



International Breast Cancer PADDLERS' COMMISSION

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What is your team's greatest asset? What is your team's greatest challenge?

In reply to a request from this newsletter to all member IBCPC teams to write a brief summary of the greatest asset the team possesses and the biggest challenge it faces, the following submissions were received. All these teams were pleased to submit their views and the newsletter was excited to receive such an enthusiastic response. New submissions would be welcomed. Email them to newsletter@ibcpc.com.

Dragons Abreast

Toronto, Canada By **AKAASH SINGH**

There are many assets a breast cancer dragon boat team (BCS) has such as camaraderie, commitment and support. One integral asset to any dragon boat team is cooperation. Cooperation harmoniously binds the steersperson, drummer and all of the paddlers together towards one common purpose. Each of us in the boat play important roles from the steersperson who guides the boat and keeps us safe to the drummer who relays the steersperson's direction with an infectious enthusiasm and keeps the paddlers in time to each of the paddlers who propel the boat forward in unison and with strength. Good cooperation means listening to each other and acting together.

The coordination of these individual efforts makes the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

Cooperation also serves a BCS dragon boat team well off the water. Many teams have social functions like team parties, fundraising efforts and support for community events. One such example for *Dragons Abreast* is our 20th Anniversary Gala event. Though this event is being spearheaded by one of our most dynamic members, she can readily draw support not just from the board but from other team members. The wide variety of skills possessed by the team members as well as the people they know makes for an embarrassment of riches when looking for an "expert." The anniversary party is certainly becoming a grand event that our members and guests will

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PHOTO: ANDREW AITKEN

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enjoy immensely. This could only happen by commitment and cooperation.

As with all things, a BSC dragon boat team is not without challenges such as fundraising, sponsorship and recruitment of new members. I believe that one of greatest challenges is maintaining positive morale within the team. Good morale can make an average team outstanding and poor morale can turn a great team into a poor one. I have personally experienced the team performance difference when morale is low and when it is high. The effect on the team members is astounding! The attitude of the individual team members is critical to good morale. Effusive and happy personalities create a welcoming atmosphere in which many team members can thrive. Combine this with good planning and support and morale remains high. Conversely, negative attitudes, poor sportsmanship and in-fighting create a highly tense atmosphere that reduces team membership since no one wants to be part of a team where they are uncomfortable and not valued. As everyone has different and often strong personalities, managing the dynamics of the team can be quite challenging. In the end, as long as good work is recognized and grievances are examined objectively and fairly, we can create good morale and set a standard of behaviour for the team.

A BCS dragon boat team is not easy. Though we may have many challenges, we must try to avoid the pitfalls and consequences of poor morale as it is essentially counter-productive to a good team and in turn, leads to other challenges. Cooperation within the team, both on and off the water is essential to improving morale and taking the team beyond what it thought possible.

PS Thanks for the opportunity to contribute to the newsletter. Akaash.

Seincr'eau

Montreal, Canada By **ANNE MARIE COUTURE**

Seincr'eau (pronounced *syncro*) was established in 2011 and they paddle in the Olympic Basin, in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

This team was created for all breast cancer survivors to encourage continued healing and victory over this disease. Our team's goal is to give a chance and hope to women going through or having gone through breast cancer so they can join a sports group and continue to have a normal life.

We are happy to have on our team women of different ages and origin who are all great examples of perseverance after the initial shock of the diagnosis. These women believe that the support this team brings helps our physical healing as well as boosts our morale tremendously by convincing us that the future is ahead of us.

Our team's greatest asset is that we all share intensely the same will to live and are willing to work hard to keep this life that we came so close to losing. Dragon boating gives each of these women on the *Seincr'eau* team a chance to strengthen their health through sport, friendship, group support and

enthusiasm as well as bringing back hope in their lives and the lives of their loved ones.

Our greatest challenge is to maintain our physical health and believe that through the times we will be able to spread the message that only perseverance will keep us healthy. *Seincr'eau* is a project in continuing evolution that keeps getting bigger with time. We have reached our goal when we have given hope to as many breast cancer survivors as we possibly can.

Our Motto: Cheers for sports! Cheers for life! Cheers for hope! And long live *Seincr'eau*! All for one and one for all!!!

Pittwater Pinks

Sydney, Australia By **JENNY JONES**

The *Pittwater Pinks* have been together for over 12 years. There are now 31 of us and nobody ever leaves the group without good reason.

Why have we stuck together for so long and so harmoniously?

Firstly we celebrate our friendships. Breast cancer brought us together but we support each other in so many other ways - through so many of life's trials and celebrations. We celebrate our past through the sharing of our collective memories. Deep long term friendships have developed. We have shared values and common goals.

Conflict is rare but we deal with it with openness, cooperation and compromise. Also respect and tolerance.

There is no "top dog", control or domination. Decisions are made at meetings where everyone can have their say. Each member of the group is willing to put their hand up to help so tasks are shared around.

