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# Dragon Divas

HELPING BREAST CANCER SURVIVORS THRIVE THROUGH THE SPORT OF DRAGON BOAT PADDLING

## From the Chair: Embracing Our Mission

2017 was a great year for the Dragon Divas, both on and off the water. We began our 12th year with Father Greg’s annual boat blessing, for our two boats Nessie and Blue, and for the safety of all paddlers. This is always so special for the Divas and a great way to start a new season. Divas teams participated in four dragon boat festivals over the summer, bringing home three event medals, as well as many great memories, and included many opportunities for friends, family members and our community to see fit, healthy Divas in action.

The Divas practiced twice a week, but one of our members worked EXTRA hard to qualify for the Women’s Senior B Team USA. Margie represented the USA at the World Dragon Boat Festival in China. We all were so very proud of her and her accomplishments in the great sport of dragon boat racing. Her husband even gave her a surprise going away party!

While Margie was competing in China, a number of Divas were busy preparing for the 2018 International Breast Cancer Paddler’s Commission Participatory Dragon Boat Festival to be held next year in Florence, Italy. We are so excited for this opportunity, and will be training very hard in 2018! We have had many Florence fundraising events already this year, including working at the State Fair selling Perfect Pickles, a pancake breakfast at the Masonic Lodge in Forest Lake, and participating in our first annual ‘Grape Crush’ at Flower Valley Winery in Minnesota.

We closed the year with our first annual Toys for Tots drive, raising several hundred dollars and collecting over 100 toys. A group of us even appeared on KARE 11!

Throughout the year, both on and off the water and always close to our hearts, is our mission to embrace newly diagnosed

breast cancer survivors, to support and encourage those among us who continue to fight the battle, and to honor those who have died from this disease. Our members serve as beacons of hope in our community, exemplifying that a full and active life following diagnosis is possible.

As I reflect back on a wonderful, productive and happy year, I am filled with gratitude for every one of our donors and sponsors who, through their generosity and dedication, help the Dragon Divas continue to be a bright beacon of hope in our community. I am also grateful for each and every one of our beautiful, strong and positive women who continue to bring support and love while nurturing one another, unconditionally.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed their time, talents and resources to our wonderful organization.

*Cindi Fitch, Board Chair*







## Mission

The mission of the Dragon Divas is to demonstrate that a full and active life is possible following the diagnosis of breast cancer.

The organization provides an opportunity for members to connect with other breast cancer survivors in a supportive environment to enhance their physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

The Dragon Divas are dedicated to promoting the early detection of breast cancer and raising awareness in the community of the importance of physical fitness in fighting this disease.

Through our message and actions, the Dragon Divas honor the memory of those who have died from the disease and the blessings they have bestowed on our survivorship.



# Core Values

## SUPPORT

We are dedicated to helping survivors attain their personal wellbeing in body and spirit. We support and encourage each other's journey through mentorship and our unique camaraderie.

## HEALTH

We emphasize the benefits of exercise in living longer and thriving following a diagnosis of breast cancer and demonstrate how to live a life without limits following the diagnosis.

## AWARENESS

We promote awareness in the wider community about the importance of early detection and the benefits of an active lifestyle in fighting this disease.

## COURAGE

We empower survivors to thrive as the strongest and most courageous versions of themselves in the boat and in their communities.

## HOPE

We embrace hope that a cure will be realized within our lifetimes. Until then, we practice active, healthy lifestyles to promote longevity and counteract the risks of recurrence.

## WHY DRAGON BOAT RACING?

Dragon boat racing has been an honored tradition in Asian communities for more than 2000 years. The dragon symbolizes protection from evil and disease. Our boats are vessels of serenity and healing.

Dragon boat racing became an inspiration for breast cancer survivors through the courageous work of a group of breast cancer survivors in Vancouver BC, with Dr. Don Mackenzie. They used this ancient sport to prove they could exercise vigorously without adverse effects. Today, there are more than 140 breast cancer support dragon boat teams internationally.

## HONESTY

We conduct ourselves with authenticity tempered by compassion in the spirit of love.

## TEAMWORK

We pull together as a team to live our values and attain our goals.

## RESILIENCE

We face difficulty and adversity with courage, resolve, and unwavering integrity.

## SPORTSMANSHIP

We demonstrate our spirit by being gracious in victory and defeat.

