

Derby City Dragons

Breast Cancer Survivor Dragon Boat Racing Team

Summer 2025

291 Hubbards Lane, Suite 172-238 • Louisville, KY 40207-8203

Vol. 6 No. 2



About Us:

As Louisville's first Dragon Boat Racing team we are proud to be part of the 300+ Breast Cancer Survivor Dragon Boat

Racing teams throughout the world. Our team was founded in March, 2013, as we sought to strengthen our spirits, prove that we weren't defined by our shared diagnosis and support each other in our individual struggles. The Derby City Dragons is a team that welcomes breast cancer survivors, regardless of age, fitness level or previous experience. We share a zest for fun, life, health and sportsmanship, and promise that members will build new lifelong friendships as they "awaken the dragon within themselves!"

For information about our team and to donate to help support our mission, our webpage is:

<http://www.derbycitydragons.org/>

Contact us at:

drbycitydragons@gmail.com

Find us on Facebook at Derby City Dragons - Breast Cancer Survivor Dragon Boat Team:

[@derbycitydragonsbcsdragonboatteam](https://www.facebook.com/derbycitydragonsbcsdragonboatteam)

DCD Team Building

By Cindy Blake

Team building committee is designed to foster teamwork, improve communication and enhance collaboration within the team.

We have events throughout the year to bring everyone together in a fun environment. We have holiday parties where we give prizes for the best costume and exchange gifts in friendly games. Ice cream socials are a hit

because who doesn't like ice cream. We had our first annual chili cook off and found out we have some really good cooks. Throwback Thursday, a recent event sailing on the Ohio River on the steamboat The Bell of Louisville, was a blast. One event we are looking forward

to is a sleepover in November. We had one at the start of the season and will conclude our season with another one. We eat, play games and just enjoy each others' company and life. Oh, and paddle together!!



Reflections: Festivals, Questions, and Bubbles

By Susan Plander

This past weekend was the Dragons on the Lake Dragon Boat Festival in Akron, Ohio. We have participated in this Festival about six years now. As I reflect on all the festivals we have gone to, I realize that each festival is different, even the ones we participate in year after year. After eleven seasons, this is the first time I have been aware of this concept.

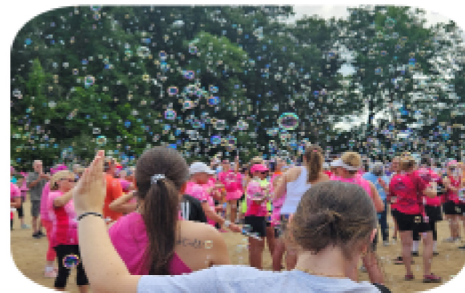
During the Flower Ceremony with bubbles substituted for flowers, I saw the bubbles as symbols of so many things that are a part of my team and of myself. They are so light, transparent, colorful in the sunshine, fragile and yet strong to be able to fly so high into the beautiful blue sky. The speaker asked the question, "What does being a survivor mean to you?"

The question surprised me. It amazed me too as it was not something I was ever asked and certainly not something I've really reflected on in the thirty-four years of being a survivor. As I reflect on this question and think about those remarkable

bubbles, I know I will see myself in a clearer light and with a newfound strength.

A festival is a race, a celebration, a remembrance, and so much more. It is an opportunity to learn more about myself and about my teammates, and feel

the camaraderie of the sisterhood of Breast Cancer Dragon Boat Teams, from near and far. I just need to be open to all the possibilities that come my way and take the time to reflect.



I'M A
Survivor



Individually, we are one drop.
Together, we are an ocean!!

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DCD Summer Birthdays

May:

Miranda Messer - 05/02
Mary Kay Zurkuhlen - 05/14
Diane Howard - 05/20
Wendy Smithson - 05/16
Kristi Thompson - 05/20
Rosie Laird - 05/21



June:

Vicki Fleitz - 06/04
Lisa Clemons - 06/18
Dana Roberson - 06/29



July:

Margaret Fadeley - 07/01 Michelle Hayes - 07/19
Jeanne Ballard - 07/03 Sherry Spanyer - 07/21
Gina Robinson - 07/05 Jessamy Thomison - 07/29
Suzanne Childers - 07/13
Cheryl Harris - 07/17



August:

Kathy Schmitt - 08/09
Jennifer Tyler - 08/21

Community Outreach



Angela Long Is Team USA's First-Ever Breast Cancer Paddlers Coach She's taking America's team to the world competition in Germany this month.