Each one of us values greatly our membership of the *Pittwater Pinks* Dragon Boat Team. We consider ourselves blessed to be part of this group.

Our greatest asset - Ourselves, our *Pittwater Pink* paddlers/ team members and supporters.

Our greatest challenge - To make everyone of us fit and strong physically and mentally.

DAM Busters

Dragons Abreast
Melbourne, Australia By **PRU MENZIES**

Our first season was 2001-2 on the Yarra River and now we paddle in Victoria Harbour, Docklands.

Our greatest asset as a team is our members, without them there wouldn't be a team, training and competing together; being there to support each other all year round. Ability to get crazy and have fun at the drop of a hat - win or lose we are always happy! Going away and having fun together, but not being pressured to compete or to go away if you can't make it.

Our biggest challenge is our membership, balancing differing

views, priorities and capabilities. Getting enough members to come regularly for weekly practice sessions and regattas. A lot of people tend to drop out... or miss a lot of sessions.

One of our members responded: "I am the biggest asset to the team... and maybe the biggest challenge at the same time!"

PS We thought this was a very interesting set of questions! Pru

Breast Friends

Edmonton, Canada By **GILLIAN RUTHERFORD**

Breast Friends trains and races on the North Saskatchewan River in Edmonton. They get on the river in late May or June and continue to train until early September. The rest of the year due to a frigid climate they work out at a local YWCA.

When we asked ourselves what our biggest asset is as a team, everyone immediately answered: our friendships. The relationships we form as we train and race beside each other are so strong. We have an unspoken shared history that means we understand each other, without any questions or explanations required. We've all walked the same road of a cancer journey – diagnosis, treatment (sometimes more than once), recovery and adaptation to the "new normal".

Each of us is proud of our individual strength and determination, hard won from taking that journey. But we recognize that together, we are even stronger than any of us could ever be on her own. It is a powerful and meaningful realization that is reinforced often, as we push each other to train harder, as we support our teammates through recurrence, as we race together in our dragon boat – a metaphor for the larger battles life inevitably brings.

As for the challenges we face, our northern climate can certainly present a few. Because ice covers our river for eight months of the year, we find ourselves paddling in half-sized pool boats in April and May. Tethered to the swimming pool deck with a bungee cord, the Aquasize class that uses the other half of the pool certainly hopes we don't spring loose and come flying their way! At this time of the year, some of us hope to improve our strokes without having one – a stroke, that is.

PS Thanks for asking us to tell our team's story! Gillian

Angels Abreast

Nanaimo, Canada By **BEVERLEY REID**

Our team, *Angels Abreast*, is made up of breast cancer survivors and supporters who are passionate about dragon boating. We've come from across Canada—from small eastern towns, major urban centres and prairie cities—to the west coast of British Columbia and Vancouver Island. We are now all islanders and perhaps this situation gives our team its most important asset: the water is always at our doorstep.

Based in Nanaimo, we draw our membership from the city itself and surrounding island communities. Twice a week, we paddle in spectacular Newcastle channel where our regular companions are seals, otters, and eagles. Our patient coach

gives us time for "nature moments" when we can reflect not only on the beauty of our environment but also on the good fortune which has brought us all together.

We are part of a large, vibrant dragon boating community which exists all over the island. As a result, each year we receive invitations to a number of festivals in which we participate. The most important of these festivals, The Nanaimo Dragon Boat Festival, is held in support of breast cancer in our home community.

Like any other survivor team, we face challenges. Not all of us are able to paddle without difficulty. Not all of us can commit fully to the demanding practice and festival schedule. Not all of us are in it for the long haul. Perhaps the biggest challenge we face as a team, however, is losing a member to breast cancer. Fortunately, this does not happen often but when it does we find strength as a group in our collective journeys and our partnerships in the boat.

North Shore Dragon Busters

North Vancouver, Canada By **DIANE TUCKER**

Paddling out of picturesque Deep Cove in North Vancouver, Canada, the *North Shore Dragon Busters* is celebrating 10 years as the only survivor team from Vancouver's North Shore.

We believe one of our greatest assets is our unity as a team. We are strongly connected both on and off the water. Partly because we all have in common a history of breast cancer but more importantly, we all share the goals of competing as dragon boaters, having fun and giving back to our community.

Our biggest challenge is the varying degrees of physical ability. Some of us have physical limitations due to health issues (lymphedema) resulting from cancer treatment. The limited mobility in our arms means that some of us can only paddle on one side or can have a restricted range of motion. However, we do not let this affect our goals or attitude.

We are proud to be survivors who compete at the same level as every other dragon boater.

Two Abreast-Côte-À-Côte

Montreal, Canada By **DONNA TREMBLAY**

Two Abreast's Greatest Asset as a team: It's members!

