



Rita Gore has found that dragon boat racing has helped her take more risks in her life.

Showing strength through sport

The irony isn't lost on Rita Gore, BSW'74, MSW'85, that it was a diagnosis of breast cancer at age 48 that motivated her to take more responsibility for her health and healing.

After undergoing treatment, she joined a dragon boat racing team called Calgary Sistership four years ago. Dragon boat racing for women with breast cancer was introduced in 1995 by Vancouver sports medicine physician Dr. Don McKenzie. He wanted to test whether the sport's strenuous upper-body workout was reasonable training for woman in recovery.

His experiment worked, and teams soon began to appear worldwide.

"It is not only the fitness aspect of the sport that is significant to women who are learning to trust their bodies again, but the teamwork required to achieve a common goal," says Gore. "As well, it is often significant for family members to see their mothers, sisters, partners and daughters taking a proactive role in fighting back against cancer and demonstrating their strength and determination through sport."

For Gore, dragon boat racing was just the start. In June, she completed her first sprint triathlon which included a swimming course at Foothills Pool, and a bicycle and running route on the U of C grounds.

Gore is also developing her artistic side, by writing and doing photography. One of her pictures has been chosen to be part of a national photography exhibit which will be in Calgary in 2009.

"For me, taking part in sports such as dragon boat racing and triathlon training has helped me to trust my body again, enabled me to be more emotionally resilient and willing to take risks in other areas of my life," says Gore.

— Beth Frank