



Dragonflyers of Michigan Newsletter

October 2023

A Message from our President

It has been such a wonderful paddling season, and I can hardly believe there are only a few weeks left. However, fall paddling is always such a treat with the changing leaves on our lake. What a great season it has been! I want to say thank you to all of you who have practiced hard, trained for races, and contributed to making Dragonflyers a wonderful organization. Thank you to our coaches, Alyona and Ellen, for planning a thoughtful season. I know I feel my paddling skills really improved this year, and that is due in great part to the support of our coaches. I'd also like to thank our board members and committee chairs for all working hard on all that needs to be done during and outside of practice. It really does take a village!

We've had some new events this year, such as the monthly weekend paddles, and have been able to bring the amazing sport of dragon boating to a broader audience. We've competed in three great race events, all of them exciting. The Lansing event was terrific this year, and we had the opportunity to talk with other teams there and share opportunities to become more involved with our team and in the sport. We are also building an incredible community of paddlers and supporters. It is exciting to see dragon boating growing in our region. I think we can look forward to a spectacular 2024 paddling season. Time to start that off-season training so we can be even more powerful in the boat next year. Paddles up!

- Julie

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The 2023 Board Members

The following are the 2023 elected board members:

President – Julie Sinclair

Vice President – Ginger Martz

Secretary – Sarynna Lopez-Meza

Treasurer – Lin Hirai

At-Large Member – Mary Guerriero

At Large Member - LouAnn Stark-Dykema

Past-President – Samantha Caughlan



Dragons on the Lake Festival 2022

Board Nominations Open!

Would you like to get more involved in the Dragonflyers organization as a part of the non-profit Board of Directors or have you enjoyed serving on the Board in 2023? We are looking for new folks interested in serving in leadership positions and would love to see some returners, too. Now is your chance!

Nominations are now open for the Dragonflyers Board of Directors Elections for 2024 to be held during the Dragonflyers Annual Meeting on October 21. Please complete the nomination form by October 18 to nominate yourself or a willing team member. The Nomination form can be accessed at

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc1-3XJgiJ9m1gbT_ZsElwr8tQ_hm9uZFRYuuOlkmM3gQH3A/viewform

For a copy of the Dragonflyers Values and Bylaws documents contact Bess at Dragonflyersofmi@gmail.com.

Thank you for considering this important service to our organization for the coming year!

Update on the 2023 Summer Activities

GWN Chicago International Dragon Boat Festival –
July 29, 2023, in Schaumburg, IL

Paddling with the Dragonflyers of Michigan is a big part of my life from May through October. It is a commitment to myself and to a team of great people. One way I experience the gift of this commitment is when we go to a Dragon Boat Festival. During the last weekend in July 2023, twenty-one members of the Dragonflyers went to the Chicago International Dragon Boat Festival.



This festival had 34 amazing teams in a variety of categories. The categories were Sport, Community, Cancer Survivors, and Adaptive. The teams were made up of all men, all women, and/or mixed men and women. The Dragonflyers were in the mixed Community category. The ages of the paddlers ranged from 14 to 80+ years old. It was fun to see teams from many different locations all gathering for the love and fun of this sport. We had teams

from the larger Chicago area, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Florida, and Canada. The Orlando, Florida team came as part of a summer program made up of teens, their mentors, and Orlando police.

The energy, fun and hard work of being a dragon boat team was in full force at the festival. There was a spirit of encouragement and friendliness that passed back and forth among the teams. Teams were constantly cheering each other on!

Participating in races requires us each to do and be our best. This comes out in our paddling, supporting each other in



moments of disappointment, and celebrating our individual and team achievements.

As I look back on this Chicago Festival, I remember much laughter, high fives, adrenalin rushes, good food and of course exhaustion. We left it all on the water and came home a happy team!

LouAnn Stark-Dykema, Team Captain

Editor's note: The Chicago International Dragon Boat Festival included three 500m races among the 20 community mixed teams. Dragonflyers finished the day in 4th place. A very successful race!