We have many experienced members as *Two Abreast* will be celebrating our 20th anniversary this year. We have members that have been to many International festivals, as a team or as members of *Canadian's Abreast*, and even individually. Three of our members joined a Guadeloupe team (last month) that wants to create a BCS dragon boat team there. They joined them for kayaking and gave a presentation on how our team formed. We have members that have attended boot camps and that have had many different coaches, resulting in a deeper understanding of the technique. Members that have had experience in administration processes, such as team procedures, events, fundraising and sponsorship activities. We benefit from many great skills that each member brings to the team.

Two Abreast's Greatest Challenge as a team: It's members!

We range in age from 42 to 85. We have members (as most other BCS teams will have) at different phases in their cancers, some back in treatment. Personalities from very quiet to hyperactive. How do we accommodate each member's needs? Different financial situations too – which makes travelling accommodations and activities challenging. We recruit in spring and fall but accept new members year-round, which provides an additional challenge to our coach who has to teach the technique even while we are training for competitions. We are 30 paddlers and sometimes don't fill a boat during practice but sometimes have too many so we have to rotate paddlers. Integrating new paddlers is a major challenge. Another major challenge in the past few years is to get a full crew for all of the competitions we plan on. We try to plan one festival per month during the season, so five festivals a year, with at least one being out-of-town.

Dragons of Hope

Thunder Bay, Canada By **LANI GARRY**

Our greatest asset as a team is the camaraderie we share – the friendship we enjoy and the support we give to each other makes each one of us a stronger person and member of the team.

We have faced challenges together and as individuals, and no matter what, we can count on each other to be there for the support and guidance to get through it. We are also there to share and celebrate the happiest of times, such as the precious birth of a baby girl for one of our members last summer.

We have currently set our sights on preparing for participation in the 2018 Festival in Florence, Italy; it's a whirlwind of activity of fundraising and travel planning. This will be the first time our team has attended an international event of this nature and we are very excited to participate!

Our biggest challenge is the isolation created by our geography – our location in the northern region of Ontario makes it difficult to travel to other festivals, unlike cities such as Vancouver and Toronto that benefit from attending many other festivals in their areas and also draw new members from the larger population. Indeed, the closest festival besides our local one is a travel distance of four hours to the State of Minnesota.

Our location in the north also means that we have a very short paddling season – usually only from June through August, and if we have inclement weather, that means missing precious paddling time.

Pink Power Hong Kong

By **ADO LO**

This team practices twice a week, every Thursday and Sunday in Tseung Kwan O, New Territories, Hong Kong.

Hip Hip Hooray! Hip Hip Hooray! Same as many dragon boat teams, *Pink Power Hong Kong* (“PPHK”) practices and paddles hard to achieve the best we can in every competition. We do not paddle only to win our race, we also want to cherish our

“second” life through dragon boat paddling.

We feel proud of the strong bonding in PPHK with the team only established for a year since 2016. PPHK is one big family to all of us. The coach, cancer survivors and supporter members have been supporting each other with love and care everywhere. We truly believe that having our team staying positive and happy helps keeping us healthy and strong. Through improving in technique and performance in this sport, our members become physically strong and confident in achieving the best we can.

Being a cancer survivor dragon boat team, we face the challenge in helping new members, especially those who recently finished medical treatment to build up the necessary physique and overcoming their obstacles to take up dragon boat paddling. In addition, it is also a challenge for us to balance and allocate time for work, family and paddling training.

These challenges won't stop us and PPHK to excel ourselves. Being a team with a strong foundation and bonding, PPHK shall continue to shine and bloom! We are so proud to say “Go...Pink! Go...Power! Go! Go! Pink Power!!!”

Dragons Abreast Brisbane

Australia By **LEE MASSEY**

Having such a large membership base is both our biggest asset and our biggest challenge as a team.

Our greatest asset as a team: the camaraderie engendered and the strength we gain from the warmth and encouragement shown within our team of breast cancer survivors and supporters.

Our 90 members, 63 breast cancer survivors and 27 supporters are united by breast cancer, either by a diagnosis or by a close link with a breast cancer survivor. The diversity of age, gender, personalities, background, and paddling experience in our club creates a unique mix. This is a dynamic group of individuals enjoying life, having fun and working together to raise the profile of breast cancer awareness, by sharing their personal skills and life experiences. We are a motivated and fitness-focused group and our members do not let a breast cancer diagnosis rule their lives.

Our biggest challenge as a team: our size, creates our biggest challenge.

We aim to keep the focus on the fun and passion of participating in dragon boating while trying to meet the needs and wants of our members.

Some of our challenges include:

- Communicating with such a large group. Happily we have emails and Facebook.
- Determining our club's priorities for such a large and diverse group
- Assisting and encouraging the development of our members as sports paddlers while fostering the sense of fun/joy demanded by recreational paddlers.
- Ensuring safety on the water
- Obtaining funding for enough equipment.

Vise-à-Vie

Quebec City, Canada By **JOCELYNE BOUTET**

Greatest asset: We work hard; we want to give our very best; we like to have fun; we're there for each other when needed.

