



# Dragonflyers of Michigan Newsletter

January 2024

## A Message from our President

I hope that everyone had some time with family and friends these past few weeks. It's hard to believe we are already in a new year. Dragonflyers had a great season in 2023 with three races, open weekend paddles, and our regular practices (see more about last year in the Year in Review article). Thank you to our coaches, paddlers, members, sponsors, and donors for your contributions to this past season. As we look ahead in 2024, we anticipate another full season of training, races, and serving our community, as well as continuing to promote the incredible sport of dragon boating. Our first quarterly board meeting, to which all members are invited, is Tuesday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, at 7pm. Zoom information will be sent separately to all members. Spring will be here before we know it.

Paddles up!

- Julie

## Welcome the 2024 Board Members

Elections for the 2024 Board took place at our end of season celebration on October 21, 2023, at Cleats restaurant in Lansing. The following are the newly elected board members:

President – Julie Sinclair

Vice President – Ginger Martz

Secretary – Sarynna Lopez-Meza

Treasurer – Jane Roy

At-Large Member – Nancy Hamlin-Anderson

At Large Member - LouAnn Stark-Dykema

Past-President – Samantha Caughlan

Congratulations to each of you. We look forward to a wonderful 2024 year!

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### Thank you to the 2023 Board!

We extend a big thank you to the 2023 Board members for their guidance during Dragonflyers' first full paddling season.

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



### Update on the 2023 Fall Activities

#### **End of Season Party**

We had a great annual meeting and season celebration on October 21 at Cleats Bar & Grille located in the Hope Sports Complex on Aurelius Road in Lansing. Thanks to Sarynna Lopez Meza making the arrangements! We were able to recognize our coaching staff and distribute Dragonflyers hot/cold travel mugs for any who paid dues last season.

If you have not received yours yet, please check your email for a message from Bess or Julie.



#### **Boat and Dock**

The boat was pulled out of the water on October 14<sup>th</sup> and the dock was removed and stored on October 22<sup>nd</sup>. Thank you to everyone who helped with these activities.

## Upcoming Events

### **Boys In the Boat Movie**

We started off our 2024 activities quickly with a group of us attending the movie Boys in the Boat on Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup> at 3:00PM at Celebration Cinema. The movie recounts the story of nine American rowers on a quest to compete in the 1936 Berlin Olympic games. The movie is based on the book The Boys in the Boat by Daniel James Brown, which was reviewed in the Dragonflyers' July 2023 Newsletter. We had a wonderful time, and the movie was captivating. Personally, I am a little concerned as one of the take-aways from the movie was to throw the coach and or drummer into the water after winning a race.



### **Bowling**

Join us for an evening of bowling, eating, laughing, and a little competition. If you are thinking of joining the Dragonflyers of Michigan, this is an event where you can meet us and experience the fun and laughter, we all enjoy. Date TBD (likely in February)

### **Sound of Music**

Do you enjoy the beauty and songs from the movie The Sound of Music? If so, please join us when we get together at Erin's house to watch this movie. I am sure there will be many sing -a-longs. Date and time TBD

## Quiet Adventures Symposium

On Saturday, **March 2, 2024**, Dragonflyers will have a table at the Quiet Adventure Symposium. This is a great way to share the sport of dragon boating with outdoor enthusiasts. We hope to have photos and videos to show people; flyers and information about our 2024 season and how to contact us. We plan to decorate our table with the dragon head and tail from the boat and some of our colorful paddles.

We need help from anyone who has experience setting up slide shows or creating flyers. Contact Ginger Martz or Ellen Lurie at [Dragonflyersofmi@gmail.com](mailto:Dragonflyersofmi@gmail.com) if you would like to help with planning or volunteer for an hour or two at our table.

Quiet Adventure Symposium is held at the MSU Pavilion on Farm Lane in East Lansing on Saturday, March 2, 2024, from 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM. Wear your Dragonflyers T-shirt. Watch for emails for additional details. Please come visit our booth and say hello and learn more about dragon boating and our organization.

Please watch your email for more information on each of these events or contact [Dragonflyersofmi@gmail.com](mailto:Dragonflyersofmi@gmail.com) for more details.

## A Look Ahead to the 2024 Paddling Season

### Practice Days / Time:

Practices will likely be on Tuesdays and Thursdays, beginning in late April/early May until mid-October.

