

## Cancer survivors turn to racing boats to keep fit By Sandy Fugate

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One Hamilton County woman's successful battle against breast cancer has turned into a mission to bring an ancient form of Chinese boat racing to the [Indianapolis](#) area -- and quickly.



After Lisa Heiden Peters, who lives in the Geist area, learned this spring that she was suffering from lymphedema -- pain and swelling that can occur after surgery for breast cancer -- her physical therapist told her that dragon boat racing has been recommended by some [health care](#) professionals as preventative exercise.

"As soon as I sat up, I said, 'Oh, my gosh. I want to do this!' As soon as I left, I started calling people," said Peters, president of [Indy SurviveOars](#), a new group that is bringing dragon boat racing to Central Indiana.

Dragon boat racing began in China about 1,500 years ago and involves paddling a narrow, decorative boat to a drumbeat. The boats typically have a dragon head and tail built and/or painted into the boat design.

During races, the boats are decorated with Chinese lanterns, and the drummer rides aboard the craft. Dragon boat teams and races are becoming more well known in the U.S., particularly among breast cancer survivors. [Indy SurviveOars](#) is the first such group in Indiana.

Peters said she immediately called her friend Kathy Harrison, because she knew Harrison had experience in organizing Race for the Cure in Indianapolis. Harrison, who also lives near Geist, is vice president of [Indy SurviveOars](#).

In less than three months, Peters, Harrison and friends have registered the group as a nonprofit, obtained designs for paddles, selected a dragon boat from a manufacturer in China, and obtained sponsors to provide free training. They hope in time to form a team to race against groups in other states.

Various Indianapolis-area health care professionals, businesses, breast cancer support groups and survivors also have become involved in the effort, Peters said.

At 6:30 p.m. Monday, [Indy SurviveOars](#) will host a meeting at Bella Vita Ristorante in the Geist Marina, 11699 Fall Creek Road, for all participants and sponsors.

The meeting is free, as is the weekly fitness training participants will receive, thanks to Joe Damush at Geist Fitness; Basia Gentry at Carmel Total Fitness; and Deb Knapp of Fitness Trainers in Noblesville.

Peters said [Indy SurviveOars](#) is hoping to receive and launch its new boat next spring. Until then, participants will do land training with paddles and weight equipment.

For more information about [Indy SurviveOars](#) or Monday's meeting, contact Peters at [peters413@insightbb.com](mailto:peters413@insightbb.com) or Harrison at [kmharrison@insightbb.com](mailto:kmharrison@insightbb.com)

**Call Star reporter Sandy Fugate at (317) 444-5522.**

### zoom

The nonprofit group [Indy SurviveOars](#) plans to acquire a Chinese dragon boat and form a team that will race against other similar groups. Dragon boat racing began in China about 1,500 years ago and involves paddling a narrow, decorative boat to a drumbeat. At left is a design for a paddle planned by [Indy SurviveOars](#). - Photo provided by [Indy SurviveOars](#)