

## ***Berkeley Racing Canoe Center Annual Report for 2015***



### **Introduction**

The Berkeley Racing Canoe Center (BRCC) is proud to report success in 2015 in serving its dual mission of encouraging competitive dragon boat racing with its inherent health and fitness benefits, and of providing water access to community members from all walks of life, ages, and abilities. It is through the tireless efforts of our volunteers that we are able to provide low-cost membership to water sports enthusiasts, serve hundreds of individual community members, and support a diverse group of social services and schools enabling them to better serve Berkeley and the Bay Area.

### **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.

Every aspect of the organization including coaching, safety training, equipment maintenance, scheduling and staffing of community outreach events, and administration, is run by BRCC members on a volunteer basis. Members are equally committed to enjoying (and improving, in the case of competitive paddlers) their own paddling experience and serving the community.

### **Low-Cost Water Access and Educational Opportunities**

Membership in BRCC, at \$100 for an annual membership (\$20/year for college students, \$5/year for UC Berkeley students, free for those 18 years of age and under), is one of the least-expensive ways for the general public to become a part of the Bay Area’s active community on the water and get fit. BRCC encourages individuals interested in dragon boat paddling to take advantage of BRCC’s free trial memberships before making a commitment to a paid membership. Full members have access to BRCC’s expanding fleet of various “human-powered” watercraft, including traditional canoes, kayaks, dragon boats and outrigger canoes, and can enjoy new opportunities for recreation and fitness.



BRCC’s low membership fees are made possible by the waived berthing fees and other marina services that the City of Berkeley provides without charge. Administrative costs are kept to a bare minimum thanks to BRCC members volunteering their time to maintain the club’s fleet and

equipment, run the day-to-day administrative functions, and provide dragon boat paddling instruction and coaching to the local community.

Service is a hallmark of the BRCC culture. Its DragonMax dragon boat racing team members generously volunteer their time to pass along their passion for water activities to the general community, especially to youth. Adult paddlers model their stewardship and citizenship as they work alongside high school members who join in volunteering at key community events, including the City of Berkeley's Bay Festival. 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

BRCC is a key contributor to the City of Berkeley's annual Bay Festival and Fourth of July celebrations, offering free dragon boat rides that allow hundreds of community members to



experience the magnificent Berkeley waterfront in an up-close and personal way. While paddling around the Marina, festival attendees learn about the sport of dragon boat paddling, enjoy a unique view of the marina, and may even be lucky enough to spot a harbor seal. For many it is the first time in a boat on the Bay, and their experience stands to enhance their appreciation for what a treasure the waterfront is in our urban area.

In 2015, BRCC members volunteered over 450 hours at festivals, lending their muscle and skill to provide free dragon boat rides around the Berkeley Marina to approximately 1,200 community members of all ages. Volunteers outfitted guests with pfd's, briefed them on safety standards, shared the history of dragon boat paddling, offered paddling instruction and gave them a brief tour of the marina. Some of the guest paddlers were repeat attendees who brought their friends to share their enthusiasm for being on the water. Others accepted the invitation to tryout a couple of DragonMax practices at no cost and then became BRCC members.

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 (conditions permitting) at no cost.

### **Youth Programs**

As part of its primary focus on youth outreach, BRCC continued to prioritize hosting numerous school, camp and scout groups during 2015. Through these outings, diverse 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. Some of the youth groups BRCC hosted in 2015:

- Summer Achievers
- Soar for Youth
- YMCA Day Camp
- Shorebird Center Day Camp
- Lighthouse High School
- Berkeley Yacht Club Day Camp

### **High School Teams**



BRCC promotes competitive high school paddling and hosts a high school team, the Rough Riders, with students from El Cerrito, Albany and Berkeley high schools and beyond, providing boats, equipment, steering, and volunteer coaching at no charge to the school or to the participants. Race fees are subsidized by BRCC when the team competes in the local high school dragon boat competitions. The team is coached by a dedicated teacher and accomplished paddler from El Cerrito High who volunteers countless hours and has successfully grown team membership, cohesion, and success.

Rough Riders have enjoyed impressive growth with 33 active members and growing. In its short history (entering year number 3), the team has served about 70 youth from 8 different cities. The youngest paddler is 11 and the oldest alumni are sophomores in college. Rough Riders have sent two paddlers to Cal's dragon boat team (100 tried out, only 20 made it). At the end of 2016, it will be the longest-tenured youth dragon boat team in the East Bay (no other youth team in the EB has existed for more than 3 consecutive years). It is the first youth dragon boat team to ever enter two boats at the CDBA Youth Race.

The Rough Riders have reached a broad range of youth, attracting both athletes jaded by the traditional sports scene and students who had never been physically active. The team has unparalleled diversity ethnically, geographically and even by gender (including two transgender paddlers). Students share that the sport has changed their lives, with one losing 30 pounds and totally changing her eating habits.

The students are developing healthy exercise habits that can last a lifetime and learning critical team skills. Student paddlers have embraced the BRCC spirit and routinely volunteered as paddlers and dock hands at the Berkeley festivals. A number of the high school students began attending the DragonMax adult practices as well as their own. They are eagerly anticipating competing in the Long Beach Dragon Boat Festival for the first time in July of 2016. Students are assuming responsibility for fund-raising as well as further conditioning and training for the races. The Rough Riders team, and the significant benefits to the increasing numbers of youth who are a part of it, would not exist without the support of BRCC.