## OUTREACH

Our community outreach programs promote awareness, early detection, and the importance of physical exercise.

## REMEMBRANCE

We honor those who have gone before us for what they have taught us about living with and dying from this disease, and what their journey has taught our physicians and researchers about curing this disease.





# Training Crew

It was another busy and successful year for the Dragon Divas and the Training Crew! We welcomed several new members to our organization and introduced them to the world of dragon boating. We again offered practice sessions with two boats, allowing us to accommodate up to 40 paddling members per session. With guidance from our head coach, we worked at improving endurance and pushing anaerobic thresholds; the benefits of which were realized on race days.

In addition to preparation for the 2017 season races, we spent our summer evenings also preparing for the International Breast Cancer Dragon Boat Festival in Florence Italy coming up in the summer of 2018. And one of our very own members, Margie Kron, tried out for and made the USA National Team, which competed and won hardware in Kunming, China at the 2017 International Dragon Boat Federation World Championships (the equivalent of the Olympics in the dragon boating world).

This year in addition to our weRow indoor rowing workouts, we introduced TRX strength training at Urban Iron in Woodbury as well as spin classes at the YMCA in Shoreview. In addition to the obvious fitness benefits, these offerings also give our members an opportunity to come together socially with fellow breast cancer survivors while deepening team-building connections.

But what's the fun of all work with no play? Our Training Crew collaborated again this season with the Grounds Crew to host our highly anticipated mixed practice fun day and potluck. The mixed practice brings paddlers of all levels together in the boats for fun races and dragon boat games followed by a potluck—a much enjoyed feast that also furthers connections.

Outside of the boat and the gym, the Training Crew sponsored a CPR/First Aid training for Dragon Diva members in the Spring and an interactive nutrition seminar in the Fall.

The training opportunities we offer to our membership are made possible largely through donations to the Dragon Diva organization. We are ever grateful and proud to live our mission of promoting the benefits of physical fitness in the fight against breast cancer.

*Jen Thorup, Training Crew Stern*

# Communications Crew

Keeping everyone informed about team activities is always a challenge. After years of using various free tools to keep our costs low, we decided to purchase a subscription to TeamSnap and are in the process of moving our internal team communications to that platform. It has been fun to see the 2018 events that are appearing on our TeamSnap calendar and registration in 2018 will happen using this tool. Many thanks go to the Membership Crew for facilitating this accomplishment!

We continue to use Facebook and Twitter to communicate with our fans and friends, and we maintain our web site, a valuable marketing tool graciously hosted by SportsEngine. We empower all members to contribute to our social media outlets, and many folks help us connect to community media sources. Working with our teammates to publish our annual report as well as keep everyone stocked with brochures and other promotional materials, we continually strive to get our message out.

*Ginny Moran and Esti Koen, Communications Crew Co-Sterns*

# FUNdraising Crew

With a mix of familiar and new events, the FUNdraising Crew continued to bring in the resources that make it possible for us to carry out our mission.

In April the Dragon Divas partnered with Costa Farms and Green house in White Bear Lake and held our second annual **plant sale**. Choices included a variety of hanging baskets and flower tubs. The plants were even more popular this year as this sale raised \$2,117. This will be an annual event!

Our annual Paddles Up! Event was held on May 7<sup>th</sup> at Jimmy's Event Center in Vadnais Heights. The monetary and in-kind donations from individuals and businesses exceeded our expectations. Nessie, our dragon boat, was on display and was full of Diva Dots that were quickly bought by attendees. We played two rounds of 50-50 raffle and one round of Heads or Tails. Both interactive games were a big hit. This year's event netted over \$8,900 from a combination of donations, door sales, raffle tickets, beverages, Diva Dots, silent auction, and Diva merchandise. The Party Guy Entertainment provided the music while guests enjoyed the pasta buffet.

In June the Dragon Divas helped serve hungry guests at the Forest Lake Masonic Lodge #344 Pancake Breakfast. All donations received were matched by the Masons for a total of \$2,082. Guests really enjoyed their pancakes topped with bacon-butter and syrup!

In the fall, over two Saturdays, the Dragon Divas raised funds by harvesting grapes at the Flower Valley Vineyard. Donned with gloves and cutting tools, the Divas helped harvest two varieties of grapes for the vineyard. We were treated to a lunch of chili and wine for our efforts. This fun event raised \$600.

