a singer and singing teacher. I have begun to write poetry. I have become an athlete.

I often wonder what James would look like if he were alive. What university would he attend? What sports would he play? What music would he love. The loss is still profound. The pain comes and goes.

In his last months of life, James said things like "You can't let cancer ruin your day" and "I've been thinking. Every day is a precious gift, you've gotta use it".

I have always wanted to honour his thoughts.

I put down my baggage and pick up a paddle.

This article appeared in The Globe and Mail, Friday June 27, 2014. Article reprinted with the permission of the author Pam Birrell. Illustration reprinted with the permission of the artist, Rachel Idzerda.

Heredity Breast Cancer Patients Should Be Included

Dr Don McKenzie, Vancouver, Canada

The criteria for inclusion on the original 1996 *Abreast in A Boat* team was the diagnosis of and treatment for breast cancer. Age, fitness, previous experience in canoeing did not matter. The question of hereditary breast cancer was not on the radar at that time. These women came together to dispel the myth that exercise caused breast cancer related lymphedema. They were successful in this experiment and other women felt more confident in engaging in this and other activities. As the program expanded women attracted to the team would ask; am I too old? I've had a reconstruction- can I still participate? I have lymphedema – will this make me worse? With very, very few exceptions these women were encouraged to join and given the necessary support to make this a positive experience.

One of the fundamental lessons that we have learned from the dragon boat teams and research from our 'cancer gym' is that exercise is an essential component in the prevention and treatment of breast cancer. Regular physical activity will affect the outcome of the disease. Women with the risk of hereditary breast cancer need support. It is a terrifying situation to be in. Please take a look at the IBCPC revised definition of a paddler and click on the links. There is a lot of information on hereditary breast cancer that did not exist 10 years ago. Women with these genes are treated for breast cancer, in some fashion when, in fact, there is no evidence of the disease. There is research that shows a reduced risk of breast cancer associated with exercise in the BRCA1 and BRCA2 carriers. Dragon boat paddling is a popular activity and results in proven changes in physical and mental health. It follows that these women should be supported by inclusion in paddling activities with women who have also been treated for the disease. It has always been a program that emphasizes inclusion rather than exclusion.



Where has he been now?

Dr Don McKenzie, founder and coach of Vancouver Canada's, *Abreast In A Boat* the first breast cancer dragon boat team is ever in demand at international paddlers' events. His involvement with the International Canoe Federation (ICF) and the Olympics keeps him moving around the world at an amazing pace. He wrote the article for this September IBCPC Newsletter during his flight to Moscow in August where he attended the 2014 ICF Canoe Sprint World Championships as ICF Director, Chair Medical and Anti-doping.





2014 IBCPC PARTICIPATORY Dragon Boat Festival

Sarasota • Florida, USA
OCTOBER 24 - 26

An Amazing Adventure in Living

By **Jane Frost**, President, IBCPC Vancouver, Canada

Sarasota 2014, the fourth international festival celebrating breast cancer dragon boat paddling, will be taking place in a few short weeks. The three previous festivals made memories for a life time.

If you were there, do you remember?

- ✓ entering the Opening Ceremonies at 10 Years Abreast in Vancouver, Canada 2005 and finding yourself wrapped in a gorgeous fuchsia boa and then dancing the night away;
- ✓ in Caloundra, Australia 2007 spending the evening at a family theme park, Aussie World and the silent rafting of the boats for the Flower Ceremony; and
- ✓ Peterborough, Canada 2010 dining and dancing in two well-disguised hockey arenas and watching white doves flying above us after The Sandy Smith Global Race and the Flower Ceremony.

Sarasota will add to the list of treasured memories.

Such events celebrate a global coming together where we reconnect with our paddling pals, where we raise awareness about the importance of exercise in our efforts to deal with breast cancer and where we demonstrate there is life after dealing with this disease.

Our focus is on participation by breast cancer survivors and is not on competition. Yes, some teams will paddle faster than others but everyone wins. We are winners just getting there.

Dragon boating has become an amazing adventure in living. We paddle together, supporting and learning from each other, sharing our joys and fears, taking pride in our accomplishments and breaking the silence of cancer.

