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# Dragon Divas

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

## From the Chair: A Grateful Year!

2015 was a busy year for the Dragon Divas, both on and off the water. We welcomed eighteen new members, representing our largest single year growth ever. The Diva team participated in four dragon boat festivals and a community parade during the summer season, offering many opportunities for friends, family members, and our community to see fit, healthy Divas in action. Our growing membership required a creative practice schedule, as we accommodated the equivalent of another full boat of paddlers. As serendipity would have it, a fortuitous opportunity allowed us to purchase a second practice boat.

The Divas new website [dragondivasmn.org](http://dragondivasmn.org) added the capability for supporters to donate on line as they keep up with our activities through the website and our Facebook page. Individual Divas continue to make personal appearances at public events. This year members of our Speakers' Bureau presented in San Francisco at an international conference on Lymphedema, on Comcast Newsmakers, and spoke at local support groups. These events help fulfill our mission to educate the public about breast cancer and the benefits of physical fitness in the fight against the

disease. Our members serve as beacons of hope in our community, exemplifying that a full and active life following diagnosis is possible.

As the Dragon Divas' tenth season got underway we established a wonderful new crew, the Grounds Crew. Members of this crew are charged with the responsibility of keeping our organization grounded in our mission and fostering unity, teamwork, respect and resilience. This crew provided an internal workshop for members on "Mindfulness Meditation," helping us bring into balance our emotional health and well being as survivors.

As I reflect on our busy tenth season, I am filled with gratitude for every one of our sponsors and donors who, through their generosity and dedication, help the Dragon Divas continue to be a bright beacon of hope in our community. Thank you to all for a successful year.

*Jen Thorup, 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.

## **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.



## **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 boat is a vessel of serenity and healing. Dragon boat racing became an inspiration for breast cancer survivors through the courageous work of Dr. Don McKenzie with a group of breast cancer survivors in Vancouver BC. 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.

# Membership

## 2015 Membership Crew Accomplishments

### Expansion of Membership Database

The Excel database used to track membership information has been updated and includes the names and phone numbers of emergency contacts for each Diva. Using this information, a listing of Diva Emergency Contact Information for 2015 will be printed to reside on Nessie for the upcoming paddling season, and another duplicate of that listing is being printed to be kept in the First Aid Kit that is taken out of town to festivals. This database continues to be used to track new member / mentor matches.

### Membership Directory

An updated Dragon Diva membership directory, including photos of members, was issued in May 2015 at the start of the paddling season. A new updated directory is being worked on with an effort to be printed and posted before the start of the next paddling season of 2016

### Process for Collecting Forms

Membership forms including the Emergency Contact Form, Waiver Form, and the Revised Medical Clearance Form now include information regarding Form submission due dates (May 1 of each year) and mailing information.

Currently, there is ongoing discussion in implementing an online membership renewal registration as well as a new member registration process. We look forward to improving the process for everyone as we move toward this goal

### Mentor / Mentee matches

Thirty new member packets were sent to mentors in 2015. Of those, 18 new members were able to paddle in 2015.

*Joan Miller and Leah Driscoll, Membership Crew Co-Sterns*

# Festivals & Events

2015 was a great year for the Festivals and Events Crew. With a record number of new members there were many opportunities to see fit, healthy Divas in action.

Two boats of Divas registered for the Asian Festival in St. Paul, thanks to a very generous donation from Mississippi Market. This local festival is a great venue for new Diva members to show their families and friends what dragon boating is all about. The Dragon Divas demonstrated their strength and endurance during the LaCrosse festival, taking the lead early in the races and finishing with a commanding lead.

Nessie (our dragon boat) and the Divas made an appearance at the White Bear Lake Parade which is always a big hit with spectators and a way to spread our message of hope and healthy living after a breast cancer diagnosis. Some of our members have discovered our group from the annual appearance in the parade!

We ended our paddling season when 44 Divas filled two boats in the Superior (Wisconsin) Festival. The camaraderie and support that happens during these festival weekends is a wonderful representation of our mission of living a healthy lifestyle and supporting each other!

*Margie Kron, Festivals and Events*

# Training Crew

The Dragon Divas had an exciting year of growth in 2015 and the Training Crew took on and met one of our most perplexing training challenges yet: How to accommodate about 70+ paddling members with only one boat and limited weekday evening daylight.