Dragons on the Lake Boat Festival –
August 12, 2023, in Akron, Ohio

Although the rains came heavy the night before, our Dragonflyers had a nice Mexican dinner at the Blue Iguana in Akron, complete with music and a view of the waterway. After a night of sleep, we made our way to Portage Lakes State Park. Fortunately, we had not set up our tent on Friday, because the rains would have damaged it. Once set up, we proceeded to lay out all our goodies and set up our chairs for a wonderful day of competition on the water.



The weather cooperated, and I would like to think my dad had something to do with that. Lol.

We were able to get in all three races and enjoy some time getting to know one another in between. Coach Alyona and Coach Ellen had gotten us prepared very well for the task before us and we competed mightily.

Dinner on Saturday afternoon was fun, and I enjoyed bringing my brother and sister-in-law along to cheer as well as my friends Charlie and Robin. It was awesome meeting everyone's friends and family they brought and enjoying each other's company. It was cool explaining some of the dragon boating to my family and friends.

Meeting up with friends for pizza and beverages at night was great too with more conversation and getting to know people!



Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and we got great pictures and truly enjoyed our last night in the hotel playing games and having food and drink and of course a lovely breakfast in the morning, where we could watch the amazement of Erin, staring at the pancake machine!

It was a wonderful time and I know we are going to be even faster on our times next year!! As one of three captains of this race I was not truly as responsible as I should be as a captain but I'm learning roles and how things work! Thanks to Katie and Ginger and the entire team helping me out!!
Lynda Heinig, Tri-Captain



Editor's Note:

This event included three divisions (Corporate, Community, and BCS Breast Cancer Survivor); 250-meter race, two rounds determine top 6 in each division who move to 3rd round. When averaging the times from all three rounds we were 4th overall and 3rd in the Community Division.

The Dragons on the Lake Race was dedicated to the memory of Barbara Thurston, the sister of our paddler Joyce Ochowicz.

Our drummer, Amy Lester, won the award for Best Drummer Costume; and she wore a different costume for each round.

Capital City Dragon Boat Race –
September 17, 2023, at Hawk Island Park in Lansing, MI

On Sunday, September 17th our Team participated in the Capital City Dragon Boat Race, which is a fundraiser for the Women's Center of Greater Lansing. The event is held at Hawk Island Park, and this was my 2nd time participating in this race. It's a shorter race, around 200 meters, and we do it on the lake while having people cheering on the sides, so it's fun.



Upon arrival, we set up the area and did a quick practice on the boat. We were thankful the weeds had been cleared for the race – the last time we had been there, paddling through weedy areas was a pain, so this was great news. After our boat practice, I was able to have some breakfast (Tim Horton's! I mean, it was only appropriate this being a Canadian-embraced sport!).

There were 10 teams overall, and we had 2 rounds of races with about 2 hours in between so that was nice. My boys went on a couple of walks



while waiting between races. It was a gorgeous day to be out; it was supposed to rain early in the afternoon but thankfully the rain held off, we only had to deal with a bit of wind towards the end.

Our first and second races went well. We had a strong steersperson, Penny from Dynamic Dragon Boat Racing, and we followed our race plan. I was paddling in the 2nd row/bench, and my recollection of the actual race includes looking up to our beautiful drummer, Amy Lester, in her gorgeous outfits, telling us to be strong and keep it together from the front, hearing George Huang's voice at the half-way mark, and as usual, hearing Alyona Troitsky's "together" as we approached the finish. There is so much noise around us, it's nice to be looking out only for those voices.



Our coaches usually remind us to just keep our heads in the boat, and to not be looking at what's happening around us. For me, personally, it's a given. The way I sit and position myself to be able to rotate, my vision is fixated on the paddler in front of me (Mary Kimball in this case!), so I honestly have absolutely no idea what's happening around me. I just see her and Amy, and that's it. Only once I hear "Let it run" I sit up and look around.

