



## DRAGONBOAT RACES: THEN AND NOW

The precision of a Swiss watch; the practicality of a Swiss army knife; the attention to detail of a Swiss banker—all characterize today's Dragonboat races. But it wasn't always so. **Rob Ireland**, the godfather of the event, recalled the first races. "We had set up in a corner of the *Lac de Joux*, at *Le Rocheray*, which is at the opposite end to *l'Abbaye*, when the powerful *Bise* (a strong, northerly wind) arrived, mixed with hail. There was no protection from the wind, so just before the start we had to change the direction of the racing by 180 degrees. Even with that change, the wind prevented the six boats from landing safely at our one pontoon, so the racers had to disembark in the water. Tires were arranged along the bank to cushion the landing."

**Patsy Allen**, coordinator of the entire Dragonboat Festival described the opening race. "As I watched the first three boats battling against the wind, I noticed that the bow of one of them was going lower and lower into the waves. 'Wow,' I thought, 'those are some really high waves.' At that instant I realized the boat was sinking! My heart also sank as I saw the drummer raise her sticks in the air - almost in a sign of surrender. But the safety boats went into action, no one was hurt, and the team came to shore with huge smiles on their faces. I thank Cargill for being such good sports!"



The wind also interfered with the mini regatta. It was too dangerous for the children to paddle the canoes alone, so experienced adults took them out in the boats and held pretend competitions instead.

Rob praised **Roger Irwin** (himself a cancer survivor) and his professional team from the United Kingdom who for the first two years managed every aspect of the racing activities from boat marshals to announcers and responded quickly to the challenges of the weather and the capsizing boat. "Roger's on-the-job training has allowed us now to run the event entirely with volunteers." Those "helpers", as Rob calls them - 50 strong - are friends of his from Switzerland, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, and other countries. They run the control tent, boat marshalling, start and finish, safety boats, and aid the finish judges. Rob believes the biggest change in the

Dragonboat Races is the increasing professionalism of his helpers, although Roger praised them even at the first regatta.

Besides growing from 31 teams competing to 50, the other major change, of course, is moving the Festival to *L'Abbaye*, on a far more protected side of the lake. Officials from the village have responded to the growth in several helpful ways, including donating a floating pontoon and supporting the building of two wooden pontoons to accommodate the turnaround - every ten minutes! - of 136 competitors from the eight boats now used in competition.

In 2007, 34 races took place from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. In 2010, 43 races were held in the same amount of time, a real testimony to the energy, efficiency, training and above all else, good humor, of Rob, his remarkable comrades, and the dozens of other volunteers on land.

## Fundraising Off The Water

Although the main fundraising events of the Dragonboat Festival are the sponsored races on the *Lac du Joux*, Dragonboat coordinators **Patsy Allen** and **Penny Ross** have developed a number of other activities to support ESCA's work, the most important of which is the Fundraisers' Challenge Cup. Begun last year, the FCC offers landlubbers a way to enter the competition. Basically, members of sponsored teams - corporate and open - compete with each other to raise funds over and above the mandatory registration fee. By seeking help (and money!) from friends, colleagues and families, last year's challenge raised more than CHF 23,000! Those funds were used to support ESCA's Counselling Fund as well as the Pediatric Oncology Units of the HUG in Geneva and the CHUV in

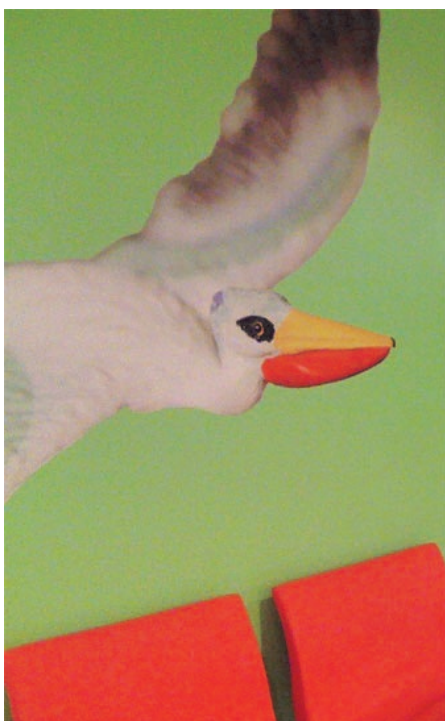
Lausanne. This year's competition, which has a target goal of CHF 30,000 closes at 3 p.m. on Sunday, September 4. Funds raised will benefit *La Maison de Tara* (<http://lamaisondetara.net/wpa/>) and the counselling fund at ESCA.

