

Officers, firefighters bask in medal glory

Teams compete at World Police & Fire Games

GWENDOLYN RICHARDS
CALGARY HERALD

Police officers and firefighters who traded in uniforms for athletic gear have returned to the city with medals in hand following the World Police & Fire Games.

From hockey to high jump, members of the Calgary Police Service and the city's fire department beat out the competition that descended on Vancouver for the 10-day event.

The games, which run every two years, hosted more than 10,000 athletes from fire and police departments around the world.

For Det. Tanya Paziuk, claiming gold in dragon boat racing was a victory against the odds.

Not only did the 12-member team come together only three months ago, but they were initially without an actual boat for training.

At the beginning, they had to split up and use two large canoes, which made it difficult to train as a team.

But, when the Sistership Dragonboat Association learned of their plight, the team of breast cancer survivors offered up their own vessel, said Paziuk.

Those women — and what they had dealt with in their lives — were in the minds of the police team as they paddled their way to victory.

With about a half-second to spare, the team of officers beat out those from Hong Kong, the United States and Australia.

Paziuk said odds were stacked against the team because of its short training time — hindered also by the dismal weather the city experienced earlier this summer — and the fact their competitors are from countries known to dominate the world of dragon boat racing.

"I'm really proud of us that we really came together as a team," Paziuk said.



August 31, 2009

Ms. Charlene Waldal
Sistership Dragon Boat Association
14 - 100 Sheep River Drive
Okotoks, Alberta
T15 1V3

Dear Charlene:

I would like to extend my appreciation to you and your organization for so generously assisting the Calgary Police Service Women's Dragon Boat Team with their training for the 2009 World Police Fire Games. The Sistership's provision of a boat and equipment led to the team's ultimate success of a Gold medal at the Games.

I understand your organization's mission is to foster wellness, educate the public about breast cancer and enhance community partnerships. In discussions with the team members, your mission and the selfless nature of your work served powerfully to inspire and motivate them during training and especially on race day in Vancouver.

On behalf of the Calgary Police Service, I thank you for your generosity and a true demonstration of community spirit in action!

Sincerely,

Office of the Chief of Police
Rick Hanson