Greatest challenge: Making sure new members feel part of the team as quickly as possible.

Vise-à-Vie (roughly translated: "Aim for Life") is the only Breast Cancer Dragon Boat team in the Quebec City area. The 40 members (including a man) are paddlers and retired paddlers that support our team. Our mission is to show survivors that it is possible to live an active life and compete in a sport even after breast cancer. We also want to show breast cancer survivors that they can do anything despite the obstacles they may have encountered.

The team was created in 2003 and has grown ever since. In the beginning the team paddled from a dock instead of in a boat; then the team trained in a Rabaska canoe as dragon boats

weren't very popular and very expensive. We practise year-round: twice a week from May to the end of September on a lake and, in the winter months, at an indoor rowing centre on rowers modified for dragon boat paddlers. *Vise-à-Vie* participates in regional, national and international competitions.

We train and paddle hard but also focus on having FUN! We think of ourselves as a big "family" where everyone gets involved in the activities we do. We get together socially a few times a year. Some of our members take part in the Quebec City Winter Triathlon, others workout together. We organize different fund-raising activities, such as conferences and concerts for the International competitions. There is always a reason to have a good time!

We recruit our members through the Run for the Cure event; in hospitals by advertising our team on posters in waiting rooms and talking to the medical staff members. We were contacted by journalists and have appeared on a Sports TV program and been interviewed on a radio show to promote the benefits of this sport. 🌸



AS I SEE IT

As I See It is a new feature designed for paddlers to express their views on issues they see as relevant to our membership, it provides a forum for the candid, unedited exchange of your opinions. If you have points-of-view you wish to express we would welcome hearing from you or if you have comments on this article, please respond to committee@ibcpc.com.

Steering as I see it

By **Akky Mansikka**

Dragons Abreast, Toronto, Canada

In 1997, the first season of Dragons Abreast, Toronto, I started out as a paddler. As a keen paddler, I was reluctant when asked to steer. I was only going to do it for practices when needed. Then came the races. Our founder and others in their wisdom wanted a breast cancer survivor to steer a breast cancer dragon boat. It took several years before I was finally comfortable with doing the calls, working with the coaches on strategies and steering at the same time. The extent of my paddling became dry land and pool practices but that dwindled when steering finally took over. And what a joy it was. I loved steering. I loved feeling the power in the boat, the control and the view from the back. I am a pilot and it is the closest I get to flying. Like flying where the plane glides through air, a dragon boat glides through a denser fluid. Similar forces come into play.

Because female steers are required for International Dragon Boat Federation sanctioned women's races, I came in demand from other competitive woman's teams whose male coaches steer. The first world championships I steered was in 2000 in Philadelphia, USA. Other teams assigned female

paddlers to steer and what a calamity that was. Steers fell out of the boat, boats veered off course and were disqualified but we did well. From then on I steered in numerous World Championship including the Club Crew Championships in Adelaide, Australia last year. If it wasn't for the insistence on a breast cancer survivor to steer a breast cancer survivor boat I probably would not have persisted with the steering. After all I was there to paddle. I wouldn't have known what I was missing. I have the foresight of Dragons Abreast to thank for my wonderful experiences.

As I see it, Breast Cancer teams should insist on a breast cancer survivor to steer to truly make it a breast cancer survivor team. Only by making it a requirement, will a need exist to train steers to world class standards. Then, more women will learn the joy of steering a good race. With the scarcity of experienced competitive female steers, they can end up being in demand for world class races. 🌸

Gordon Miller, renowned maritime artist and author, donated the art work used in this "As I See It" feature.

The IBCPC Steering Committee is pleased to announce the appointment of **Cleusa Alonso** as the National Representative to Brazil. Cleusa (*photo, fourth from right with teammates*) is from Itu, a small state in Sao Paula, Brazil. She was a teacher until four years ago when she retired. She and her family now live in La Plata, Argentina. She was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2011 and is a member of *Remeras Rosas*, the first Latin America team for breast cancer survivors. Cleusa says: "Paddling brought me back to life." The following is an account of her experience in starting paddling teams in Brazil.



Founder of Brazil's teams says "paddling brought me back to life"

It was a very emotional meeting between my team *Remeras Rosas* and **Adriana Bartoli**, IBCPC Latin America Representative, in La Plata, Argentina in November 2014. It was then I learned there were no breast cancer dragon boat teams in my country of Brazil although there were six dragon boats already in Brazil.

Adriana helped me to start the outreach in Brazil. She gave me three contacts. I started with one of the owners of the dragon boats. I sent six e-mails without any answer. Finally, I sent another insistent email as I was determined not to give up having watched the video of the 2014 IBCPC Participatory Dragon Boat Festival, Sarasota, USA. I was blown away after watching it. The long-awaited positive answer came the next morning.

I knew I had only one goal: to let my compatriots know about the benefits of paddling in a dragon boat. I wanted to take the message of hope to the Brazilian breast cancer survivors. The message is that a beautiful and active life after cancer is possible.

