

DragonBoat Beaufort

Cancer Survivor Mixed DragonBoat Racing Team



“A Dragon Boat is a human-powered watercraft traditionally made in the Pearl River Delta region of Southern China. Dragonboats are the basis of the team paddling sport of dragon boat racing, an amateur watersport which has its roots in an ancient folk ritual of contending villagers, held over the past 2000 years throughout Southern China.” (wikipedia)

Story by **MARY ELLEN THOMPSON**

The screening of *Awaken The Dragon* at the Beaufort International Film Festival vividly portrayed the effect the Charleston Dragon Boat program has had on cancer survivors, their caregivers and their supporters. As the lights went up, Clare Taylor and Mary Ann Thomas, moved as many in the audience were, turned to each other and said “We need to do this in Beaufort.” At the awards ceremony the evening of the screening, they met with Liz Oakley, the producer/director of the Festival’s winning documentary, Sterling Hannah and the enthusiastic members of the trophy-winning Charleston crew and DragonBoat Beaufort was born. The ambitious goal was to create a dynamic team, for both men and women cancer survivors and supporters and to fund local cancer support programs. Step One: form a team. Step Two: buy the DragonBoat through community support and outreach.

Dragon Boat Charleston has been the model for Beaufort’s initiative, providing support, direction and even water-based “newbie” training in Charleston’s Ashley River. According to their website: “Twenty paddlers sit two abreast in colorful 48-foot vessels while paddling to the beat of a drummer, the heartbeat of the dragon. In 1996, a physician at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, created the first cancer survivor team. This team, called ‘Abreast in a Boat’, quickly proved the importance of team activity for both physical and emotional well

being. Just five years after the development of the original team, over one thousand survivors had formed survivor teams.”

DragonBoat Beaufort’s goal is to promote “physical wellness and psychological well-being through this thrilling, team-oriented support program that even offers opportunities to travel to competitions world-wide. Being cut, radiated and medicated by cancer treatments needs an offset. This is an opportunity to get outdoors in a supportive team environment and regain some of what was lost.”

Dragonboats can cost as much as \$16,000. Additional needs include a safety boat, insurance, marina costs and trailoring. While initial fundraising in Beaufort is focused on the purchase of one, perhaps even two boats, DragonBoat Beaufort hopes to stage a DragonBoat Festival in the Fall of 2013 raising significant funds to support its local cancer support programs.

On April 21 at 5:30, BIFF will hold an encore screening of *Awaken the Dragon* at USCB Center for the Arts; tickets are \$20, \$10 of which goes to DBB. It’s not necessary to wait until then to contribute, donate, or volunteer - see the trailer: <https://vimeo.com/35915444>, go to the website: www.dragonboatbeaufort.org and choose how you can help. Cancer affects all of us in one way or another.