With enough new members to nearly fill their own boat, we created a “newbie” cohort of paddlers with a practice session focusing on learning the paddling stroke and building endurance. Several veteran paddlers mixed in at these sessions, helping to fill the boat and getting to know their newest sisters. In addition, we offered two other practice sessions twice a week each, geared for our veteran members with variation in the level of practice intensity. We also offered our “Happy Hour” paddle, a non-structured paddling opportunity which focuses on the social and scenic aspects of being out on the water and enjoying each other’s company. Regardless of what practice session members attend, one of our favorite highlights every season is getting together between practices for a potluck on the beach, with the opportunity to catch up and share time with each other.

When we weren’t on the boat, many were in the gym with off-season training opportunities of Zumba, strength training, and yoga to help members maintain the fitness levels they work so hard all summer long to achieve. And we always enjoy any opportunity to reunite with each other when we can’t be out on the water!

*Jen Thorup, Training Crew Stern*

# Finance Crew

The Dragon Divas ended 2015 with \$56,343 in total assets which represented an increase in assets of \$12,034 over 2014. Our team experienced membership growth in 2014 and 2015 which led to taking advantage of an opportunity to invest in a new dragon boat. The 2015 World Dragon Boat Racing Championships were held in Welland Canada in August 2015 and we were able to purchase one of the new boats after the race at a discount without incurring any debt. We received a restricted donation of \$1,000 from Bell Mortgage that went towards this purchase.

Our annual Paddles Up event continues to provide income used to fund our mission. We were also very fortunate to receive many donations and sponsorships throughout 2015 from both individuals as well as companies. Mississippi Market sponsored the Dragon Divas for the third year in a row by paying for our entrance fees at a local Asian Festival held at Phalen Park. Dungeon Strength and Conditioning held a workout event for the second year in a row raising \$1,389. We received a new sponsorship of \$1,200 from American Strength Training Center and a \$2,000 donation from Comprehensive Financial Resources Inc.

The Dragon Divas will continue to work with our current donors and look for new fundraising opportunities as we look forward to the next International Breast Cancer Paddlers Commission Dragon Boat Festival to be held in Florence Italy in 2018.

*Pam Baker and Linda Ruecker, Finance Crew Co-Sterns*

# FUNdraising Crew

The FUNdraising Crew embraces their responsibility for raising funds to support the Dragon Diva mission. FUNdraising took many different forms in 2015.

Our annual Paddles Up! Fundraiser exceeded expectations due to generous monetary and in-kind donations from numerous individuals and businesses. We held the event at Jimmy's Event Center in Vadnais Heights, MN, a venue spacious enough to display our dragon boat "Nessie" and offer a taco bar. The event netted more than \$12,575, from a combination of door sales, raffle tickets, a silent auction, a photo booth, beverages, plus a new game Shake-A-Day and Diva Dots. The Party Guy Entertainment provided music for the gala event.

Dungeon Strength and Conditioning in Vadnais Heights, MN, held a fundraiser for the Dragon Divas again this year where members, friends and family worked out to raise \$1,389.

We participated in Give to the Max Day in November 2015. This innovative online FUNdraiser encouraged friends and family from all over to donate \$5,575 to the Dragon Divas during a 24-hour period.

We also raised funds through the sale of Dragon Diva pins, towels, and other memorabilia, netting more than \$110. Our crew tried two new sources of on-line shopping for raising funds through GoodSearch (\$22) and Amazon Smile (final amount not available at this time).

In addition we received generous donations of \$250 from Metcalf Mayflower and \$1,000 from Mississippi Market. Also we received \$1,000 in restricted donations for our second boat and another \$2,993 in donations throughout the year.

*Terri Schultz, FUNdraising Stern*

# Equipment Crew

The Equipment Crew is responsible for purchasing, maintaining and repairing team equipment. Our crew worked hard in the spring because our dragon boat Nessie was stored late last fall before cleaning and touch-ups could be done. During 2015, the Divas purchased a BUK dragon boat for practices to accommodate our growing membership. The purchase provided an opportunity for the crew to come up with creative ideas for efficient and economic transport and storage of our growing fleet.

In order to continue using our existing trailer without altering it, we rented a hydraulic hoist to lift one boat above the other and place the OC2 inside the top boat. With the help of several Divas and Divos, the endeavor was successful and all three watercraft traveled safely to the winter storage.

The Divas currently own 37 team paddles and 30 personal flotation devices. Several Divas own their own equipment and we encourage individuals to purchase their own to meet specific needs. Therefore we do not anticipate any additional equipment purchases at this time.

Our current project is to determine how to enable both boats to be on the water for the 2016 practice season. In addition, the current Equipment Crew sterns have handed off their duties to new leadership.