Approximate time will be 5:45 to 7:15 PM

### Location:

1284 N. Cedar St.; Mason, MI

Off Cedar St between Holt and Mason.

Parking information will be provided soon.

Cost: TBD

### Races:

A list of races and their dates will be shared as soon as they are known – hopefully early February.



## From the Maintenance Shed

The maintenance co-chairs would like to thank everyone who helped us throughout the year, but specially the members of the maintenance committee: Jay Stark-Dykema and Nancy Hamlin-Anderson. We couldn't do it without our dedicated volunteers!

Looking forward to 2024, we have some tasks scheduled for completion:

- clean and wax the hull (spring)
- re-wire trailer
- refinish the benches (winter 2024-25)
- construct a shed
- replace some dock boards
- paint the new dock sections constructed in 2023 (spring)

Just for fun, here are some nautical terms that apply to our dragon boat:

**Fender** (or Bumper): An inflated plastic tube that acts as a cushion between the boat and the dock or another boat to prevent damage.

**Freeboard**: The vertical distance from the waterline to the gunwale.

**Gunwale** (pronounced Gunnel): The upper edge of the side of a dragon boat.

**Hull**: The frame or body of the boat.

**Port**: Nautical term for the left side of a boat.

**Starboard**: Nautical term for the right side of the boat.

**Aft**: Toward the stern of the boat.

**Beam**: The greatest width of the boat

**Bow**: The forward part of a boat.

**Draft**: The depth of water a boat draws; how far the boat extends below the waterline.

**Stern**: The after part/back of the boat.

**Chine**: An angle of the hull design; our dragon boat has 4 chines on our hull (see cross-section below).

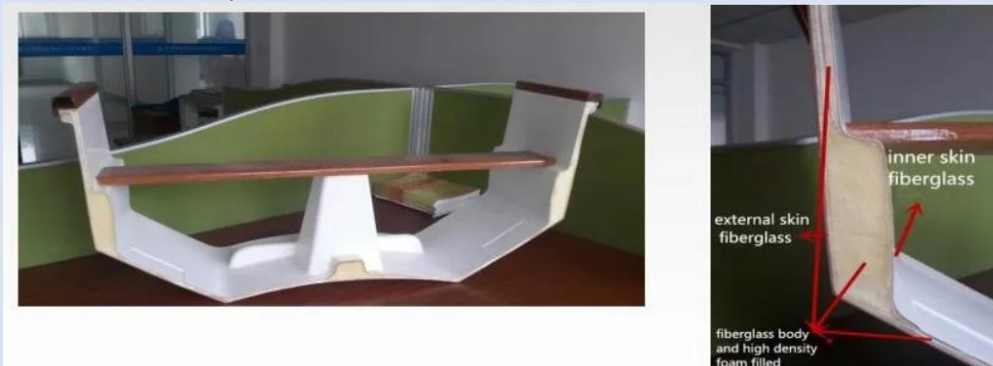
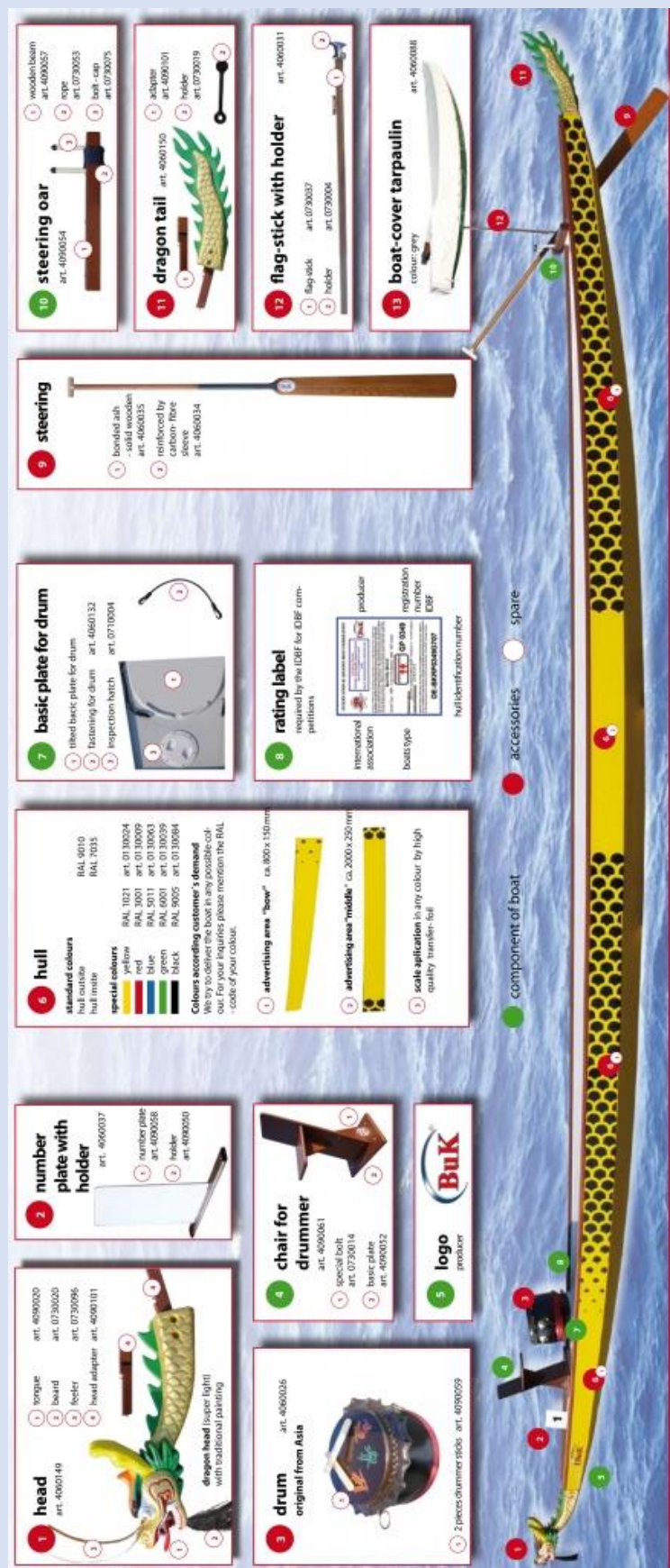