For the final race we ended up coming in in 3rd place, only 1.26 seconds behind the 1st place boat! It was not shabby at all considering the many differences in team composition (both gender and age!). I was really proud of our team's effort at the end!!!

Sarynna Lopez-Meza, Team Captain



Dragonflyers Bonfire!

On Friday September 27, 2023, our fantastic and gorgeous drummer Amy Lester hosted us for a bonfire! We had about 10 people show up to make s'mores and relax on a wonderful Friday night. The weather was perfect, a bit cool and without rain, so we just sat down and mostly relaxed (I say mostly because I don't know that everybody found Alyona's and my singing relaxing, but let's hope they did!).



The most-talked event of the night was the giant, squared marshmallows that are perfect for s'more-making. The 2nd most-talked event was Mary Kimball's fingers getting stuck with marshmallow goo and her trying to get them off.



As the sun went down and our stomachs grew fuller the fire grew brighter. The lucky paddlers who were able to come and enjoy the beautiful weather started to learn a song.

"If I A-frame like this
And if I rotate like that
It was lost long ago, but it's all coming back to me
If we follow like this
And if our heads in the boat
It was lost long ago, but it's all coming back to me....

Words by Lynda Heinig. Sung to the tune of Celine Dion's It's All Coming Back To Me



I look forward to holding many more bonfires and having s'more of you come.

Sarynna Lopez-Meza and Amy Lester



Weekend Paddle Updates:

This year we offered opportunities to paddle on some Saturdays and/or Sundays. We charged a small fee to cover the cost of a coach and raise a little money for the club. Overall, the weekend paddles were a success with new, returning, and current paddlers attending. We will likely offer these weekend paddles again next year. If you have any suggestions on how to improve these events and have more paddlers attend, please email us at Dragonflyersofmi@gmail.com.

Upcoming Events

End of Season Party

This years' End-of-Season Party will be held on October 21st. At this event we will hold elections for positions on the board. See article on Page 2. We will also celebrate the season and have fun.

Alyona's Pumpkin Carving Party

Although not a club sponsored event, we are all welcome. This year the party will be held on October 28th. Start thinking about your design for your pumpkin.

Please watch your email for more information on each of these events or contact Dragonflyersofmi@gmail.com for more details.

From the Maintenance Shed

Greetings fellow paddlers!

Year-end maintenance tasks are upon us! We are making arrangements for winter storage for our boat. If you know of any low- or no-cost storage options, please contact Ginger at Dragonflyersofmi@gmail.com. We need about 47' of room. In lieu of a low- or no- cost options, we will again store the boat at the Eaton County Fairgrounds. The unfortunate aspect of storing the boat there is that we have no access to the boat until early April. Ideally, we would like to be able to periodically access the boat off-season to do repairs and improvements.

Our date for pulling the boat out of the water is Saturday, October 14, with Sunday the 15th as a back-up in case of bad weather. We'll need volunteers that day to paddle the boat, flip the boat on the trailer, and wash and wax the hull.

We'll also need volunteers to help with taking the dock out of the water on October 22nd. Please contact Erin at Dragonflyersofmi@gmail.com if you can help with the boat and/or the dock. Please mark your calendars!

Thank you to all the volunteers who helped us keep everything ship shape this year!

If you would like to join the maintenance committee, please reach out to Erin at Dragonflyersofmi@gmail.com.

Paddles Up!
Erin & Ginger
Maintenance co-chairs

Coaches Corner

As the 2023 paddling season comes to a close, we should reflect on how each of us grew and changed. We grew as a team and each of us grew individually.

Each of us will have had goals we set for ourselves early in the season. Were we able to reach our goals? How do you feel about reaching your goal? If you did not reach your goal, what got in our way? What did we need to stay more focused or motivated?

After reflexing on this past year, you can now look ahead to next year. How will you prepare for next season? What shape do you want to be in in May 2024, when we start the next paddling season? What will you do to make sure you are ready for the 2024 paddling season?