*Carolyn Jonason and Carolyn Jacobs, Equipment Crew Co-Sterns*

# Communications Crew

2015 was a busy year for the Communications Crew. Our first responsibility was to generate and update printed materials including the annual summary, brochures, and business cards. Our annual summary includes a compilation of reports from all crew sterns, a message from our Board Chair and the financial report required for our 501(c)(3) status. We use the annual summary to share our mission with potential sponsors and donors. Brochures and business cards are shared at festivals, other outreach events, and are included in new member packets.

Communications updates members and the general public about Diva paddling season activities and other events through our website and Facebook page. The ad hoc Website Crew made progress on our newly designed dragondivasmn.org website, adding an online donation feature. Diva members are encouraged to post on our Facebook page. To help, we created some simple guidelines, which were distributed at our Fall all-member meeting. Guidelines were also included in new member packets.

A new venture was the creation of a Speakers' Bureau. We solicited suggestions from the Board and Crew Sterns for members who will represent our organization in media interviews. In April, Ione Livingston and Sandra Sorensen were interviewed on Comcast Newsmakers about the 2014 International Breast Cancer Paddlers' Commission (IBCPC) festival in Sarasota Florida, and about dragon boating in general. Dr. Sandra Rosenberg, Diva member and medical advisor, spoke at an international lymphedema conference. She and our 2015 Chair, Jen Thorup, reported on initial findings from the Lymphedema Quality of Life Study conducted by our organization during the 2014 IBCPC festival.

Finally, our crew continues to support all members by acknowledging birthdays, illnesses and other significant events in their lives. We also take photos of team events and new member photos. In 2016 we plan to explore on-line storage for photo albums.

*Nancy Reichow and Esti Koen, Communications Crew Co-Sterns*



# New This Year: Grounds Crew

The Grounds Crew is the newest crew of the Dragon Divas established in 2015 and has 14 members.

We provided a retreat last spring with our members. This half day retreat was facilitated by TheraRising and was designed to build a strong culture of cohesiveness.

This past fall, we held an evening class on “Mindfulness Meditation” presented by The Urban Retreat. This form of meditation is known to reduce stress, anxiety, worry and is an attribute of consciousness to promote well-being.

We have also had evening sessions with our crew learning tools and creating commitments necessary to reach our goal of keeping our organization grounded in its mission of fulfilling the emotional and spiritual health of our members. By keeping our organization strong, healthy and moving in a positive direction it will in turn foster a supportive environment. We want to build unity, teamwork, respect, and resilience by celebrating our members, celebrating our successes and fostering togetherness within our organization and within our community.

*Gayle Adair and Mary Skrypek, Grounds Crew Co-Sterns*

## 2015 Festivals

- Jun:** Capital Lakes Dragon Fest, Madison, WI
- Jul:** Asian Festival on Lake Phalen, St. Paul, MN
- Jul:** Big Blue Dragon Boat Race, LaCrosse, WI
- Aug:** Lake Superior Dragon Boat Festival, Superior, WI



## Divas in the News

May 2, 2015, **Comcast Newsmakers**

Dragon Divas featured.

<http://comcastnewsmakers.com/2015/05/02/dragon-divas>

### Additional Outreach Opportunities

- Manitou Days Parade and Boat Show, White Bear Lake
- Many cancer walks including the 3-day and Mother’s Day walks
- Dragon Divas speak at various events related to breast cancer, including support groups

# Finance

## Dragon Divas Statement of Financial Position December 31, 2015

### Assets

|                      |            |
|----------------------|------------|
| Current Assets       |            |
| Cash                 | \$33,231   |
| Other Current Assets |            |
| Clothing and Apparel | <u>782</u> |
| Total Current Assets | \$34,013   |

### Other Assets

|                              |                 |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Dragon Boat, Cover & Trailer | 21,716          |
| Dragon Boat & Cover          | 11,254          |
| OC-2                         | 1,500           |
| Accumulated depreciation     | <u>(12,140)</u> |
|                              | \$22,330        |

**Total Assets** \$56,343

### Liabilities and Unrestricted Net Assets

|                         |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| Liabilities             | \$ 0          |
| Unrestricted Net Assets | <u>56,343</u> |

**Total Liabilities & Net Assets** \$56,343

### Revenue

|               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| Contributions | \$12,342      |
| Sponsorships  | 1,200         |
| Dues          | 3,950         |
| Earned Income | <u>15,624</u> |
| Total Revenue | \$33,116      |

### Expense

|                       |              |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| Depreciation Expenses | \$ 2,536     |
| Program Expense       | 10,396       |
| Supporting Expenses   | <u>8,150</u> |
| Total Expense         | \$21,082     |

