

# Dragon boat team seeks new members

Dragon boating is the fastest-growing watersport in the world. Dragon boating is not just a sport for breast cancer survivors. In fact, there are now several local community teams within the Comox Valley that paddle on a regular basis.

This boat was originally purchased by the local breast cancer survivor team Hope Afloat Canada in 2002. Funds for the purchase of the dragon boat were raised through generous donations from Comox Valley communities and many fundraising efforts.

Comox Valley Dragon Boat Society was formed by a handful of breast cancer survivors from the Comox Valley who embarked upon dragon boating in 2002. The name they have become known by locally and internationally is Hope Afloat Canada.

The team is very active in the community and regularly participates in many "awareness" events such as Relay for Life, CIBC Run for the Cure, Tour de Dance for Cops for Cancer and pink-ribbon Tag Day to help raise funds for breast cancer research and equipment.

Women of every age and physical ability occupy the boat during practices and races. There are 20 paddlers who sit in pairs, side by side, a steersperson (tiller) and a drummer in the 48-foot dragon boat. Through dragon boat regular practices and races, Hope Afloat brings an increased awareness of breast cancer and spreads the message of hope.

Hope Afloat Canada is motivated, trained, guided and encouraged by its coach, Don Irvine. He is a man who

has many years of experience, wisdom, knowledge and strength. He instills the qualities of patience, motivation, kindness and respect in all team members.

The active paddling season starts in February and lasts until early September each year. Hope Afloat Canada is committed to practicing at least two times per week, in addition to participating in regular personal exercise programs in preparation for the various local and international dragon boat festivals throughout the season.

On Saturday, March 11, Hope Afloat Canada will be holding a membership drive. The only prerequisite to become a paddler with Hope Afloat Canada is that you have had a personal diagnosis of breast cancer,\* and that you have a predisposition for having lots of fun while getting fit.

At 9:45 a.m. there will be an orientation paddle (optional) at the Comox Marina for approximately 15 minutes, where would-be new paddlers can try out the sport of dragon boating. Several team members will accompany the new paddlers in the boat. Life-jackets and paddles will be provided. Please wear something warm and preferably waterproof. Coffee, muffins and an information session will follow in the upstairs room of the Edgewater Pub.

To find out more about Hope Afloat, check out the website at <[www.hopeafloat-canada.ca](http://www.hopeafloat-canada.ca)>. If you are interested or would like more information contact Marcy Petersen at 338-2112, Barb Thompson at 752-0422 or Lorraine Boyd at 336-0128.

**HOPE AFLOAT**