In the meantime, between exchanges of emails, a comment on my team webpage written by a Brazilian survivor caught my attention and I decided to send my phone number to her in private. We spoke for almost 3 hours as if we were great friends!!! She had already heard about the paddling benefits for survivors and, inevitably, shared my enthusiasm.

I decided to invite her and one of the dragon boat owners to join the first Dragon Boat Event for survivors in the city of Tigre, Argentina, in February 2016. Luckily, they accepted the invitation to experience something they didn't know; my arguments were based on the joy and emotion I always feel while paddling with my team in a simple canoe. We are about to get our own dragon boat!

They came, got touched by the "Pink" energy and returned to Brazil vowing to move forward. My goal has worked out!

The first Brazilian team *Canomama* from Brasilia became the first Brazilian IBCPC member! In October 2016 KA ORA, the very first breast cancer dragon boat festival in Brazil embraced excited survivors from Argentina, Brazil and my dear friends **Adriana Bartoli**, Canada, **Meri Gibson**, New Zealand and our loved **Dr. Don McKenzie**, Canada

After KA ORA I began to encourage and assist future teams. In January, I spent the holidays in Brazil and I took that opportunity to work with newly forming teams. Today, we have two teams who are members of IBCPC.

Finally, I would like to say I feel honored to work with **Adriana Bartoli** and to start the breast cancer dragon boat teams in Brazil. I immensely thank life for crossing my path with these incredible people and I am grateful for being part of this task of taking a wonderful message to women who have gone through what I went through.

Teams from Brazil include

Canomama, is from Brasilia and became a member of IBCPC in 2016. With twenty-two survivors, *Canomama* is working hard to strengthen their team and to get their own dragon boat. They have already signed up for the IBCPC Festival in Florence in 2018.

Remama Dragão Rosa is from São Paulo. They joined the IBCPC this year. With seven survivors, the team is counting the days before receiving their dragon boat. They work hard and are united in finding new paddlers. They will also be present at the Festival in Florence.

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Pictured above left are some members of Remos Rumos and Ka Ora to the right.



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With the same pride, I will also mention the other teams that are forming in Brazil, spreading the message of strength and hope for other states and cities in the country.

Ka Ora is from Santos. They were formed by five survivors and there are another 20 survivors in the early stages of OC6 paddling. *Ka Ora* already has their dragon boat and they are planning to participate in the Florence Festival.

Remos & Rumos is from Paulo Afonso. With five survivors,

they already have their dragon boat, and are working with much care and dedication to form their team.

Koa Keakua is from Vila Velha. With nine survivors, the team is very excited and shows a great interest in growing and strengthening. They paddle in OC6's.

In addition, we are in a phase of preparations to start the formation of a new team in São Paulo and the first teams from Salvador and Rio de Janeiro. 🌸

Adriana Bartoli Rep for Latin America

The IBCPC Steering Committee is pleased to announce the appointment of **Adriana Bartoli** as the IBCPC Representative for Latin America. Her goal? To start teams in Latin America and she is making good progress.

Adriana Bartoli who this year has led groups in Argentina and Brazil, several of which have become IBCPC members, was born in Argentina into an Italian family. She grew up in Buenos Aires and Patagonia. After graduating as an aviation engineer, she pursued her first dream of raising a family and working in the aerospace industry with her devoted husband, Carlos Alonso. They lived in Italy and Argentina, and then moved to Vancouver, Canada in 2004 with their twin daughters.

In 1993 she was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetic. As a diabetic, exercise and diet are very important to her. She ran ten kilometer races, swam, did traditional workouts, and always



felt strong! She never imagined the word cancer would become a part of her life, but in 2012 she was diagnosed with breast cancer. It was an early detected aggressive breast cancer, in spite of having a very active life, healthy diet, and not having a history of cancer in her family.

In 2013 Adriana joined one *Abreast In A Boat* crew: *Abreast Deas Divas*. Immediately, dragon boating became a passion. She looked for similar teams in her home country and around the world. To her surprise there were no teams in Latin America; dragon boating wasn't an activity developed there. Slowly, with determination and passion on her part, the Latin America outreach started that same year.

Adriana is looking to the future for more teams to start in other Latin American countries to make more of her dreams come true. She continues to be active with *Abreast In A Boat* and will be part of their crew going to the Florence Festival. 🌸



Italian Update

2018 IBCPC PARTICIPATORY

DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL

FLORENCE ITALY



By **LUCIA De RANIERI**, President

2018 IBCPC Participatory Festival

Florence, Italy

Dear friends,

I personally wish to thank you for your great enthusiasm in anticipating and planning for participating in the 5th IBCPC festival to be held in Florence, Italy in 2018.

The registrations are progressing very well and we anticipate that all available slots will be taken up by June 30, 2017. This is the closing date for registrations for those who are paddling. Please do not miss the opportunity to register and take part in living this extraordinary Pink Adventure! The 2018 Festival will be represented by nearly all continents, with teams from around the world, and many new teams from South America and Asia.