Do you benefit from a list of things to do? Or does writing your goals down on a piece of paper and tucked away, helped you strive to meet the goals you set for yourself?

Be realistic in the goals you set. Make sure they are achievable.

Some things to consider when setting goals (staying and getting in shape for paddling) include specific exercises and drills for dragon boat paddlers, building up your muscles and increasing your stamina. How can you prepare mentally for paddling. And what are the best foods for you to eat.

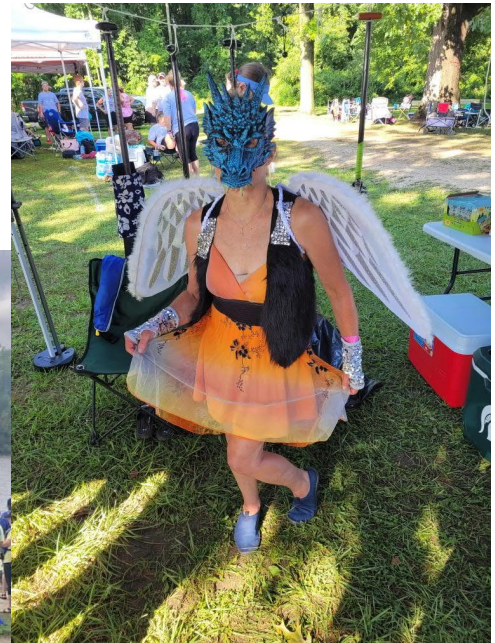
From the internet you can search what are the best exercises for dragon boating. You will find some videos and other helpful hints. Perhaps you should join a gym or get a personal trainer. Whatever you decide to do, please do not overdo it. Work out within your limits and only push yourself in small increments.

This winter we hope to offer opportunities to work out on a dragon boat erg. See article on page12.

Paddles up!
Coach Ellen

The Beat Goes ON – The Story of a Dragon Boat Drummer

When I was handed my first set of dragon wings and was asked to wear them, honestly, I was a little shy to wear them. I remember it so well; it was at the Lake Orion Race in 2022. That was the second race I did that year, but it was enough to get my wings wet. Then this year came and the true Dragonflyer in me came out. At the Dragonflyers Yard Sale in June 2023, Mary Guerriero hooked me up with some of her granddaughter's old dance outfits and the obsession began. I have collected enough outfits to change for every race and not repeat all season, but wait, you haven't seen all of them yet!



It isn't only the costumes but being at the drum. I love being able to see all of you reaching down the gunnel, having a perfect top arm, and pushing with those feet. I especially love to scream POWER at you during the race! I truly with all my heart want to thank all of you for accepting me into the Dragonflyers' family. It is truly an honor and a blessing!

Amy Lester

Dragonflyers' Donors

Dragonflyers would like to recognize and thank our 2021, 2022 and 2023 donors and sponsors. Through their contributions, Dragonflyers is working towards our goal of multi-generational comradery, team building, healthy exercise programs, and education regarding the technique and wellness features of dragon boating. Proceeds from donors and sponsors also supported charitable racing for a women's center, the arts, and cancer programs.

Darling Hardware in Perry, MI

Great Northern Docks in Vermont

South Lansing Lowe's

South Lansing Menards

Lynda Heinig

Rebecca (Becky) Saul

Bess German

Ellen Lurie

Mary & Rich Kimball

Virginia Martz

Capital Region Community Foundation (Guerriero Family)

Beth Wing

Paige Lawson

Joyce Ochowicz

Rob Flanders

Laurel Winkle

Performance Project, LLC (M-43 Gym)

FlipGive

FlipGive helps teams to raise funds using something many of us are already doing: shopping. This replaces attempts to raise money through a car wash, bake sale, or other method of fundraising. We encourage everyone to share the link to the Dragonflyers of Michigan FlipGive account (<https://www.flipgive.com/teams/327372-dragonflyers-of-michigan>), so as friends and family shop at local or national retailers, they are also assisting our organization with our fundraising efforts.