Diagram is from [www.oceanfive.net](http://www.oceanfive.net).

Paddles Up!  
Erin & Ginger  
Maintenance co-chairs



## Coaches Corner

Happy New Year Dragonflyers!

Whether you slept through midnight or eagerly stayed up for the ball drop, we have arrived in 2024. My family and I love the New Year's celebrations and preparations to kick off the new year right. We enjoy staying up past our bedtime, snacking and playing board games. We usually take a stroll in the park right after midnight and make too much noise. This year we were given the gift of live music on bagpipes. Listening to my sister-in-law greet the New Year with a bagpipe rendition of Auld Lang Syne as we strolled in procession through the park, was a joyous experience. We lit sparklers, while the neighbors set off something much louder, and brighter, but importantly it was a memorable experience for all.

I look forward to more experiences in the 2024 year, not least of which is dragon boating with an absolutely amazing group of people. When thinking about what I look most forward to in 2024, starting dragon boat season is in my top three. Working together toward a goal brings me great satisfaction in being part of our dragon boat community. I will always be grateful for the friendships and experiences that dragon boating has brought into my life.

I don't want to sign off without at least trying to put some smiles on faces so here are a few funny favorites from New Year's Eve:

- What does the little Champagne bottle call his father? Pop!
- I thought I got lost on New Year's Eve, but then I found the Auld Lang sign.
- What did the kids say about the fireworks on New Year's? They were a blast.
- Why did 2023 go by in a blur? My resolution must've been too low.

Whatever resolutions, goals, or joyful things you look forward to in the New Year, I hope to see all of you in the boat and I wish you the very best of health, prosperity, joy and wisdom in the New Year.

Paddles up,  
Peace and love.  
Coach Alyona



## A Monthly Year in Review – 2023

2023 was a great year for the Dragonflyers of Michigan.

### January

- ✓ A new Board of Directors stepped up in January and began tackling relevant issues.
- ✓ Dragonflyers first newsletter was released.
- ✓ First quarter board meeting held January 25<sup>th</sup>.

### February

- ✓ Bowling at Spare Time Bowling.



### March



- ✓ Dragonflyers participates in Quiet Adventure Symposium at MSU Pavilion

### April

- ✓ Our dragon boat was taken out of winter storage, cleaned, waxed, and deemed ready for the water.



- ✓ The dock was placed in the water.