For those who want to stay dry, there are several other opportunities to be a sponsor of the Dragonboat Festival activities on land and receive public acknowledgement in all the printed materials relating to the day. Some of those activities, which are free to the public, are the Mini Regatta, face painting and bouncy castle for children; Indian Head Massages and Reflexology for weary paddlers and spectators.

To be a part of Dragonboat events without getting your feet wet, go to: [www.paddleforcancer.ch/fundraise](http://www.paddleforcancer.ch/fundraise)



## Using the Fundraisers' Challenge Cup Gifts



The artist has already begun work on the pediatric hemato-oncology unit

### I. HUG

For three years the team from the pediatric hemato-oncology unit of the University Hospital in Geneva, Les Globules, has competed in the Dragonboat races. For longer than that the unit has led in the fight against childhood cancer.

Thanking ESCA for its donation to that cause, Professor Hulya Ozsahin explained how those funds are being used. "We are able to organize English courses for our doctors and nurses as well as other health care providers." Since the families need "not only excellent professional care, but also psychological and social support" it is important that there is a common language. In addition, since "parents are the best advocates for their children, it is critical to be able to fully communicate and understand their needs".

The team enjoys competing with each other on water as well as "fighting together against that terrible illness - cancer in children."

### II. CHUV

At the University Hospital in Lausanne, Dr. Maja Beck Popovic who heads the pediatric hemato-oncology unit there, explained that the budget to remodel part of the outpatient section did not extend to creating a more cheerful atmosphere. Resources for that project depend on donations. An artist has already transformed part of the 11<sup>th</sup> floor, where the unit is located, and will be hired to introduce brighter colors and wall paintings to the new 6-bed treatment and consultation rooms. Creating a sunny, positive ambience should help lift the spirits of the children and their loved ones as they face the challenges of dealing with cancer.

## Divas Reveal Secret Weapon



“Long and Strong and Deep and Hard” is the delicate chant of the Dragon Divas as we power our way to the podium each year in the female open category of the ESCA Dragonboat Races. Our all-women team, who know each other primarily through children's playgroups, schools and sports clubs, look forward each year to getting together on the sparkling *Lac de Joux* for a day out. The satisfaction of knowing we're raising money for an excellent cause only adds to the fun.

Although most of us enjoy a bit of exercise, few belong to a competitive sports team, so Dragonboat racing gives us a chance to get the adrenalin going and rediscover the unique spirit of

pulling together as a team. Every member works hard and feels not only exhilarated by the effort but also rather surprised by the overwhelming desire to win! Memories of being fired up for school sports days and competitions add to the excitement, and it's nice to have the children cheering us on for a change!

Yelling our formidable cheer at the top of our lungs ensures a regular paddling rhythm and keeps us laughing all the way to the finish line. Our chant may use valuable energy, but we're told it also distracts our opponents, which may help explain why we continue to take home prizes every year!

Claire Bishton



## Training Sessions

Training sessions will be held on Saturday, 3 September 2011 at L'Abbaye from 15h00-17h00.

Those teams wishing to come and practice under the guidance of *Dragonboatevents.ch* from Zurich are encouraged to do so! These training sessions are relaxed, great fun and are also wonderful team-building exercises.

Sessions are scheduled in 30 minute slots (trust me, after 30 minutes, you will be tired!). Each 30 min. slot cost **CHF100 per team**. This helps cover costs of the helms and boats for an extra day.

Signing up for a training session is easy!