Once on our FlipGive site, there is an option to donate or shop on-line. To shop you have an option to shop by Brands (stores) or Departments (Gift Cards; Sports & Outdoors; Fashions; Grocery & Essentials; Home & Garden; Travel & Tickets; Electronics; etc.). You can also shop gift registries, once you are at the store. FlipGive has over 700 stores and brands you can shop from.

Dragonflyers of Michigan will receive a percentage of any purchases made when using FlipGive as the venue to access retailers. Our website, www.dragonflyers.org, has a direct link to the Dragonflyers of Michigan FlipGive account and allows paddlers, their families, and friends to shop online through local retailers and national retailers.

Please share this with family and friends!

Training with a Dragon Boat Erg

A used dragon boat erg was generously donated to the Dragonflyers of Michigan by Rob Flanders. An erg is basically a paddling machine that helps work on the technical side of your dragon boat stroke, as well as strength and stamina.



The erg we have, shown on the right above, can be adjusted for right and left side paddlers and distance to the foot brace can also be adjusted.

The goal will be to have opportunities to train on the erg this winter.

Watch for emails for times, cost, and trainers for the erg later in the fall/winter.

Extras

Potential Training

Look for details on potential short trainings or workshops this winter. Some topics may include How to utilize FlipGive while doing your holiday shopping; how to tie knots; and more. Please send suggested topics to DragonflyersofMI@gmail.com

Dragonflyers' Website

The Dragonflyers of Michigan website is up and available for viewing at www.dragonflyers.org. The area for photos is still being developed along with the sponsorship opportunities, but the rest of the site is active and available to the public.

The analytics of the website show the month of September had 49 site sessions (unique email addresses) at 97% new contacts from the following traffic sources: direct 7, Facebook 4, Google 31 and Yahoo 1, DuckDuckGo 3.

Not surprisingly, our webpage saw the most activity on September 16 – September 19, 2023. Overall, the summer contacts on the website total 161 contacts from the USA, 3 from Canada, and 1 contact from each of the following countries: Philippines, Mexico, Hong Kong, Pakistan and Netherlands. Please continue to share our website with family and friends.

Committees and Chair-people

No organization can succeed without the help of countless people serving on committees. Dragonflyers is no different. We are always looking for people to join our committees.

Membership Committee – Bess German

Fundraising Committee – Co-chairs Julie Sinclair and Ginger Martz

Finance Committee – Lin Hirai (Treasurer)

Social Activity Committee – Sarynna Lopez-Meza

Maintenance Committee - Co-chairs Ginger Martz and Erin Linn

Social Media & Website/IT – Looking for chair and members - Contact Julie Sinclair

Election/Nomination – Bess German

Safety – Alyona Troitski

Race – Co-chairs Alyona Troitski and Ellen Lurie

We are especially looking for people who can help with our Facebook accounts.

If you are interested in joining any of these committees, please contact the chairperson or the board President Julie Sinclair at DragonflyersofMI@gmail.com.

Dragonflyers Board Meetings

The Board holds quarterly meetings, which are open to members and the public.

Meeting dates for 2023 are tentatively scheduled on the following dates:

- ~~January 25, 2023, at 7:00pm~~
- ~~April 26, 2023, at 7:00pm~~
- ~~July 26, 2023, at 7:00pm~~ Changed to July 19, 2023, at 7:00pm
- October 25, 2023, at 7:00pm

The meeting will be held on Zoom. You may contact us at DragonflyersofMI@gmail.com for the link and meeting details.

Additional details will be provided at least one week before the meeting. All are welcome to attend these meetings.

We hope this Newsletter can be published quarterly. If you would like to help with the newsletter, please contact Ellen at DragonflyersofMI@gmail.com

Ideas for articles are welcome.

For questions or more information regarding Dragonflyers of Michigan please visit our website at www.dragonflyers.org or email us at DragonflyersofMI@gmail.com

Dragonflyers of Michigan is a 501(c)(3) organization.