Two local businesses hosted fundraisers for the Dragon Divas this year. weRow in northeast Minneapolis sponsored a #sweatlocalmpls charity event that brought together local vendors and Twin Cities residents for two full rowing sessions filled with sprinting, cheering, and networking. weRow donated 100% of the proceeds (over \$300) to the Dragon Divas. The Athleta store at Ridgedale Mall in Minnetonka sponsored a Shop for a Cause / Breast Cancer Awareness event in October. A team from weRow taught a fun rowing class and afterwards, guests shopped. Athleta donated 100% of the sales and donated \$154 to the Dragon Divas.

We decided not to formally participate in the MN Give to the Max Day but did encourage our friends and family to donate to the Dragon Divas on that day. This event raised \$405.

Funds were also raised through Amazon Smile and Good Shop (not available at this time). Additional donations were given by various donors.

The FUNdraising crew was also responsible for ordering and selling various Diva wear – racing shirts, pullovers, seat pads, etc. Look for our Diva wear at our next event so you can cheer us on in style!

*Terri Schultz, FUNdraising Crew Stern*



# Equipment Crew

The Equipment Crew is responsible for purchasing, maintaining, repairing and storing the team's equipment which includes our two dragon boats, Nessie and Blue, the OC2, a boat lift, jackets and paddles. Last spring, before beginning the 2017 paddling season, we moved both boats from storage to a pole barn in Lake Elmo where we spent several weeks giving Nessie a "face lift," cleaning, sanding, varnishing, and painting both her inside and outside, and mending a "crack" in the Blue's hull. This was accomplished with the help of many Divas and Divos, but especially with the help of Ron and his friend who patched the cracks in Blue, and of Mary and her husband, Randy, who gallantly applied an epoxy agent to the hull to reduce the amount of algae that collects during the paddling season. Once both boats were ready to go, we successfully got them in the water and docked again at Mare's, using her neighbor's dock for Blue.

Aside from some issues with the lift and Nessie's cover, the season went well, without incident. A number of Divas bought themselves life jackets last year, making it possible us once again to let some Divas check out a team jacket for the season. For 2018 we are also exploring the possibility of establishing a system that would allow Divas to check out a team paddle for the season.

At the end of the 2017 paddling season the boats were placed in storage at a pole barn in Lake Elmo. The OC2 was stored at a Mare's house to enable Divas to begin using it as early as possible in 2018.

During the 2017 season, research was done to explore the possibility of docking the boats and practicing at another location other than Lake Gervais. After much deliberation and discussions with Mare and her family it was decided to stay at Lake Gervais. Before the start of the 2018 season we will be looking at various dock options for both boats, deciding whether to keep the lift, and purchasing a new cover for Nessie.

*Katie Cavanor and Pat Donlin, Equipment Crew Co-Sterns*

# Festivals & Events

The Asian Festival at Lake Phalen in St. Paul was the first race of the season for the Dragon Divas. This festival was well attended by new Divas, veteran Divas as well as lots of friends and family. We encourage new Divas to attend this festival so they can show their loved ones what this new sport of theirs is all about! We have been told by the organizers that the Divas are a "big draw"!

"Big Blue" Dragon Boat Festival in LaCrosse, WI was a great event for the Divas, bringing 38 members for teams Spirit and Harmony. There is always a potluck scheduled for the team and family members the night before the races to build camaraderie. There were 6 Breast Cancer Survivor teams in the division, it was a hot 90 degree day, but both teams did very well.

The end of July saw Divas from team Spirit heading to the Great White North festival in Chicago. The BCS ceremony is a tradition at all festivals with a BCS Division. These ceremonies are always very dear to our hearts as it celebrates the lives of our lost sisters and for those of us who are blessed to still be here with our loved ones. We took Gold out of six BCS teams so our commitment to fitness outside the boat paid off!

In August, a group of Divas pooled their resources for one more event and headed to Minoqua, WI for their festival. We took Bronze in the Women's division and placed 13th out of 26 teams. This was our first time at Minoqua but won't be our last!

*Margie Kron, Festivals and Events Crew Stern*

# Membership

The Membership Crew strives to make joining our team effortless. We do this by making necessary forms accessible to our members and through clear communications about member requirements.

Current member information is maintained in a database. The database is used, in part, to provide an up-to-date photo directory for members, and to provide coaches with emergency contact information for active members each paddling season.