### Other Community Service



In addition to providing time on the water to as many people as possible at the City of Berkeley events, BRCC supported a wide variety of non-profits in 2015 through the donation of dragon boat outings as silent auction items in support of their fundraising efforts. BRCC values these outings at \$500 for the excursion for 20 people. The auction winner follows up with a volunteer BRCC host who arranges for a mutually agreeable time for the

actual paddling experience. For most of these guests it is their initial experience with dragon boating and may well be their maiden voyage in a human-powered boat on the Bay. In 2015, BRCC donated dragon boat experiences to:

- Bike East Bay BikeTopia
- SF Bicycle Coalition
- North Coast Underway MARÉ Soirée
- Albany Village School
- Families Without Borders
- Meals on Wheels
- Special Olympics
- Asian Health Services
- Oakland Tech High School
- Alameda High School

In addition to these donations which are typically auctioned off at non-profit fundraisers, BRCC hosted dragon boat experiences for the following groups.

- Ashby Village
- Citizens for Eastshore Parks
- Cal – Berkeley School of Social Welfare
- Touro University Pharmacy students



BRCC again served as the host for training sessions for developing corporate teams to get them ready for participation in novice dragon boat races. AT&T continued to work with BRCC volunteer coaches and steers-persons to develop and hone the skills needed for racing. A number of these participants have become passionate paddlers and join DragonMax on the competitive circuit.

BRCC members regularly alert the Harbor Master of any significant hazards encountered in the water and have been known to drag logs back to the dock while paddling so that other vessels don't collide with the potentially destructive debris. With DragonMax practice Monday through Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings year-round (conditions permitting), the team is one of the most consistent monitors of the waters. An *El Nino* year provides even more opportunity to serve as stewards of the Marina, picking up random plastic bags and other debris that could injure marine life or cause a boating accident.

**Key Accomplishments in 2015**

BRCC made great strides this year with respect to each of its goals—promoting competitive dragon boat racing and serving the local community by providing water access and educational opportunities.

Competitive Dragon Boat Racing:

BRCC's DragonMax Senior C Women's and Mixed teams (paddlers age 60 and above) took first place at the Pacific



Dragon Boat Association Regional Championships in Vancouver Lake, WA in August. This victory qualified the Senior C crews, who range in age from 60 to 81, for the World Club Crew Championships in Adelaide, Australia in early April 2016. The crews will be proudly wearing their newly designed Berkeley jerseys as they compete with teams from across the globe.

Four BRCC members who compete on the Senior C DragonMax team also became members of the US National Dragon Boat team and represented the US at the 2015 World Dragon Boat Racing Championships in Welland, Ontario,

Canada in August. In preparation they participated in rigorous training camps in various locations including Florida, all at their own expense.

BRCC has promoted greater collaboration between its competitive DragonMax team and the Cal team, encouraging Cal students to continue to develop as paddlers beyond their college years.

Providing water access and educational opportunities for the community:

BRCC further invested in our commitment to youth by purchasing 12 child-size paddles made by local teens at Waterside Workshop at Aquatic Park. The addition of these paddles means that even more families with young children can experience dragon boat paddling at the annual Bay Festival and on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. This also enables parents and children to attend regularly scheduled DragonMax practices.



We improved our facilities by installing a boat ramp for the Champion dragon boat owned by the Cal team and expanded our locker storage area enabling paddlers to readily access paddles and pfd's, making it easier for guests to be easily outfitted before joining us on the water.

BRCC has continued to expand the number and range of non-profit organizations supported through donation of dragon boat excursions. BRCC's growth in membership resulted in even more volunteers available to host groups on the water.

BRCC designed and implemented a new online scheduling procedure that ensures that boats and volunteers are available to fulfill requests from community groups without interfering with scheduled practices for DragonMax, Cal, Rough Riders or AT&T.

## Membership

BRCC wrapped up 2015 with 248 members, nearly 80% of whom were actively participating. While the majority (161) of membership consisted of paying adults, 87 were young people (33 high school students and 54 Cal students)—youth who pay no membership fees or college students who pay between \$5 and \$20 for unlimited paddling throughout the year. Members ranged in age from pre-teen to octogenarians.



## Finances

In 2015, total income for BRCC was \$18,146, which was in line with the \$17,000 target established by the Board in its budget planning. Unlike in 2014, which was a year of extraordinary fundraising, 2015 income reflected a typical year for BRCC. Expenditures for 2015 totaled \$19,929, which was higher than budgeted for the year. Completion of the new docking, a new boat ramp, and miscellaneous maintenance expenses accounted for most of BRCC's 2015 expenses. Year-end cash accounts totaled \$6,905. Income for 2016 is estimated at \$17,000, assuming continued membership growth and no active fundraising.

Expenses for 2016 are anticipated to be approximately \$15,000 and will include installation of a more durable, water-resistant veneer on the dragon boat seats to preserve them and eliminate the need for frequent labor-intensive sanding and varnishing completed by volunteers, maintenance including haul-outs of the dragon boats and repairs on the small boat fleet, and the possible purchase of a 10-person dragon boat if it we can obtain it for a very reasonable price at auction. The budget also includes a continuation of the \$1,000 youth team race fee subsidy and \$1,000 for Community Services as well as required club expenses like insurance, taxes, and dues (Pacific Dragon Boat Association). It is anticipated that cash reserves will remain steady or increase depending on the number of new paying members who join BRCC in 2016.