



Background

The Los Angeles Pink Dragons is California's first breast cancer survivor dragon boat racing team. The team is dedicated to improving the fitness and quality of life for breast cancer survivors. Through dragon boat racing, we demonstrate that women with breast cancer can lead full, active lives that are full of possibilities. By taking part in this challenging, yet gratifying sport, we each strive to achieve our personal best in hopes of empowering and inspiring others who have been through this journey.

The Los Angeles Pink Dragons' mission is to provide inspiration to women who have survived breast cancer, to provide hope that there is quality of life after breast cancer, and to promote health and fitness, camaraderie, and competition through the sport and culture of dragon boat racing.



The Los Angeles Pink Dragons are a 501(c)(3) charitable organization under the auspices of Los Angeles Racing Dragons (Tax ID #33-0908177). The team is governed by a Steering Committee made up of volunteers. 100% of funds raised or donated support the ongoing operations of the Los Angeles Pink Dragons. Donations are tax-deductible as allowable by law.

History

Dragon boats have been part of Chinese culture for more than 2,000 years, used originally as a religious ceremony as a way to appease the rain gods. In 1996, Dr. Don McKenzie, a physician at the Allan McGavin Sports Medicine Centre, University of British Columbia, strove to dispel the myth that women who have undergone breast cancer treatment should refrain from repetitive, upper body exercise for fear of developing chronic lymphedema, a permanent and sometimes incapacitating swelling of the arm and chest area that can develop any time after lymph node surgery and radiation treatment. Research published in 1998 in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*¹ showed that paddling a dragon boat benefits breast cancer survivors as it provides strenuous upper body activity in an aesthetically pleasing and socially supportive environment. Later research published by *Mitchell, et al* concluded that, "The interview data support the emerging hypothesis that dragon boating is a vehicle for improving women's wellness and post-treatment quality of life."²

The Los Angeles Pink Dragons was formed in 2003 through the support of Diane McCabe, a breast cancer survivor and member of the Los Angeles Racing Dragons. A remarkable woman in countless ways, Diane had a vision of a team of breast cancer survivors coming together to paddle a dragon boat in the beautiful waters of Los Alamitos Bay in Long Beach, California. She began to work with Team Survivor LA to recruit a core group of survivors. Through their efforts, the Los Angeles Pink Dragons was born.

Today, there are more than 120 breast cancer survivor dragon boat racing teams hailing from more than 60 countries around the globe. The International Breast Cancer Survivor Paddlers Commission provides a framework for participation and inclusion, and encourages the formation of breast cancer dragon boat teams as a contribution to a healthy lifestyle for those who have been diagnosed with breast cancer.

Our Sport

The Los Angeles Pink Dragons is coached by trained instructors from our parent team, the Los Angeles Racing Dragons, as well as benefitting from land training provided by Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist (RCEP) Jay Scully.

In addition to racing, the team participates in community and breast cancer events to raise awareness and to encourage breast cancer survivors to try our sport. It is our goal to operate the team in a self-sustaining manner so individual paddlers can enjoy and benefit from the training without a high financial commitment. The Los Angeles Pink Dragons relies on the generosity of individuals and commercial organizations, as well as revenue derived from local fundraising events, such as our annual Yard Sale, to offset the operating costs.

The annual operating costs to support the Pink Dragons' ability to train year-round and compete in high-visibility events include, but aren't limited to:

- More than \$3000 to rent dragon boats (up to 2 per practice) and insure our paddlers
- \$1000 (or more) to participate in racing tournaments
- \$100 per session for professional coaching by master-class paddlers
- \$75 to grant a membership scholarship to a survivor with limited financial means

In 2014, the Los Angeles Pink Dragons sent a team to Sarasota, Florida to compete in the International Breast Cancer Paddlers Dragon Boat Festival. 101 breast cancer survivor teams from around the globe took part in this weekend of fitness, camaraderie, and racing.



2015 Tournament of Roses Parade

The Los Angeles Pink Dragons was honored to have been invited to participate in the 2015 Tournament of Roses Parade, themed "Inspiring Stories." The City of South Pasadena chose a float designed by a local volunteer and one of our paddlers, Anita Scott, entitled, "Still Winning" which featured two dragon boats racing under a pink ribbon, highlighting breast cancer survivors who choose to live active and healthy lives through dragon boat paddling.

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- 1 McKenzie, Donald C. (August 1998) "Abreast in a Boat – a race against breast cancer." Canadian Medical Association Journal 159:376-378.
- 2 Mitchell, JL, et al (2007) "Survivor Dragon Boating: A Vehicle to Reclaim and Enhance Life After Treatment for Breast Cancer." Health Care for Women International 28(2).