

Pink Paddling Power SHINES IN HONG KONG

Thanks to nearly 200 donors, the breast cancer survivor support group and dragon boat racing team embarked on the trip of a lifetime, making history at the world championships in Hong Kong

Rough waves and strong currents met with hot, humid July weather in Hong Kong's Victoria Harbor, crowded with thousands of athletes for the World Club Crew Championships. Some dragon boats crashed, others capsized. Pink Paddling Power's boat not only remained upright, but with a focused effort, the team netted a personal best and two bronze medals. It was their first major international race and the birth of the breast cancer division at the world championships.

"We made history just by being there," said club president Terri Smith. "We were nervous, but we did better than ever before."

It was a world away from the group's 2006 inception at All Saints Cancer Center, where rows of chairs lined the hallways, so the team could air-paddle, learning the proper motions for the day they would venture into the water. The women have a Canadian sports doctor to thank for their entry into the world of dragon boating. Research in 1996 showed that strenuous, repetitive upper body exercise proves helpful to many breast cancer patients. All Saints Cancer Center associates took notice and formed Pink Paddling Power, part support group, part racing group, and 100% hope.



"There's still so much more to live for," says member Lee Nehmer. "We're going to live every single minute." In Hong Kong, the 29 paddlers did just that, responding to invitations to extra festivities with an emphatic, "Oh, yes, we're here for the *whole* thing!"

That unbridled enthusiasm is what inspired nearly 200 donors to help fund the paddlers' trip. "People saw something in us," Nehmer says. "They believed in our team, but more so, they believed in our spirit." The club's spirit of courage and sisterhood inspired donor Vicki Atkins. "These women are shining examples of faith, hope, and strength. They are survivors and more. They are an inspiration," she said.

Michele Bachmann, owner of Grapes 2 Glass, hosted a fundraiser for the team. As a cancer survivor herself, she knows the value of survivors supporting each other. "These outstanding women show that you can overcome this. You are not alone," she said.

The team shared the trip of a lifetime, but it was not without disappointment. Before competing, one of the paddlers ruptured her Achilles tendon. She received care at a Catholic hospital in Hong Kong run by, as fate would have it, Franciscan nuns. So far from home, she found comfort in the Catholic connection. As she recovers, pink cast and all, she and the team look to the future—to more races, to connecting with new members, and to touching lives with their legacy of hope, a legacy that is already so apparent.

When the team returned home to All Saints, they were greeted by lots of excited supporters, many bearing welcome home banners, champagne, and party horns.

On that very same day, a breast cancer patient finished her last day of treatment at All Saints. She headed over to the parking lot to tell the team congratulations. And to tell them one more thing—I want to join.

樂部錦標賽