- Captains simply click on the Doodle link:  
<http://doodle.comzc8qt7qafvb7rqqg>
- Fill in their team name
- Check the time slot(s) desired. **LIMIT 8 TEAMS PER TIME SLOT!**
- Payment can be made in advance or on the day. CHF 100 per 30 min. slot per team.

Training session sign-ups are by TEAM only and not individually. This does not mean you must bring every team member to sign-up. Come along with as many of your team as you can and hop in a boat.

## From The Host Commune

For many reasons the *commune de l'Abbaye* enjoys hosting the Dragonboat Festival on its shores of the *Lac de Joux*. We welcome having people from different countries in our area, and we are proud to join ESCA in helping those who have daily struggles with cancer, either as patients or caregivers. While we feel it is our duty to provide the venue and the framework for the races, it is also a pleasure to make our contribution to such a positive and cheerful sports event. We invite newcomers to come and experience the magic spirit of working together for a common cause.

*Gabriel Gay, Syndic*



## Cargill at the Helm

Splash! That's what we heard as Team Cargill's paddles dipped into the *Lac de Joux* during the first race of ESCA's first ever Dragonboat Festival in 2007. Whoosh! That was the last sound we heard as our boat sank right before the finish line! Every year since then our teams have stayed afloat, and our times have dramatically improved. Although we've yet to take a first, one of our second places was a photo finish; what's more, we've tripled our participation, now entering three

teams into the competition. We hope to celebrate this fifth annual Festival with a victory!

But for us the day is more than just about winning. It's about devoting our time to a cause that is important to every one of us, as we all have family and friends who have been directly or indirectly affected by cancer. It's also about spending a great day together as a team and with our supporters in an atmosphere of camaraderie as well as of challenge. The event has

become a tradition for Cargill employees - one we look forward to with greater anticipation each year.

*Isabel Deconinck*



Pre-order your PADDLEforCANCER 5<sup>th</sup> Edition bottles of wine now!

For more details:  
[info@paddleforcancer.ch](mailto:info@paddleforcancer.ch)

## For your diary...

**When** Saturday, June 11, 5pm

**Where** Geneva Lutheran Church  
20 rue Verdaine, Geneva

**What Chamber Music Concert**  
featuring cellist Daniel Grosgrurin performing the European première of *Songs without Words* by award-winning composer Larry Alan Smith and the Severini String Trio (Marie-Josée Wyder-Lattion, violin; Ursula Warren, viola; Gerhard Wyder, cello) in addition to works by Haydn, Telemann, Bach, Cherubini, Arriaga, Schubert and Borodin.

Free admission but donations to help fund ESCA outreach projects are most welcome. Seating is limited so please reserve your space(s) by emailing: [info@cancersupport.com](mailto:info@cancersupport.com)

**When** Sunday 4 September 2011

**Where** L'Abbaye on Lac de Joux

**What** Dragonboat Festival 2011

## ESCA

We are a non-profit group of professionals and trained volunteers, almost all of whom have experienced cancer as survivors and/or care-givers. We seek to have a positive impact on the lives of those affected by cancer by providing emotional support, practical help and information in English to cancer patients, their carers and loved ones in the Geneva, Vaud and French border areas.



## DRAGONBOAT FESTIVAL STATS

10	KILOS SANDWICH SPREAD EATEN
36	AVERAGE STROKES PER MINUTE
140	VOLUNTEERS
300	LITRES OF BEER SOLD
350	METRES RACE COURSE LENGTH
867	PEOPLE IN BOATS
3000	SPECTATORS AND PARTICIPANTS
244,800	RACING STROKES DIPPED IN LAC DE JOUX



## Volunteers Needed

Last year more than 100 volunteers helped care for 3,000 participants and visitors to the Festival. We need at least that number for this 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year. For information and opportunities:

[www.paddleforcancer.ch/involve\\_volunteer.htm](http://www.paddleforcancer.ch/involve_volunteer.htm)



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# dragonboat festival THE HEAT'S ON

Registration for 2011 is now closed !  
 ESCA thanks Dragonboat Festival partners and sponsors  
 for their continued enthusiasm and support

## partners



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