The hotel reservation process through our official ENIC partner has been a great success, with over 1,200 bookings made already. July is the high season and finding the type of accommodation you want at the best price may be a challenge. We do not want you, our festival participants, to miss out on the opportunity to book your accommodation and take part in any tourist services through our travel agent partner so that you can obtain the best deals and the highest quality of comfort. Lock in your guaranteed room and room rate now, even though the Festival date is still over a year away. We have reserved all types of lodgings for all participants, giving the opportunity to find accommodations of different levels and qualities that best fits the needs of everyone. It also allows you to book a number of rooms in the same hotel and avoids splitting up team-mates and supporters. Our accommodations partner will give you assistance and support for any need, they will take care of everything concerning your reservation and your stay in Florence.

For information, please contact: festival2018@enicbooking.com

As you will all be aware it is compulsory for each team to be BCS from the front of the boat to the back, this includes a BCS steer and drummer. We expect that most teams will have a drummer and steer. We do however acknowledge that some of the new forming teams and the composite teams may not yet have these people in place. We would like to invite each team to advise us of the availability of BCS steers and drummers who would be happy to join the Festival steer and drummer pool which we are organizing in order to provide steers and drummers for the mixed crews and the newly formed teams. We would be delighted to have you in our pool! Please reply to the festival info email address noting pool steer in the subject line.



Lucia de Ranieri in the drummer's seat for her team Florence Dragon Lady LIIT on the Arno river in the centre of Florence.

I would remind you that teams older than 2 years are expected to have their own trained steers and drummers, and that the crew must be composed of 20 BCs paddlers, 1 BCS steer and 1 BCS drummer.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation. I look forward to hearing from you. PADDLES UP! 🏡

More teams are coming

By **BETTY SOLLEY**, IBCPC Membership Director

2017 has seen a flurry in the growth of teams joining the IBCPC. *Remama Dragao Rosa* is the second team to come to us from Brazil. They are located in Sao Paulo. *Dragons Abreast, Hong Kong* is also the second team to join the IBCPC from Hong Kong. *Wild Atlantic Warriors* becomes the fourth team and is from Cork, Ireland. *Rosa Fenix* is the fifth team to join from Argentina. They are located in Neuquen. *Sunshine Coast Pink Sea Serpents* are now IBCPC members. They are located in Queensland, Australia where they join thirty-three other Australian teams. *Breast Friends* from Grapevine, Texas and *Dallas United Pink* from Dallas Texas are the newest teams to join the IBCPC from the USA where there are now forty-eight teams. The *Breast Buddies* from Ontario, Canada have also joined, bringing the Canadian team numbers to fifty-six.

There are currently 197 breast cancer paddling team members of the IBCPC located in twenty-one countries of the world. More are sure to come!



Italy's Minister of Health paddles with teams

By CECILIA PICCHI

Florence Dragon Lady LILT

European IBCPC Representative

April 22nd has become a special day for the awareness of women's health issues in Italy. In 2016 the Italian Minister of Health, **Beatrice Lorenzin**, declared April 22 as a National Day of Women's Health to mark the anniversary of the birth of **Dr. Rita Levi Montalcini**, noted neurologist and Nobel prize winner for medicine (1986). The Ministry, together with the Fondazione Atena, has endorsed the creation of a National Day of Women's Health as an incentive to focus awareness on women's health issues at every phase of life, from childhood through to later life. A conference was organized at the Ministry Auditorium in Rome with speeches by health-care specialists from various institutions/associations and concerned citizens on the subject of diseases which mainly affect women, and on the search for their possible prevention and cure. There was information and discussion on the possibility of free screenings, including mammograms. As well, the day featured special free and immediate access to 150 breast clinics across Italy, each of which displayed a pink sticker to denote their participation in the event.

On a day dedicated to women's health, breast cancer dragon boaters, of course, were present in full force. In the afternoon, the program continued at the Aniene Rowing Club, along the Tiber river in Rome, with the participation of Rome's *Irosache-osa* BCS dragon boat team and some friends who came from

other BCS teams in Italy: *Florence Dragon Lady Lilt*, *Donna Più Latina*, *Abbraccio Rosa Rome*, *Pink Amazons Milan*, *Astro Dragon Ladies Empoli*, and *Trifoglio Rosa Mestre*. Minister Lorenzin was invited to paddle in the dragon boat for the '1000 Paddle Strokes to Turn Tiber Pink' parade which also featured canoes, rafts, and rowboats. In the Minister's speech, she used the analogy of the dragon boat and the teamwork that is required in order to underline the importance of working together cooperatively in women's collective objective of achieving wellness. The Minister stated that prevention of disease involves choosing to love oneself and maintaining good nutrition as well as an active lifestyle to stay healthy in body and mind. Minister Lorenzin was very enthusiastic about her experience in the dragon boat, especially the feeling of camaraderie which she felt on board. **Dr. Maria Alessandra Mirri**, oncologist and director of the Radiotherapy Unit of San Filippo Neri Hospital in Rome, who also paddled that day, was equally impressed by the experience and hopes to repeat it soon.