Our crew also assists new members with all aspects of joining the team, including the assigning of mentors to all new Divas. Mentoring is a crucial part of the membership process and helps our newest members prepare to become Dragon Divas. Twenty-two new members were matched to mentors in 2016. Currently, we have 90 active members from all over the Metropolitan area and Wisconsin. We receive numerous inquiries from breast cancer survivors and respond to each individually throughout the year.

Membership and registration forms provided by our crew include membership registration information, emergency contact, waiver, medical clearance, and scholarship forms. Our vital documents that require yearly review and updating are provided to members through our online registration site. First piloted in 2016, our complete SportsEngine online registration process will be fully implemented for our 2017 paddling season! We also provide downloadable medical clearance and scholarship forms through our member-only website.

*Leah Driscoll de Gomez, Membership Crew Stern*



# Grounds Crew

The Grounds Crew is our youngest crew. We are in our second year. We have 14 members committed to keeping our membership grounded in our mission. Our crew works to support and enhance the emotional and spiritual wellbeing of all of our members and to maintain healthy group norms. We are called to be leaders of unity and camaraderie within our organization.

This season, the Grounds Crew provided opportunities for our members to come together and to strengthen trust and respect for each other.

At the start of our paddling season, the Grounds Crew brought all members together on the water to bless our boats, bless our 12th paddling season, and bless each other. With a traditional flower ceremony, we also took time to remember our teammates and those closely connected with us whom have died.

Throughout the year, we gathered teammates to serve our community. These opportunities included Cooks for Kids at the Ronald MacDonald House, Habitat for Humanity, and Feed my Starving Children. We also participated for the first time in collecting gifts for the Toys for Tots program.

Our crew also organized an in-house retreat, "Meant to be Moments." We welcomed our newest members by organizing Newbie brunches. We helped bring all members together for potlucks and fun paddling. Our Crew also supported those who are ill with cards and flowers.

Through the work of our Crew, the Dragon Divas continue to successfully commit to each other and to our mission.

*Mary Skrypek, Grounds Crew Stern*



# Finance Crew

The Dragon Divas ended 2017 with total assets and equity of \$69,335 which represented an increase of \$7,270 over 2016. We have enjoyed the investment we have made in our two boats “Nessie” and “Blue” and have had the opportunity to use them simultaneously on the water. We were able to do side-by-side training, practice races, and to receive one-on-one training.

We continue to receive generous donations both in cash and in-kind from our supporters, including Divas and their families. Minnesota Masonic Charities supported us with a donation of \$2,082, and through our participation in the 2016 Give to the Max (the K Foundation) event, we received \$2,182 in 2017 to our organization.

A number of Dragon Divas are looking forward to the International Breast Cancer Paddlers Commission Dragon Boat Festival in Florence, Italy in July 2018. All fundraising for this event will be separate from our ongoing annual fundraising and we look forward to representing the Dragon Divas well in Italy.

*Lisa Schommer, Finance Crew Stern*

# 2017 Festivals

- Jul:** Asian Festival on Lake Phalen, St. Paul, MN
- Jul:** Big Blue Dragon Boat Festival, LaCrosse, WI
- Jul:** Great White North Festival in Chicago, IL
- Aug:** Minocqua Dragon Boat Festival, Minocqua, WI

# Outreach Activities

- Habitat for Humanity, St. Paul
- Cooks for Kids, Ronald McDonald House, Minneapolis
- Feed My Starving Children, Eagan
- Toys for Tots, Minneapolis
- Cancer walks

# Finance

## Dragon Divas Statement of Financial Position December 31, 2017

### Assets

#### Current Assets

Cash	\$ 51,106
Clothing and Apparel	<u>2,379</u>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$ 53,485</b>

#### Other Assets

Dragon Boat, Cover & Trailer	\$ 21,716
Dragon Boat & Cover	\$ 11,254
OC-2	\$ 1,500
Accumulated depreciation	<u>(18,620)</u>
<b>Total Other Assets</b>	<b>\$ 15,850</b>

**Total Assets** **\$ 69,335**

### Liabilities and Unrestricted

#### Net Assets

Liabilities	\$ 0
<b>Unrestricted Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ <u>69,335</u></b>