- ✓ Boat launched on April 22, 2023. We are ready for paddling season!
- ✓ Name the boat contest.
- ✓ Quarterly Board meeting held on April 26<sup>th</sup>.



## May

- ✓ Dragonflyers' Open Houses for 2023. We had 19 people at our first open house and 18 at the second.
- ✓ Members voted to name the boat *Blue Heron*.
- ✓ Tuesday and Thursday practices started.
- ✓ We held our first weekend paddle, on May 20<sup>th</sup> with 13 paddlers.

## June

- ✓ Our Yard Sale Fundraiser took place and raised over \$2200 for Dragonflyers. Watch for details for a yard sale in 2024.
- ✓ On June 22<sup>nd</sup> we celebrated International Dragon Boat Festival by having a small ceremony where we learned about the festival, and we enjoyed yummy zongzi from Hong Kong Restaurant of Lansing.
- ✓ Dragonflyers of Michigan supported Michigan Waterways Stewards in their June event to clean up our area rivers and river trail. Our Dragonflyers team, along with numerous other local organizations, supported a very successful effort, with some team members doing clean up by boat on the Red Cedar and Grand Rivers, and others walking a section of the Lansing River Trail. We collected everything from small trash items to old tires and other large items that are now removed from our waterways and trails.



## July

- ✓ Weekend paddle occurred on July 9<sup>th</sup>
- ✓ Quarterly board meeting held on July 19<sup>th</sup>
- ✓ First race of the season happened on July 29<sup>th</sup> in Schaumburg, IL.



## August

- ✓ Dragons on the Lake Festival in Akron, Ohio was held on August 12<sup>th</sup>.
- ✓ Weekend paddle happened on August 26<sup>th</sup>.



## September



- ✓ A spectacular social activity of a bonfire on Friday, September 8<sup>th</sup> brought many Dragonflyers together, at drummer Amy's home.

- ✓ Our hometown race, the Capital City Dragon Boat Race occurred on September 17<sup>th</sup> at Hawk Island Park in Lansing. We had a great time (as we always do at races) and placed 3<sup>rd</sup> at the event.
- ✓ Weekend paddle on September 24<sup>th</sup>.



## October

- ✓ We enjoyed several fall paddling days when Cedar Lake explodes with fall colors.
- ✓ The boat was pulled from the water and put into winter storage.
- ✓ The dock was taken out of the water and stored until spring.
- ✓ Our End of Season Party was held on October 21<sup>st</sup> at Cleat Bar and Grille. This event celebrates our accomplishments; recognizes our coaches and all our members; and includes elections for the 2024 board members.

## November and December

- ✓ Recuperation and planning for 2024.

## President's Year in Review- 2023

This past year was a great year for Dragonflyers of Michigan, with a full paddling season of training, committee work, social activities, fundraising, new community partnerships, and of course, races. Last year Dragonflyers had 34 members, with most being paddling members and a few non-paddling members. Of this number, seven were new to the team.

Our coaches Ellen and Alyona worked hard to plan and carry out twice weekly trainings to prepare us for three race events: the Chicago International Dragonboat Festival (a 500-meter race), Dragons on the Lake Boat Festival in Akron, Ohio (a 300-meter race), and our local event, the annual Capital City Dragon Boat Race that benefits the Women's Center of Greater Lansing. Our team raced extremely well in each event and took home third place medals in the Capital City race. As a team, we logged about 40 practices, beginning in early May, to prepare for the three races. We also had a beautiful post-race paddling season in mid-October.

In 2023, Dragonflyers established several new initiatives. One was to offer three eight-week sessions to first year paddlers who were new to the sport or to Lansing. We also offered monthly weekend recreational paddles, providing regular opportunities for family members to join us and for anyone interested in trying out the sport. The weekend paddles turned out to be successful and will likely be continued in 2024.

Another new effort was beginning to partner with other community-based nonprofit organizations that support health and wellbeing or environmental stewardship. Dragonflyers members participated in a river clean up event organized by Michigan

Waterways Stewards. Whether paddling in the Grand and Red Cedar Rivers or walking the river trails, we picked up debris and trash. Additionally, several board members had conversations about potential partnerships with community health organizations that we hope will develop further in 2024.