By Susan Burns July 2, 2025 Published in the July-August 2025 issue of Sarasota Magazine

Six afternoons a week at Nathan Benderson Park, a group of middle-aged-and-older women sporting Lycra shorts, tank tops and powerful shoulder muscles step into a skinny boat with their long paddles. Members of the competitive Survivors in Synch (SIS) team, they share a formidable bond—they are breast cancer survivors.

They also have a formidable coach. Angela Long, 56, founded SIS at Nathan Benderson Park 12 years ago. This year, Long was selected as Team USA's first-ever coach for breast cancer paddlers, and she'll take 39 women (including eight SIS paddlers) from around the country, who qualified in arduous time trials, to the International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF) World Championships from July 15-20, in Brandenburg, Germany. While breast cancer paddlers have competed in international competitions as part of their individual club teams, this is the first time they will be competing as nations.

If you haven't heard of dragon boat, you're not alone. It's not a mainstream sport even though it's thousands of years old and has millions of participants around the world. The first internationally recognized competition was in Hong Kong in 1976. The sport attracts men and women of all ages and all abilities—there is a para-dragon boat team, for example, and a veterans' team, as well as breast cancer teams.

A standard boat is 40 feet long, fitted with nine benches, two paddlers to a bench. At the front is a drummer who keeps the pace and in the back is a steerer who maneuvers the boat. Unlike in rowing, where rowers sit single file, face backwards and hold two oars, dragon boat paddlers sit two to a seat, face forward and hold one paddle. The sport takes precision and perfect synchronization. Every paddle should enter and leave the water at the same moment for a smooth, fast ride.

This takes practice and total focus. Nathan Benderson's SIS team came home with a gold medal last year in Ravenna, Italy. Long, who isn't one for the limelight, can take credit for the team's success. Unflinchingly cheerful yet intensely serious, she is known for demanding practices, crystal-clear instruction and insistence on technique. She breaks every stroke into four parts and paddlers are drilled on every movement until the stroke is muscle memory.

SIS is only one of the NBP teams Long coaches. She is the head coach for all paddlers at NBP Paddling, which has become one of the most competitive and largest teams in the U.S., with 150 paddlers.

But the SIS team holds a special place in Long's heart. At 34, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and understands that life can change in a phone call. As part of her recovery process, she worked with local nonprofits to support other cancer survivors until she was tapped to start SIS. For many of the women she coaches, dragon boat has changed their identity from victim to athlete. Some of these women have had double mastectomies. Many have had chemotherapy and radiation. Their bodies look different, feel different, move in ways that are unfamiliar. Survivors In Synch gave these women a place to cry when they needed to, but more importantly, it gave them a place to heal in nature, to feel powerful and to trust their bodies again with other women who have gone through the same experience.

"A lot of the women on the breast cancer team have never been involved in a support group or been involved in a sport," Long says. "They don't want to talk about their cancer. They want to move on and find a new identity by becoming physically active and focusing on the future. Dragon boat gives them a new identity. They find a group of women, a common peer group to provide the support they never knew they needed, and now they're in the best mental and physical shape of their lives."



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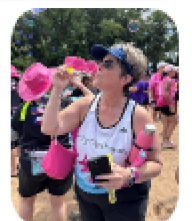
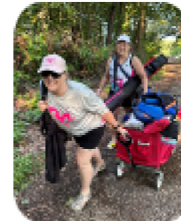
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Robin's Joke Corner



Where does a pirate go to get his hook??
A second hand store!!
Why did the coffee file a police report??
She got mugged!!