Thank you for coming and special thanks to the families, friends, communities and sponsors who have been there for us in so many ways over the years and who have made Sarasota 2014 possible.

Have a wonderful weekend, laugh and be proud.



The 2014 IBCPC Participatory Dragon Boat Festival logo is strictly forbidden and may not be used without the advanced written approval from the Sarasota BCS Festival 2014, Corp. Any unauthorized use of the logo on any items will be removed at the festival and may be retrieved at the conclusion of the festival.

NOTICES

Face to face

The IBCPC Steering Committee members are looking forward to meeting the many of you who have worked with us over the past four years through our website, newsletters, Skype and, of course, those thousands of emails.

Come to our tent at the race site between noon and 1:30 pm on either Saturday Oct 25 or Sunday, Oct 26. We will be there waiting to talk to you in person. We will also have some interesting items for sale so it will be a time for both a chat and some shopping.

Hosting a Festival: What You Need to Know.

A workshop entitled *How to Win the Bid for the Next IBCPC Festival* will be held at Benderson Park, Sarasota, Florida on Friday October 24, 2014 from 1:30 to 3:00 pm.

All teams interested in hosting the next IBCPC festival are encouraged to attend.

The workshop will be a round table discussion led by the women who organized the last three international festivals: Vancouver Canada 2005, Caloundra Australia 2007 and Peterborough Canada 2010. Bring your questions and your sense of the timing that would be best for your team to host this important event.

Who will carry the flags?

Is Pat Daley from Australia (See June 2014 IBCPC Newsletter) at 91 going to be our oldest paddler? And who is going to be our youngest?

The IBCPC Festivals have a tradition of recognizing each country's youngest and oldest paddler. For the Sarasota event your country's youngest paddler will present your national flag at the Opening Ceremonies. Each country's oldest paddler will carry its flag leading the paddlers' parade into the Closing Ceremonies.

Action is required. Each of the IBCPC member teams has been assigned an IBCPC National Representative. To see who that person is go to www.ibcpc.com, click on People and then National Representative. Your National rep is collecting the names and ages of each team's oldest and youngest paddlers.

Please submit the names and birthdates of your oldest and youngest no later than September 15, 2014 to either your National rep or to committee@ibcpc.com. Give your email the subject: Paddler ages.





Decision-Making

All members urged to participate

Welcome to those of you fortunate enough to be attending the Second IBCPC Congress in Sarasota, Florida, USA. We will be missing those Member Teams from countries unable to attend. You will be with us in spirit. Through our newsletter and website we will endeavor to fully report back to you on the activities and decisions made at this important meeting. To reflect the future direction members wish the Commission to take, it is essential we receive your comments in advance of the meeting. We are urging you to participate in the decision-making process as described in this message.

The Second IBCPC Congress will take place on Friday October 24, 2014. The first Congress was held in Peterborough Canada in June 2010. That Congress approved the Constitution and by-laws for the establishment of the Commission as well as a process for the election of the Steering Committee's directors.

Now, four years later, it is time to review the work of the Commission.

An important agenda item will be a facilitated discussion on a proposed new definition of an IBCPC paddler. Visit www.ibcpc.com and click on 2014 Congress to review the documents and on the People tab to see who is running for election.

For those Teams unable to attend the Congress you are encouraged to review all the documentation and forward your comments to the Steering Committee. Proxy voting is not permitted but comments are welcome and will be reviewed at the Congress if they are not redundant to the discussions. Comments must be received by October 15, 2014. Send comments to committee@ibcpc.com and title your email: Congress Comments from....name your team.

We look forward to seeing you there or hearing your views on the agenda items.

IBCPC Steering Committee

**You must be present to vote.
We urge you to participate.**

What are the criteria for membership on an IBCPC breast cancer paddling team?

Currently the definition of a Paddler as set out in the IBCPC By-laws approved at the First IBCPC Congress in Peterborough, Canada in June 2010 is "a person who has been diagnosed with breast cancer and who is one member of a Crew and includes the Crew's drummer and steersperson."