Our committees were active this year. The social activity committee, headed by Sarynna Lòpez Meza, coordinated bowling and a walk at North Lake Lansing Park in the off-season, a bonfire in the late summer, and our end of season party. The membership committee, headed by Bess German, created recruiting event flyers, organized two open house paddle sessions at the beginning of the season for visitors to try out the sport, collected our member surveys, and found great member gifts for this year, insulated travel mugs with our logo. The maintenance committee, chaired by Erin Linn and Ginger Martz, coordinated the assembling and disassembling of our floating dock at the beginning and end of the season and did research on future new sheds for us and Building 21.

This past year Dragonflyers also developed a working website, thanks to members Ginger Martz and Bess German. The website now has details of upcoming events, a link for donations, and other information about the Dragonflyers organization. This was a huge and needed step to support our ability to apply for grants, recognize sponsors, and to promote our team and the sport of dragon boating in our region.

- *Julie Sinclair*



## Phrases from the Dragon

I was introduced to the “Dragon” back in 2018 and it was in the summer of 2019 that I committed to paddle with a dragon boat team. I had no idea how this experience would impact my life. As a woman in her 60’s, this was my first team sport.

That summer the team I joined was all women of various ages, shapes, and skill levels. I was eagerly welcomed and encouraged that I could learn this paddling technique and have a fun adventure! I gained confidence during the practices which had a ripple effect in my perspective of life. In September that year I experienced my first race and had the adrenaline rush that I saw my sons have as I rooted for them from the sidelines during their team sports. I called my sons and exclaimed, “I get it!!”

There is a Dragon language among those in this sport. I experience it now spontaneously popping up in my mind and conversations. It is a language that you can feel in your body. I am realizing the impact the Dragon is having in my daily life.

**“TOGETHER”** - This is a command you will hear often in the dragon boat. All the paddlers must paddle in sync if the boat is to move smoothly and quickly. When it happens, it feels and looks like a form of art. As a paddler I can see and feel when I am out of sync with those in front of me and will need to adjust my stroke. In my daily life this experience comes to me when I notice I am out of sync with relationships in my work, family, and friends. Questions come to me, “How do I get back into sync? Am I willing to notice and adjust my behavior and/or communicate about this? What does Together mean in this situation?”

**“LET IT RUN”** - When this command is called all the paddlers pull their paddles out of the water. Often it is a moment of rest. This command is very welcome at the end of practicing a difficult technique or at the end of a race.

This phrase comes to my mind when I need to step away from something I am working on. This is often a project that I am pushing hard at and from which I need a break. The task may not be completed but pushing harder is not being productive.

**“HEAD IN THE BOAT”** - This phrase is especially important when preparing and during a race. As a paddler our focus must be in the present moment. We are not looking at or comparing ourselves to other teams. We tune into ourselves, our teammates, and our coach. We attempt to be One.

In my daily life I can feel myself floundering when I compare myself to others and mistrust my abilities. This is when I hear myself use the Dragon words, “Head in the Boat!”

**“LEAVE IT ON THE WATER”** - After a race, when you have done your **best** individually and as a team, you climb out of the boat and all your effort is left on the water. You gather as a team and evaluate the experience with all the reflections and feelings. Then you let it go—leave it as is.

There are times in my life when I feel like I have done well and leave the experience very satisfied and proud. There are other times when I have not done as well or do not feel successful. Either way I hear myself say, “leave it on the water—let it go. You did the best you could at this time.”

**“ENCOURAGEMENT”** – This is not so much a Dragon word/phrase as it is an experience that happens frequently among the Dragonflyers. It happens in the boat during practice and out of the boat. We know we are all learning together and try to give each other grace in that. Another very common experience is how often we laugh together! We often leave with smiles on our faces and in our hearts.

**“PADDLES UP!”**

- LouAnn Stark-Dykema, January 2024

## Dragonflyers' Donors

Dragonflyers would like to recognize and thank our 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	
Performance Project, LLC (M-43 Gym)	Julie Sinclair	Lin Hirai
Capital Region Community Foundation (Guerriero Family)		Laurel Winkle
Lynda Heinig	Rebecca (Becky) Saul	Bess German
Ellen Lurie	Mary & Rich Kimball	Virginia Martz
Beth Wing	Paige Lawson	Joyce Ochowicz
Rob Flanders	LouAnn & Jay Stark-Dykema	Melodee Graybill
Linda Connor		

## FlipGive

FlipGive helps teams to raise funds using something many of us are already doing: shopping. 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.



