

2010 Calgary Festival Flower Ceremony – Deidre Palik



Hi Everyone,

My name is Deidre and I am proud to be standing here this afternoon with my team, Sistership Calgary. Each and every one of us has heard those dreaded words...“it's breast cancer”. Each and every one of us, and many before us, chose a road, post treatment, that led us to this wonderful sport and team. Climbing into that boat, we have gained strength, camaraderie, and discipline. As each

year passes, more layers come off revealing our inner ‘athlete’. With the help of our great coaches and the YMCA, we are strong and surviving very well.

Sistership had the great honour to represent Calgary at the second international breast cancer dragon boat festival in Peterborough, Ontario, in June this year. We competed in a field of 2,000 survivors from all over the world. Peterborough was a sea of PINK. Dr. Don MacKenzie, who started it all in 1996, was in attendance.

Sistership started 13 seasons ago, in 1998, and has seen over 200 survivors join and paddle on this reservoir, some of whom had never been on the water before. Many have stayed. Indeed, we still have some original members actively paddling. Others have moved on to other adventures. We always welcome new members; if you are a survivor and want to know more, come over to our tent today!

Sadly, some of us are fighting the battle again. We pray for them and wish them a hasty return to good health and to our boat.

Harder still, over the 13 seasons, we have lost an entire crew to this disease, including Sandra who died earlier this year having spent a brief time with us in 2008 wearing her red hat and great smile.

Also, earlier this year, we sent that crew a coach, Heather Webber.

Heather had joined Sistership within a year of her first diagnosis of Breast Cancer, in 2000. Her passion and drive were soon felt throughout our ranks. She was a paddler, coach, mentor, spokesperson, activist, a physical presence, and, most importantly, friend to us all. She took her diagnosis and made it a mission to show the world how to survive it. We have all learned well and she is sorely missed.

We want to take a moment to thank the newly-formed Calgary Dragon Boat Society for their great efforts to put together today's regatta and for breathing life back into dragon boating in Calgary.

In honour of our team-mates who have passed, and indeed for all who have lost their fight with breast cancer, we will be releasing 22 doves in a few minutes; 20 paddlers, a steer, and a drummer; 22 Hearts, One Goal.