

Women paddle "dragon boat" to beat breast cancer

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[Anne Marie Tiernon](#)/Eyewitness News

Indianapolis - A local group of breast cancer survivors are excited about a new sport that's coming to Indianapolis.

It's called dragon boat racing, and while it might be new to Indianapolis, it's been around for 2,000 years. Right now training is pool-side for the sport, which requires paddlers and a drummer.

"We call it our heartbeat," said Emily Brenner, Fishers.

The drum helps pace these breast cancer patients to do what previously they were told they could not.

"Breast cancer survivors were told to not even raise their arms past their shoulders," explained Brenner. "This what we were told. We have found through research from Dr. Don McKenzie up in Canada, he thought that was absolutely wrong. So he did research on women who were paddling and he found out through raising your arm and steady motion and the water resistance of using the paddle in the water resistance helps women with lymphedema."

So far there are 47 paddlers. At 85, Annabell Barnes is the oldest member. She is marking progress.

"My range of motion before was at this level and now it's at this level," said Barnes, demonstrating how much higher she can get her paddle.

With a price tag of \$7,000, the team's 40-foot boat just arrived, and still is on a flatbed at Geist Marina. Two rows of ten women will sit side by side. The head and tail is still under wraps.

"It's the first in the dragon boat world that will look like this and I've been told by the main dragon boat man in China that we are trend setters in the dragon boat world and especially in the breast cancer dragon boat world," said Lisa Heiden Peters, Fortville.

Psychologically, the paddlers say gathering like this beats a support group circle and researchers are measuring the impact.

Emily Brenner says a researcher from Purdue is studying the effects of paddling on the group and how it will help them with their medical issues.

Science aside, these survivors say they feel better and are ready to race. The launch celebration is now set for Sunday April 13th at 2:00 pm, Bella Vita at Geist Reservoir.

[Learn more about their efforts](#)



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