Dragons on the Lake Dragon Boat Festival

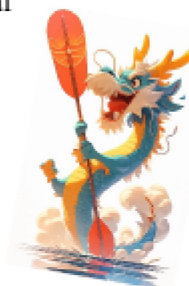


Behind Every Strong Woman Is A Story That Gave Her No Choice



50 Uses for a Paddle **

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1 - Axe | 19- Tent Pole | 37- Walking Stick |
| 2 - Hat Stand | 20- Umbrella | 38- Battering Ram |
| 3 - Prosthesis | 21- Hammer | 39- Wooden Spoon |
| 4 - Door Stop | 22- Javelin | 40- Modesty Preserver |
| 5 - Fly Swatter | 23- Broom | 41- Paper Weight |
| 6 - Pokey Stick | 24- Spade | 42- Drum Stick |
| 7 - Paint Palette | 25- Crutch | 43- Fire Wood |
| 8 - Steering Arm | 26- Fan | 44- Musical Instrument |
| 9 - Roasting Spit | 27- Ornament | 45- See-Saw |
| 10- Washing Line | 28- Bludgon | 46- Pry Bar |
| 11- Clothes Horse | 29- Air Guitar | 47- Sundial |
| 12- Kebob Skewer | 30- Sun Shade | 48- Crook |
| 13- Back Scratcher | 31- Cricket Bat | 49- Lance |
| 14- Pioneering Pole | 32- Rescue Tool | 50- Paddle |
| 15- Goal Post | 33- Pizza Paddle | |
| 16- Garden Cane | 34- Vaulting Pole | |
| 17- Toten Pole | 35- Slayer's Stake | |
| 18- Bird Stand | 36- Carpet Beater | |



**We accept no responsibility for any damage incurred as a result of the suggested uses for a paddle listed above...

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What Does It Mean To Me To Be A Survivor??

Michelle Hayes For me, survivorship means rediscovering a sense of purpose and joy, and pursuing personal goals and interests. In addition, I have become an advocate for breast cancer by sharing my story and experiences to support others.

Claudia Johnson: Being a breast cancer survivor means I've discovered a strength I didn't know I had, rising even in my weakest moments. It's given me the purpose and compassion to walk alongside others in their battles—and made me a more powerful healer in my work as a therapist.

Gina Robinson: Breast cancer is a journey I never ask or plan for but I choose to love my life hate the disease and keep fighting. Surviving means I fought the Battle and I'm winning I'm Surviving and Thriving.

Cherie Eplion: I survived what tried to break me. It was not easy. I learned that through Christ, I can truly do all things. It taught me empathy and compassion for others. I choose to live boldly and love deeply. Being a breast cancer survivor means I've walked through fear, pain, and uncertainty—and came through with a deeper sense of who I am. Cancer changed my body, but it didn't change my worth. It didn't steal my spirit, my strength, or my voice. My physical body does not define who I am—my courage, resilience, and heart do. I am more than scars, more than side effects, more than a diagnosis. I am a whole person, full of purpose and power. Surviving breast cancer means I've learned to love myself in every form, to celebrate what I've overcome, and to live each day with gratitude and grit. I honor the journey, but I'm not defined by the battle—I'm defined by how I rose from it.

Cindy Blake: Being a survivor means, I can bounce back and persevere in tough situations. I have gained a new appreciation for life and manage to overcome fears and do things I never thought I could.

Erika Sherek: Being a survivor means seeing life through a different lens—one sharpened by pain, yet softened by gratitude. It means being more aware of my body, not just in its limitations but in its quiet strength. I've learned to listen to it, honor it, and treat it with care. I've also become more aware of the world around me. The little things—a cool breeze, a warm cup of coffee, the sound of laughter—matter more now. I don't rush past them anymore. I slow down. I stop to smell the roses. Surviving changed my values. What once felt urgent or important often no longer holds weight. I've let go of the noise and started paying more attention to the things I used to overlook: rest, connection, simplicity, presence. I carry more compassion now—not just for myself, but for others. I know what it means to look fine and still feel like you're falling apart inside. That awareness has made me more empathetic, more human. Being a survivor isn't just about enduring. It's about becoming. And who I've become is someone who feels deeply, appreciates more, and lives life with a little more grace and intention than before.

Jessamy Thomison: Being a survivor means I went through something that stood a chance of killing me, but it didn't! I'm still here. But part of surviving something like cancer is changing, often radically, just in order to survive. I have to remember not to judge my self, my body, or my mind against my pre-cancer abilities. Change is never easy, but it helps to be around others who've had to do it too. That's why the Dragons are such a great group!

