

# *Berkeley Racing Canoe Center*

## *Annual Report for 2013*

### **Introduction**

Throughout the year, visitors to the Berkeley Marina and surrounding area are intrigued by the sight of a dragon boat as it is being paddled in the waters of the San Francisco Bay by members of the Berkeley Racing Canoe Center (BRCC). For those curious enough to venture to “M” Dock for a closer look, they will discover an organization that has dedicated itself to providing



low-cost access to water activities in an environment that encourages teamwork in a unique setting. Whether it is a free dragon boat ride on the Fourth of July, or a year-long commitment with other water sport

enthusiasts, BRCC can offer these opportunities at a low cost primarily because every aspect of the organization, from safety training and equipment maintenance to administration, is run by its members on a voluntarily basis. The uniqueness of dragon boating also permits BRCC to provide a community service in a manner that other organizations cannot.

## History and Mission

The Berkeley Racing Canoe Center was formed in January 2004 as a public benefit corporation for the purpose of promoting international dragon boat competition and providing water access and educational opportunities for the Berkeley and East Bay communities. In November 2004 BRCC transformed into a non-profit organization under United States Internal Revenue Code § 501(c)(3) in service to the public, and has been serving the public continuously since then.

## Low-Cost Water Access and Educational Opportunities



Membership to BRCC, at \$100 for an annual membership (\$20/year for college students, free for youth under 18 years of age), is one of the least-expensive ways for the general public to become a part of the Bay Area's unlimited water

opportunities. BRCC encourages individuals interested in dragon boat paddling to take advantage of BRCC's free orientation rides before making a commitment to a paid membership. Full members have access to BRCC's fleet of



various “human-powered” watercraft, including kayaks, dragon boats and outrigger canoes, and can enjoy new opportunities for recreation and fitness.



BRCC is able to maintain its low membership fees due in large part to the free berths and other marina services that the City of Berkeley provides to BRCC without charge. In addition, BRCC members volunteer their time to maintain BRCC’s fleet and equipment, to run the day-to-day administrative functions, as well as to provide dragon boat paddling instruction and coaching to the local community. Although BRCC does not require its membership to volunteer for community service activities, it has fostered an atmosphere of cooperation and a spirit of teamwork through its competitive DragonMax dragon boat racing team that members enthusiastically volunteer their time to pass along their passion for water activities to the general community, especially to the youth. Given that BRCC members participate in a sport that is still amateur in nature and requires a great deal of personal and financial sacrifice and investment, the level of volunteerism within the organization is impressive.



## Free Dragon Boat Rides

As mentioned previously, BRCC encourages all individuals regardless of age to join BRCC's dragon boat team members on a trial basis during regularly-scheduled practices year-round at no cost. One of BRCC's busiest (and most popular) events continues

to be its participation in the City of Berkeley's annual Fourth of July celebration.

In 2013, approximately 40 members the DragonMax dragon boat team volunteered their time, as well as their "human" power, to provide free dragon boat rides around the Berkeley Marina to just



under 800 people of all ages who came for the festivities. The enthusiasm of the volunteers was well-received by all participants, who experienced the Berkeley Marina and its surroundings in a unique way. Some enjoyed their experience so much they have become members of BRCC.

## Youth Programs

As part of its primary focus on youth outreach, BRCC hosted numerous school, camp and scout



groups during 2013. Through these outings hundreds of youth were introduced to the team sport of dragon boating and its history. They had the chance to get out on the water that many of them had not had before and to see themselves and the bay from a new perspective.

### **High School Teams**

BRCC promotes competitive high school paddling and has hosted a team from San Leandro High School and is developing an East Bay high school team with paddlers from Berkeley High, El Cerrito High and Albany High under the direction of an El Cerrito High teacher. The boats, equipment and volunteer coaching are provided at no charge to the school or to the participants. Race fees are largely subsidized by BRCC when a youth team competes in the local high school dragon boat competitions.

### **Other Community Service**

In addition to providing time on the water to as many people as it can engage, BRCC offered private dragon boat outings as silent auction items to approximately six different non-profits in support of their various fundraising efforts. The item usually raises \$500 each time it's auctioned off. The auction winner follows up with a volunteer BRCC host who arranges for a mutually agreeable time to take the winner and 20 friends out for an excursion.

BRCC also hosted training sessions for newly developing corporate teams to get them ready for participation in novice dragon boat races. In 2013, Bayer and AT&T continued their work with

BRCC volunteer coaches and steerspersons to develop and hone the skills needed for racing. The AT&T team took a gold medal at the races in September held at Treasure Island. Several of these “newbies” have already become passionate paddlers and join DragonMax on the competitive circuit. (See DragonMax in winning in lane 3.)



## **Membership**

In 2013, BRCC had 134 paid members, of which over two-thirds were active participants throughout the year. While majority of the membership consisted of paying adults, an additional 27 were youth who pay no membership fees. Members ranged in age from 10 to 79.

## **Finances**

In 2013, total income for BRCC was \$14,740. Expenditures for 2013 totaled \$17,077. Year-end cash accounts totaled \$9,028. Income for 2014 is optimistically estimated at \$48,000. This can

only happen if BRCC is successful with its intensive fundraising plan that includes pursuing sponsorships, donations, hosting a dinner dance and silent auction, hosting a sailing excursion on the Derek M. Baylis, executing a CrowdTilt campaign, and holding garage sales. The funds will be used to offset the cost of sending 65-80 paddlers to compete in Ravenna Italy in September 2014 at the Club Crew World Championships. Expenses are anticipated to be \$44,000 and include \$35,000 to assure that no paddler stays home because of financial limitations. The budget also includes a continuation of the \$500 youth team race fee subsidy and \$1,000 for Community Services as well as required club expenses like insurance, taxes, dues and lease/option payment on the dragon boats. Subsidies to traveling paddlers will be limited to fundraising returns.

### **Plans for 2014**

BRCC's focus in 2014 will be to continue to develop its youth outreach programs, as well as



provide low-cost access to water sport resources. Continuing to work with the high school paddlers as we grow the newly initiated East Bay High Schools teams will be a high priority. BRCC also plans to continue its participation in the Berkeley Bay Festival in April and the annual Fourth of July event through its free dragon boat rides.

Online outreach continues in 2013 as a way to connect with the community. BRCC posts regularly on Meet-Up, Craig's List and has offered dragon boat rides through Fun Cheap SF. With the help of volunteer BRCC members, a

Facebook page has been created and a new website has been developed for DragonMax to increase our visibility with a broader cross section of the community.

### **Maintaining the Vision**

BRCC's Outreach and Community Service program is dependent on the good will of its membership who, as was stated before, coach, paddle, steer and coordinate all the on water activities. These same paddlers and volunteers also handle everything behind the scenes. The club takes as much pride in its community service efforts as it does in its competitive paddling. This is possible year after year because joy is another part of the success equation.

This year the DragonMax racing team made it's best showing in Regional competition since the inception of the team. Members are inspired after their success at the Regionals in August, 2013 and earned slots for 4 crews at the World Championships in Ravenna, Italy in 2014.



Big dreams - big returns!

Free berthing allows us to keep fees low, and frees us to use our funds to subsidize youth teams,

provide great exercise and joy to a growing number of regular paddlers and appropriately maintain our fleet and equipment. Like volunteer labor and passion for the sport, it's a critical part of our success.

This is the energy and commitment that BRCC brings to its partnership with the City of Berkeley. Free berthing allows us to keep fees low, and frees us to use our funds to subsidize youth teams and appropriately maintain our fleet and equipment. Like volunteer labor is a critical part of our success.