**Change in Net Assets** \$12,034

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



# Donors

## Cash Contributions over \$1,000

American Strength Training Center—Clare Poulouse  
Comprehensive Financial Resources, Inc.  
Dungeon Strength & Conditioning

## \$500 to \$1000

Bell Mortgage—Dan Peinovich  
Peter Funnell  
Mississippi Market  
Dan and Barbara O'Keefe  
Tom O'Keefe

## \$100-\$499

Pamela Baker  
Katie Cavanor  
Jim Donlin  
Rosemarie Donlin  
Michael Driscoll  
Dora Driscoll de Gomez  
Cindi Fitch  
Roger Green  
Carolyn Jonason

Maureen Kegler  
Mary Knudsen  
Ione & Gary Livingston  
Shirley Mandel  
Carol & Vincent Michealson  
Morgan Stanley—  
Matching Donations  
Paul Olson  
Anne Rumsey

Linda Ryan  
Patrick Sheedy &  
Lynne Schriver-Sheedy  
Terri Schultz  
Ryan Schultz  
Carol Sheehy  
Sean Skrypek  
Mary Skrypek  
Thomas Skrypek

Patrick Sloan—  
Fraternal Order of Police  
Lodge #1  
Target  
TST Media  
Vadnais Heights  
Firefighters Relief  
Lisa Wagner

## \$10-\$99

Gayle Adair  
Liza Allen  
Peggy Biernat  
Cindy Borup  
DelRae & Nina Brockton  
Nancy Bryan  
Wilbur & Barbara Cant  
Robert & Kathryn Carter  
Jim Colten  
Judy Crane  
Thomas Delich  
Claude Devost  
Laurie Ducharme  
John Feigal  
Julie Frakes  
Anne Fray  
Richard & Mary Ann  
Gapinski

Paula Gustafson &  
Donna Karnuth  
Goodshop  
Julie Heintz  
Terry Heitland  
Laura Hopple  
Anne Haselhuhn  
Barbara Huelsman  
Carolyn Jacobs  
Kathy Jordan  
Mang Khang  
Joann Khoury  
Esti Koen  
Pam Koepke  
Linda Kraus  
Marjorie Kron  
William Kronschnabel  
John Kuduk

Jill Laszewski, SSND  
Stacy Livingston  
McAfee—  
Matching Donations  
Kathleen Michealson  
Joan Miller  
Virginia Moran  
Network for Good  
Jean Novak  
Michael & Karen O'Keefe  
Tim & Kristi O'Keefe  
Baiba Olinger  
Ronald & Sandra Orf  
Carrie Osland  
Jay Pernu  
Wendy Perry  
Sandra Rosenberg  
Amy Sadoff

Sophie Sawichi Memorial  
Howard Schwartz  
Lawrence Shomion  
Maggie Skrypek  
Julie Sockwell  
Cecilia Stephens  
Jennifer Thorup  
Jennifer Vitale  
Bertie Wakeling  
Heather Wright  
Tracey Yacks

## Supporters

|                    |                      |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 5th Ave Dental     | Fresh Grounds        | Muna Yoga            |
| Terri Arfie        | Gypsy Moon           | Needham Distributors |
| Capitol Beverage   | Lois Ann Helgeson    | Northstar Outdoor    |
| Sales              | Jimmy's Event Center | Paddle North         |
| Lucy Pam Bloomberg | Joe's Sporting Goods | Red Savoy Pizza      |
| Jack Cedarleaf     | Mary Lee Kahn        | Father Greg Skrypek  |
| Dairy Queen        | Sharon Krueger       | Sport NGIN           |
| Robert Donlin      | Karen Krueger        | Target               |
| Rosemarie Donlin   | Lake Elmo Inn        | Judith Trudel        |
| Fairfield Inn and  | Mancini's Char House | Twin Cities          |
| Suites, VH         | MN Science Museum    | Provisions           |
| Cindi Fitch        | Minnesota Twins      | The YMCA             |
| First State Bank   | Baseball Club        |                      |
| and Trust          |                      |                      |



# Board

## 2015 Board of Directors

### Founder:

Mary Skrypek

### Officers:

Jen Thorup, Chair  
Kathy Jordan, Vice Chair  
Pam Baker, Treasurer  
Sheila Ludden, Secretary  
Jenny Vitale, Secretary

### At Large Members:

Gayle Adair  
Katie Cavanor  
Jill Laszewski  
Baiba Olinger

### Medical Advisor

Dr. Sandra K. Rosenberg



Dragon Divas  
c/o Mary Skrypek  
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