The Steering Committee is proposing the following changes to the current definition:

A Paddler is a person who has been:

- a. *diagnosed with breast cancer; or*
- b. *diagnosed with a mutation in a hereditary breast cancer gene such as BRCA 1 and BRCA 2 and may be managing her/his diagnosis with one or more of the following: clinical trials, hormone therapy, surveillance, chemoprevention and/or prophylactic surgery*

and is one member of a Team all of whom fall into category a. or b. above. A Team comprises steers, drummers and paddlers.

Visit www.ibcpc.com and click on IBCPC 2nd Congress for background and rationale for this new definition.

Everyone Welcome to Wellness Day Friday October 24, 2014 | 9am to 3pm

Nathan Benderson Park

All paddlers are invited to attend the workshops that have become a tradition for our international festivals. We are able to invite everyone to participate because the Sarasota venue can accommodate us all. You can expect seminars and presentations geared toward wellness for the breast cancer paddler.

Bring your sneakers for a zumba class and your notebook for news on nutrition and cancer prevention. Come prepared to learn and participate. Most presentations will happen twice, so you won't miss your favorite. Also on Friday the site will have all kinds of activities; food and beverage vendors and entertainment or you can choose just to chill out on the sandy beach so don't forget your towel and bather.





River Thames Epic Event to be Revisited

By **Jane Frost**, IBCPC President

Millions of viewers will remember for their lifetime the spectacle on the River Thames organized in celebration of Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee in 2012. Now the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is planning to revisit the event through the eyes of four participants in that maritime extravaganza. To the great delight of the breast cancer dragon boat world one of those four people is **Louisa Balderson**, Patron and Co-founder of *Paddlers for Life*, Windermere, Great Britain.

Recently Louisa spent two days in London with the BBC. She was in her element talking about breast cancer dragon boat paddling and then regaling her interviewers with such stories as getting the two boats from Windermere, down the M5, through the streets of London and onto the embankment at Putney. Dragon boats are long, 39 feet and heavy so it was not an easy feat.

Paddlers for Life had kindly loaned the IBCPC crew *Internationally Abreast* (IA) their second boat, *Lucy at Low Wood*. What a sight she was all decked out in royal style complete with pink carnations ringing the drum. But nothing could compare to the sight of the *Spirit of Chartwell* refitted and adorned for the Royals. Even from a distance the sight of that vessel with the Queen and her family smiling and waving will remain with those of us fortunate enough to have paddled the turbulent waters of the River Thames on that blustery day.

Louisa had the good fortune during her visit with the BBC to take a memory ride down the Thames aboard the vessel, *Havengore* which had passengered some of the Royal family for the Pageant. For the BBC story as the *Havengore* passed under Tower Bridge, a member of the Jubilee choir sang 'Land of Hope and Glory' and the crowds on the bridge roared and waved just as they had done two years ago when the thousand vessels made their way along the river.

Louisa said "It was like being taken back in time. I could feel the lump in my throat. The movement of the boat, views of London's landmarks and the cheering crowds made the Pageant experience all so very real once again."

"Memories for a life time" recalls Jenny Yule, Captain of IA. "The sight of that flotilla of vessels, all sizes and shapes navigating the turbulent waters of the River Thames will stay with the paddlers forever. The four breast cancer teams had achieved what they set out to do: honour the Queen and raise breast cancer awareness."

