



WHAT IT'S LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE KENTUCKY DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL™

By Jim Thaxton, Founder of the
Kentucky Thorough-Breasts Dragon Boat Racing Team

In the distance, 3-5 dragon boats line up at the start. A horn blows. As you look out over the lake at the dragon boats racing across the water, you hear the drums beating out of sync with each other. Watch more closely, and you will see that each drummer is setting the cadence for 16-20 paddlers. Following the teams off the water to their tents reveals a touching tapestry of stories and support. Each tent houses a team with a unique background and motivation. One tent is filled with family and friends supporting someone undergoing cancer treatment. Another team in the next tent returns year after year in memory of a loved one who succumbed to cancer. The Paddlers' Village brims with breast cancer survivor teams from as far away as Canada and Florida. There are corporations using the festival as a team-building experience. Churches and hospitals from around the region send their teams, all united by a common cause. The 30-40 teams in the Paddlers' Village gather to support the mission of Paddling for Cancer Awareness, Inc., the Kentucky Thorough-Breasts "Surviving in Sync" non-profit organization. Each stroke of the paddle, each cheer, and each beat of the drum signifies a collective resilience and an unwavering commitment to the fight against cancer.

Yet, amidst the vibrant festivities, one tent remains conspicuously absent—the Kentucky Thorough-Breasts (KTB) tent. The KTB team is the invisible force behind the event, orchestrating the seamless execution of the festival. They set up the event the day before, working tirelessly to ensure everything is in place. On the day of the event, they arrive before dawn, parking cars and assisting teams in and out of the dragon boats. They keep meticulous track of race times and provide each boat with a drummer to guide the rhythm. The KTB members run the silent auction and manage the myriad behind-the-scenes tasks essential for the festival's success. As the sun sets and the event draws to a close, the KTB team remains steadfast in their commitment. They bring the lake and the grounds back to their pristine condition, erasing any trace of the bustling activity that filled the day. Their dedication is unwavering, driven by a deep sense of purpose and community.

The Kentucky Dragon Boat Festival™ "Paddling for the Pink" is more than just a sporting event; it is a celebration of life, love, and resilience. It is a testament to the strength of the human spirit and the power of community. Each paddle stroke, each drumbeat, and each cheer carries the collective hope and determination of those impacted by cancer. The festival serves as a powerful reminder that together, we can paddle through the challenges and make waves of change. KTB's commitment ensures that the event runs smoothly, allowing participants to focus on what truly matters—supporting one another and raising awareness for cancer.

In the end, it is not just about the race; it is about the journey, the camaraderie, and the shared mission of paddling for cancer awareness. The Kentucky Dragon Boat Festival™ "Paddling for the Pink" stands as a shining example of what can be achieved when people come together with a common purpose, united by love, resilience, and the unwavering belief in a brighter healthier future

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