**Total Liabilities & Net Assets** **\$ 69,335**

### Revenue

Contributions	\$ 9,041
Dues	\$ 3,900
Interest	\$ 56
Earned Income	\$ 15,412
Other Earned Income	<u>\$ 8,091</u>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 36,500</b>

### Expense

Depreciation Expenses	\$ 3,240
Program Expenses	\$ 16,761
Supporting Expenses	<u>\$ 9,229</u>
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$ 29,230</b>

**Change in Net Assets** **\$ 7,270**

Dragon Divas of St. Paul, Minnesota is a  
501(c)(3) nonprofit organization



# Donors

## Cash Contributions \$1,000 or more

Minnesota Masonic Charities -  
Forest Lake Lodge  
K Foundation

## \$500 to \$1000

Anonymous  
Kowalski's Markets

## \$100-\$499

Allina Health System  
Mona Ahlf  
Athleta - Molly Severson  
Dave Balk  
Julie Christensen  
James Colton  
Community Shares of Minnesota  
Laurie Ducharme  
Sibyll Goetze  
Katherine and Matthew Iserman  
Carolyn Jacobs  
Mary Knudsen  
Elizabeth Niehaus  
Melissa Lallak  
M. Larson  
Linda Ruecker  
Terese Schultz  
Carol Sheehy  
Jen Thorup  
WeRow

## \$10-\$99

Amazon Smile Foundation  
Lorraine Anderson  
Anonymous  
Benevity  
Wilbur and Barbara Cant  
Robert and Kathryn Carter  
Dee Elwood  
Maggie Erickson  
Robert Ethen  
John Feigal  
Network for Good  
Virginia Rayman  
Linda Rinehart  
Linda Sandvig  
Nathan Schuldt  
Mary Skrypek  
Sheri Yarosh  
West Bend

# Supporters

Auto Zone	Karen Krueger
Gayle Adair	Kwik Trip
Terri Arfi	Melissa Lallak
Lisa Benson	Leeann Chin Catering
Bethesda Hospital	Gary Livingston
Michel Betts	Carrie Lyles
Lucy Pam Bloomberg	LynLake Brewery
Cabelli by Kelly	Mall of America
Capital Beverage Sales	Shirley Mandel
Katie Cavanor	Gwen Marion
Carlson Chiropractic	Laurie Marsh
Rebecca Christenson Daley - Success	Mary O'Keefe - Meant to Be Moments
Tina Cornelius - Independent Scentsy	MetCalf Mayflower
Costa Farm and Greenhouse	MGM Liquore
Cotroneo's	Joan Miller
Crooked Pint Ale House	Marguerite Nardini
Dairy Queen	Northern Vineyards
Rosemarie Donlin	Paddle North
Jim and Matt Edison	Linda Rinehart
Julie Ellingson	Duzdee Ryan
Mary Ethen	Salon 514
Dan Flaherty	Ryan Schultz
Julie Franks	Terri Schultz
Matt Frakes	Susan Sheridan
Cindi Fitch	Rev. Greg Skrypek
Fresh Thyme Store	Ron Soppeland
GoodShop	SportsEngine
Hair I Go - Colleen	State Fair Perfect Pickle - KWF
Hair I Go - Kelly	Surly Brewing
Hair I Go - Jane Lokowich	Target Stores
Mary Macdonald-Hatcher	The Party Guy Entertainment
Herbergers	Tin Whiskers Brewing
Mandy Hyatt	Total Wine
Innovative Growth	Urban Growler Brewing Co.
Jerry Foods	Renee Vitch
Jimmy Event Center	Wabasha Brewing Co.
Gia Johnston	Laurie Waschbusch
Joke Joint Comedy Club	Ways to Wellness
Joe's Sporting Goods	WeRow
Mary Knudsen	Jane Whitney
Kowalskis	Yoga Fresh
Megan Kress	Michele Zubert



## Dragon Divas Board

### **Founder**

Mary Skrypek

### **Officers**

Cindi Fitch, Chair  
Ione Livingston, Vice Chair  
Lisa Schommer, Treasurer  
Pat Donlin, Secretary

### **Medical Advisor**

Dr. Sandra K. Rosenberg

### **At Large Members**

Katie Cavanor  
Cory Graham  
Karen Krueger  
Jill Laszewski

<http://www.dragondivasmn.org> | <https://www.facebook.com/DragonDivas> | St. Paul, MN

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