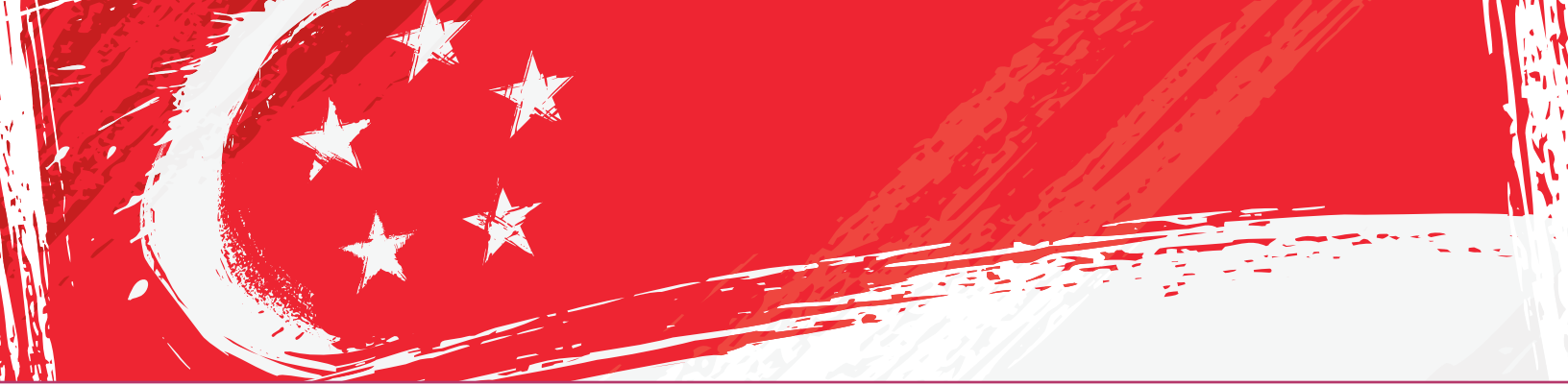
I, as President of IBCPC, felt proud and elated that we had been invited to paddle in the historic event. I vividly recall we were on the water for six hours and once we were out of our boat, the six hours felt like six minutes. Even the torrential rains could not dampen our spirits.

The BBC Special, *Real Lives Revisited*, will air in the British spring of 2015.



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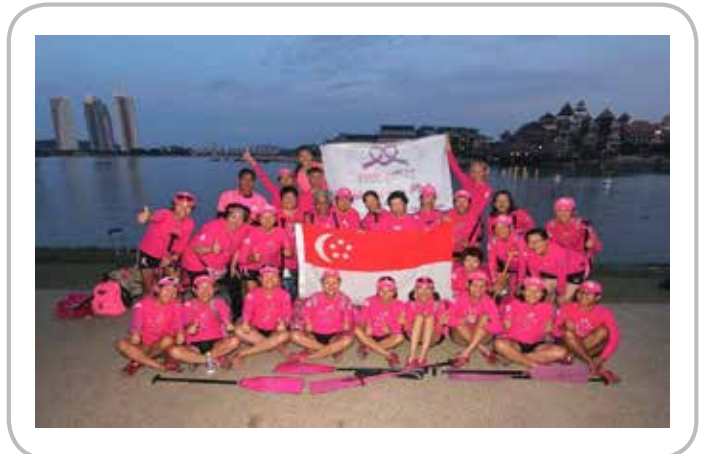
Intense Training Rewards “the hulks”

Chia Siang Pio, Captain, Paddlers in the Pink Breast Cancer Foundation of Singapore (BCF),

On the weekend of May 31- June 1, *Paddlers in the Pink* participated in the Malaysia International Dragon Boat and IDBF Cancer Survivors Championship – The Twin Cities Races in Malacca and Putrajaya. Going into the races, we were pumped with the knowledge that the weekend would include a couple of “firsts” for us. It would be the first time that we would meet the strong South African breast cancer team. It would also be the first time that Paddlers in the Pink would take part in a 500m race, and our coach had set us a target race time of 2:40. We would also face our old rivals, the Australian and Malaysian teams which would be keen to avenge their losses to us in our last encounter with them three years ago.

To prepare us for these exciting challenges, our coaches Winsor and Mel had developed a rigorous training regime, including weekday evening pool and “ramp-up” training sessions in addition to our regular Saturday morning practices. Beginning with our very first boot camp in late April, Winsor had drummed into us the technique of visualizing ourselves as “Incredible Hulks” as we plunged our paddles into the water to start every race.

The Saturday races in Malacca were 250-meter sprints. Armed with our signature determination to do our best and with heads filled with vivid images of strength from the first paddle stroke onward, we managed to secure a hard-fought victory over the Australian team for our most important race: the 12-crew International Cancer Survivors Open. The mere one-second victory prompted the Australian coach to issue, with the wink of an eye, a friendly warning that they would catch us the next day in the 500-meter races in Putrajaya. It was not to be.....