The impact of the Tiber river bustling with boats carrying ladies all wearing pink shirts for the occasion was striking. The parade, as well as the earlier events of the day, received great media attention on our national TV networks. **Magda Macchi**, a member of the first breast cancer survivor team in Italy and skilled dragon boater, was interviewed and commented, "[dragon boating] è la miglior cura che esista!" – 'dragon boating is the best cure there is!'. All of us bsc dragon boaters can certainly relate to her enthusiastic words. 🌸

Pictured here, third from the right with the Italian breast cancer dragon boat paddlers is Beatrice Lorenzin, Italy's Minister of Health who joined the women for a paddle on the Tiber River to mark National Day of Women's Health.



Abreast of Life takes top spot at national dragon boating championship

by **JOEL INESON**, *Stuff* New Zealand, April 11th, 2017

A group of Christchurch breast cancer survivors have “taken control” of their lives by dominating a national dragon boating competition.

Abreast of Life, made up of 24 women who have “stared the beast in the face”, took away top honours at the New Zealand Dragon Boat Association National Championship over the weekend.

Eight teams of breast cancer survivors faced off across five categories over Friday and Saturday. *Abreast of Life* won all of them.

Club president **Meri Gibson** said the wins were “unbelievable” and marked a third year of returning to form for the group, which had faced the constant hurdle of losing members, some to cancer.

“Over the time we’ve been a team, since 1999, we’ve lost 23 paddlers, as in passed away.

“It’s a constant, constant rebuilding for us and the earthquakes had such a massive impact that we actually [previously] had to paddle in the women’s division because we couldn’t get enough breast cancer paddlers.”

She said team members ranged in age from their early 40s to mid 70s.

The national win meant the team qualified to take part in the world championships in Hungary in 2018.

A big part of the group’s determination came from a desire to spread awareness about what could be achieved by those who had been treated for breast cancer, she said.

“We’ve all had a diagnosis, stared the beast in the face, and have come to sport as a way of reclaiming your body and reclaiming your fitness and your health.

“It used to be ‘don’t do anything, don’t do any upper-body exercise, wrap yourself in cotton wool’... You now can take control and say ‘this is about me, I’m in control of this’.”

St George’s Hospital cancer specialist **Dr Chris Wynne** said people who had cancer treatment had better results, both physically and socially, if they exercised regularly.

“For reasons we don’t quite understand yet, exercise may very well improve survival.

“It could be any activity, but dragon boating seems to have captured their imagination and it’s really exciting in that it’s great camaraderie, they’re very supportive of each other and it achieves the goals of exercise,” Wynne said.

Gibson said several of the team members’ determination was tested throughout as some received calls that friends and family members died while they were away.

But all persevered and did their part to ensure the team came away with victory, including a helmswoman battling a virus.

“The St John ambulance people actually wouldn’t let her on the boat until her temperature and blood pressure came down,” Gibson said. “She said ‘I’d rather feel bloody disgusting on the back of a boat than even worse standing on the sideline’.

“There was no way she was staying off the boat.” 🌸



PHOTO COURTESY OF ONE OF OUR PADDLERS: DOROTHY MCPHAIL

Australian convention inspiring



Left to right: Pat Hancock, Australia Rep IBCPC, Mabel Sansom DAA Chair, Jo Parry DAA Board member and IBCPC Advisory Board, Meri Gibson VP IBCPC, Ali Sutton DAMbusters President, National Rep IBCPC, Event organiser.

By **MERI GIBSON** VP, IBCPC

Christchurch, New Zealand

I was really pleased to be invited to attend the 2017 Dragons Abreast Australia (DAA) Convention in Melbourne, Australia hosted by *DAM Busters* on the weekend of the 29th-30th April. There were 103 registered attendees – representing 28 of the DAA 35 member groups

The convention commenced with a welcome from Ali Sutton, *DAM Busters* president and a personal story from the newest board member – Pearl Lee.

Then there were very good workshops which included:

- Putting yourself back together to move forward
- Coaching your DAA group – strategies and tips for participation and competition
- Fuel the dragon – preparing for endurance sessions and eating on race day
- Fundraising for your group – tips and ideas

For me there were several highlights. One was the presentation of the **iCare4u App** from **Alyx Stewart** *DAM Busters*. Alyx developed the iCare4u App following her breast cancer diagnosis. She wanted to deal in a concrete organised fashion with her family and friends kind offers of help. What rang true for me was that we are generally not good at asking for help; strong warrior women that we are. The app facilitates a virtual support network among family and friends. It can be used for and by anyone who needs help and care. The app can be accessed via the App Store (Apple) or Google should anyone be interested in looking. There is also a website www.icare4u.net.au.