FlipGive provides the option to donate or shop on-line. Individuals can shop by Brands (stores) or Departments (Gift Cards; Sports & Outdoors; Fashions; Grocery& Essentials; Home & Garden; Travel & Tickets; Electronics; etc.), and gift registries. FlipGive has over 700 stores and brands.

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](http://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 and national retailers.

### Fundraising Committee

In 2023 Dragonflyers of Michigan set up its first fundraising committee with co-chairs Ginger Martz and Julie Sinclair and the following members: Samantha Caughlan, Bess German, Mary Guerrero, and Joyce Ochowicz. The committee set a goal of raising \$5,000 in 2023 through sponsors, individual donations, and fundraising events. We were able to meet that goal, bringing in just over \$5,000 through the following sources: sponsors - \$1,500; yard sale - \$2,200; foundation gift - \$500; individual donations (primarily through Giving Tuesday campaign) - \$730; and through FlipGive (\$75). A big thank you to all of our donors and sponsors and to Mary Guerrero for overseeing the yard sale effort, which was very successful. The committee will meet early in 2024 to set a new yearly fundraising goal. Funds that come in through these efforts allow Dragonflyers to set aside reserve funds for future boat repairs or unexpected expenses and over time will help offset the cost of paddling.

### Membership Committee

Have some great ideas for recruitment of new paddlers this season or things we could do to better serve our continuing members? The membership committee needs you! If you would like to join these efforts, please let Bess German know ([Dragonflyersofmi@gmail.com](mailto:Dragonflyersofmi@gmail.com)). The committee will meet in early March to plan for the 2024 season.

### Training with a Dragon Boat Erg

Want to improve your dragon boat paddling technique in the off season? Try out an erg, a paddling machine that helps work on the technical side of your dragon boat stroke, as well as strength and stamina. Watch your email for detailed information on training opportunities and how to sign-up for your time slot.

Location: Coach Ellen's home.

Instructor: Ckat Duke, a highly skilled person on the erg will provide coaching and instruction on the use of the erg.

Assistant Instructor: Ellen Lurie

Cost: Optional with a suggested donation \$10 per training (more if you can, less if you can't).



## Extras

### ✚ Training Opportunities

#### ✚ Learn how to Raise Funds for Dragonflyers While Shopping

Join Ginger on Sunday, 1/28/24 at 5 pm to learn how to use FlipGive while shopping. This will be a virtual meeting. Watch your email for details and the link for the meeting.

#### ✚ Learn to Tie Knots with Coach Ellen

The most common knot the Dragonflyers' use is the bowline, which is how we secure the boat to the dock. Other useful knots include the square knot, figure eight knot, half hitch and more. Do you want to learn how to tie these knots? Coach Ellen is offering an informal class on or around April 16, 2024, in the evening. Watch for more details about signing up for this class.



Please send suggested topics to [DragonflyersofMI@gmail.com](mailto:DragonflyersofMI@gmail.com)

### ✚ Do we row or do we paddle a dragon boat?

There are many ways to look at this. One is paddlers face the direction they are moving the boat, while rowers have their backs to the direction the boat is moving. Paddles are not attached to the boat while oars are typically attached to the boat through oar locks. Therefore, we paddle a dragon boat. Next time someone calls you a rower or says we are rowing our boat, politely correct them and say we paddle our dragon boat because we are all facing forward (eyes to the finish line) as we move our boat through the water and our paddles are not attached to the boat. Perhaps with this visual, people will remember that dragon boats are paddled, not rowed.

### ✚ Dragonflyers' Website

The Dragonflyers of Michigan website is up and available for viewing at [www.dragonflyers.org](http://www.dragonflyers.org).

### 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 – Jane Roy (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](mailto:DragonflyersofMI@gmail.com).

### Dragonflyers Board Meetings

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

Meeting dates for 2024 are tentatively scheduled on the following dates:

- **January 30, 2024, at 7:00pm**
- April 24, 2024, at 7:00pm
- July 31, 2024, at 7:00pm
- October 30, 2024, at 7:00pm

The meeting will be held on Zoom. You may contact us at [DragonflyersofMI@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:DragonflyersofMI@gmail.com)

Articles and ideas for articles are welcome.

For questions or more information regarding Dragonflyers of Michigan please visit our website at [www.dragonflyers.org](http://www.dragonflyers.org) or email us at [DragonflyersofMI@gmail.com](mailto:DragonflyersofMI@gmail.com)

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