That evening, we travelled close to 150 kilometers to Putrajaya. Sunday presented us with the opportunity to repeat our 2011 victory when Paddlers in the Pink had won the inaugural IDBF Cancer Survivors World Cup at the same venue. We were determined to show our strength again. How happy we were to win all three of the 500-meter cancer races: the 12-crew and 22-crew International Cancer Survivors Open, as well as the 22-crew Breast Cancer Survivors Invitational Race. We all beamed with pride when we realized that we had won the bcs race by almost 1½ boat lengths, but most importantly that we had surpassed our coach’s target time by several seconds.

How did we do it? With determination and heart, and oh yes, by digging deep to find the inner “Hulk” in ourselves!

Overheard

Editor’s note: We hear many comments from readers and associates about survivors so we thought it would be interesting to share them with you through a feature we are calling “Overheard”. We would welcome any you might care to pass on to us.

One new paddler to one old paddler
“I know you. You were my chemo nurse twenty years ago. I may forget my students but I will never forget you.”

Paddler’s husband to Dr. Don McKenzie
“Thanks for giving me my wife back.”

New paddler to teammates
“You have given me back my laughter.”

Chemo nurse to patient
“Are you one of those paddlers?”
“Yes” came the response and the nurse quipped: “We don’t worry about you paddlers as patients. You know the drill and are easy for us to look after.”





Memories are made of this

Deanna Lee, (second from right) a member of Vancouver Canada's *Abreast In A Boat*, accepted the invitation from the Hawaiian breast cancer outrigger team, *Mana'olana's* to accompany paddlers on a memorable outrigger ride around the tropical island of Maui. (See June'14 issue of this newsletter for further details.)

Motor City Dragons

Motor City Dragons (MCD), Detroit, USA, kicked off the 2014 paddling season at Chicago International Dragon Boat Festival @ Lake Arlington, Illinois with 3 new paddlers.

MCD is the only breast cancer and co-ed supporter/friend dragon boat team in Michigan, USA. Their goal is to have fun, help raise awareness, raise funds to support other breast cancer charities, and support others and one another! Their team is open to all ages and all abilities - men & women!

They are a team within Ford Canoe & Kayak Club which is a member of Ford Employee Recreation Association. 2013 was their first season on the water and in 2014 they purchased their first boat which they named Mustang Patty.



Left to right: **Kathy Zaguroli, Susan Wellman-Smith, Catherine Curley, Stacy Brege, Kim Brown, Rose Rehbein, Stephanie McKire, Carol Fink, Michelle Smart**
Kneeling in front is **Csilla Gutay**, the driving force behind this burgeoning team.

What in the world is going on?



September 14, 2014 Windermere, UK
First Paddlers for Life festival in partnership with English Lakes Hotels
www.paddlersforlife.co.uk



October 24-26, 2014 Sarasota, Florida, USA
IBCPC Participatory Dragon Boat Festival info@
sarasotabcsfestival2014.org



September 20 & 21, 2014 Rouen, France
Agnes Sorel Challenge for Pink Ladies on Jumieges Le Mesnil Lake, Normandy
dragonboat@hotmail.fr



October 24, 2014 Benderson Park, Sarasota
How to win the bid for the next IBCPC Festival Round table workshop 1:30 to 3pm. Bring your questions and the opportune time for you to host the next festival.



October 11, 2014 Sidney, Australia
Dragons Abreast Australia's annual regatta at Sydney International Regatta Centre, Penrith
festival@dragonsabreast.org.au



May 30 & 31, 2015 Florence, Italy
Pink Dragon boat meeting the weekend after Venice's Vogalonga
www.florencedragonlady.it

The IBCPC invites teams to post events of interest to paddlers on the above Bulletin Board. To do so email the information to newsletter@ibcpc.com. The IBCPC takes no responsibility for events by reason of the posting. Where travel to another country is involved, teams are advised to consult their respective Government's Travel Advisory.



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IBCPC is a commission of the International Dragon Boat Federation