Jessica Elliot: Cancer has been part of my family experience for generations. Being a survivor gives me a profound feeling of connection to the other survivors and fighters in my family, and those long-gone ancestors who also faced cancer. It's a kind of genetic intimacy, like a thread of strength and power that I was already made ready for.

Ellen Jacobs: To me a survivor is someone that has been through a very trying time, a time that before it happened, you never believed you would get through it. You realize how strong you are and that you can do anything you put your mind to. Survivor is also someone that shares their experiences with others to help them get through similar challenges.

Dianne Howard: A survivor is the foundation of a new beginning as you navigate through life. It's the determination that there is no other option but to survive.

Kathie Carmen: Being a breast cancer survivor means carrying the weight of what I've been through while also embracing the strength it took to get through it—and often, using that strength to live more boldly, love more deeply, and help others along the way.

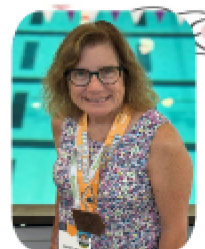
Martha Royse: Being a survivor to me means allowing space for my own healing and my own joy during this short and precious life.

Cindy Whitaker: Survivor Victorious over a dreaded disease, both to physically work through it, and to live courageously and joyfully in the journey with it.

We are DCD Strong On and Off the Water



Congratulations to one of our long time paddlers, Jan Weimer, she won a silver medal in the 75-79 age group in Tennis at the Senior Games in Des Moines, Iowa.



Congratulations to our own Wendy Medley who won a bronze medal at the Senior Games in the 400 IM! Way to be Dragon Strong! And... 5th 500 Free, 5th 200 IM, 7th 100 Breast, 9th 100 IM, 10th 200 Free



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Up-Coming Events

- ** Tuesday Evening Practice
- ** Saturday Morning Practice
- ** Dragon Strong 30 min Low Impact Cardio Blast
- ** Buff Bones / HIIT Workout
- ** Walking w/ exercise stations led by Kim
- ** Abs/Butt/Thighs Workout with Carol
- ** Susies Pink Pilates (Zoom)
- ** DCD board meeting
- ** DCD Sleep Over - Nov. 7th
- ** Louisville Bats Game Rescheduled - Aug. 10th
- ** Throwback Thursday - Belle of Louisville - Aug. 24th

** Please check Teamsnap calendar for dates and times. (For Practices, remember to sign up by 8pm the night before.)

2025 Festivals:

July 19th - Dragons on the Lake, Akron, Ohio
Sept. 6th - Kentucky Dragon Boat Festival, Alexandria, KY
Sept. 27th - Pittsburgh Dragon Boat Festival, Pittsburgh, PA
Oct. 4th - 2025 Louisville Dragonboat Festival
Lake Jericho,
Smithfield, KY



The Flower Ceremony

From a FaceBook post: January 30, 2025
ABreast in a Boat, Vancouver, British Columbia

The Flower Ceremony is a deeply meaningful tradition that honors those who have passed away from breast cancer and those who are still fighting.

The ceremony's roots go back to 1996, when a member of ABreast In A Boat noticed that the roses in her garden matched the color of the team's fuchsia shirts. She brought the roses to the Vancouver Festival and the team members wore them in their headbands.

The following year, at the 1997 Festival, members of the Breast Strokes crew carried pink carnations as symbols of hope for a team member undergoing treatment. At the end of the race, the crew released the flowers into the water.

In 1998, breast cancer survivor races were held at both the Vancouver and Toronto festivals. At each location, participating crews linked boats and tossed flowers into the water following the final race. These marked the first officially organized Flower Ceremonies, and today this tribute is held after most breast cancer final races.

This incredibly moving ceremony was beautifully captured in the film "In the Same Boat" (2010).

<https://youtu.be/e7FmfM7QQQk?si=j4SlpgPZ5cBem46n>



You Can Help Support Us:

Kroger Rewards Program:

Did you register your Kroger Card to link to "Derby City Dragons" Community Rewards program yet?

By doing this, we will receive a percentage each quarter of all money spent at Kroger when you swipe your Kroger Card. Simply register online at krogercommunityrewards.com



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