My most favourite and entrancing session was one of the guest speakers, **Meg Rynderman**. Meg is the Coordinator of Wellbeing at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne. Meg has had her own cancer journey (20 years) starting with Hodgkin disease and four years ago a diagnosis of breast cancer. Meg was so eloquent, the

Meg was so eloquent, the air of calm and intense interest in listening to Meg was palpable. She was amazingly insightful and gave a very moving presentation.

–MERI GIBSON

air of calm and intense interest in listening to Meg was palpable. She was amazingly insightful and gave a very moving presentation (just talking, NO PowerPoint). She touched on many aspects of her experience and vocalised many of the taboo subjects. You could hear a pin drop such was the interest from everyone in the room. Meg is a serene, calm, beautiful and amazing woman. I cannot help but think that anyone who had the privilege of being helped by Meg would be in extremely compassionate and very helpful hands.

The day ended with a celebration dinner and this presented another highlight for me with the entertainer, **Lana Schwarcz**. Lana is a comedian; she is a breast cancer survivor. Her skits were so hilarious we were all in fits of laughter. I think Lana herself was quite floored by the peels of raucous laughter at her jokes, which really hit home shining a light on the parts of our experience that only we could understand. Lana was in her element talking about her own breast cancer experience with a room of over 100 other survivors!!

It was a memorable weekend and I thank *DAM Busters* for making me feel so welcome. 🌸

Academic Dragon Boat Paddling

By **Dr Don McKenzie**, Professor & Director
Division of Sport and Exercise, Faculty of Medicine
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

One of the pleasant duties of a university professor is to review scientific articles and help judge their suitability for publication in medical journals. It's called peer review and is the foundation of research publications. It is an important job as it sets and maintains the standards necessary to publish in respectable medical journals. That is a critical factor for academics who live in the world of publications and grant money. It also keeps you up to date with the research activities of your peers and you learn about the latest research findings several months before they are published.

What is impressive is the fact that dragon boat teams are being used as subjects in research programs! Of course the first team was a study on whether the intense, upper extremity exercise of dragon boat paddling would cause lymphedema. That was the huge question that deserved a response. In the early days, we needed to publish more work on lymphedema and the changes in strength, aerobic fitness and arm volume over the course of a 6-month paddling season, in order to justify this program. Working with colleagues in Australia, the risk of lymphedema as a result of long haul air travel was addressed by paddlers who were flying from North America, direct to Australia, to participate in what was the Second IBCPC Festival in Caloundra.

The changes to the quality of life and mental health over the course of a season has always impressed me more than the physical changes and this has received a lot of attention in the literature. It is a complex interaction between the physical demands of paddling and the improvements in function, emotional and spiritual well-being. Dragon boat paddling gives you back control of your life, something that was taken during treatment.

Some time ago I had the pleasure of reviewing a paper that reported the positive effects of dragon boat paddling on heart function over a four year period. As you know, some of the drugs used to treat breast cancer can damage the heart and this study reported that adaptations to paddling improved heart function in women treated with chemotherapy.

In the last ten months there have been two detailed publications from Italy that have examined the complex biochemical changes that occur with breast cancer dragon boat paddling. These are important studies that are documenting the cellular changes that may impact fatigue, quality of life, recurrence and survival. They concluded that dragon boat paddling had a positive effect on these biomarkers and was important in improving the long-term health benefits for breast cancer survivors.

So there is more going on inside that dragon boat as you paddle, and you thought that paddling with your team was just fun.... 🌸

What in the world is going on?



Nanaimo, Canada, July 7 – 9, 2017
Maffeo Sutton Park
angelsabreast@hotmail.com



Vienna, Austria, June 10, 2017
Vienna City Beach Club, Neue Donau
First breast cancer division, 50%
reduced registration fee
info@pinkpaddling.at



Burlington, Vermont, USA, August 7, 2017
Waterfront Park
11th Annual Lake Champlain Festival
www.dragonheartvermont.org



Fort Dodge, Iowa, USA, August 11 & 12, 2017
Badger Lake Kennedy Park
Dragon Boat Bash
<http://www.badgerlakedragonboating.com>



Dublin, Ireland, September 9 & 10, 2017
Hong Kong Dublin Dragon Boat Festival
In conjunction with Plurabelle Paddlers
www.dragonboat.ie



Toronto, Canada, September 9 & 10, 2017
Great White North, Marilyn Bell Park
In conjunction with Dragons Abreast
Toronto 20th Gala Celebration
www.dragonsabreast.ca



Las Vegas, Nevada, USA, October 14th, 2017
The Rose Regatta, Lake Las Vegas
Free for breast cancer teams
www.RoseRegatta.org



Florence, Italy, July 6 – 8, 2018
IBCPC Participatory Festival
www.florencebcs2018.org

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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**International Breast Cancer
PADDLERS' COMMISSION**



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