

BREEZE

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Dragons in the Pink

Squadron member Sue Jenness is a strong woman with a lot of strong friends. Together they make up the Ascot Radiology Pink Dragons, a dragon boat team consisting of 20 paddlers, plus a sweep and a coach. The team was formed in 2005 to empower breast cancer survivors to assume responsibility for their health and well being through participation in this very strenuous sport.

Breeze caught up with Sue the day after the team had competed in the breast cancer and open teams' events at the Chinese New Year Dragon Boat Festival at Auckland's Viaduct. Thirty corporate and social teams took part, with the Pink Dragons being pipped at the post by a few seconds for a silver medal in their division.

"We did, however, have a good rehearsal for the nationals on Lake Pupuke at the end of March," said Sue. "Our game plan was to keep improving throughout our five races. Our best effort definitely came through for our last race."

Sue and her husband Warwick own the Farr 1020 *Watermark* and Sue is

Story by Debra Douglas
Pictures: Warwick Jenness

secretary of the Auckland Yacht & Boating Association. She joined the Pink Dragons in 2006 and takes up a position at the back of the dragon boat.

"We are all equal paddlers, but I have to follow what everyone else at the front does. We race from standing starts, so when we are manoeuvring at the start, the back of the boat has to work pretty hard, especially in cross winds before we can paddle straight.

"We take our lead from our coach seated at the back of the boat or the caller

in the front. Our coach, Graeme Rountree (son of Squadron member John Rountree) has the overall control. He yells very loudly at us. Graeme is very loud, but very polite too, of course."

The Pink Dragons, aged between 40 and the mid-60s, train on the water twice a week during the season and keep up their fitness during the year by walking and with gym work.

Sue: "It is quite a feat getting all the girls together for training. Everyone bar one in the team works. We spend a lot of time training and so little time actually racing. For example, the course for the nationals is 500 metres, so it is over in a matter of minutes.

"But it is an intoxicating event. When everything is going right during racing and everyone is in rhythm the boat too is in rhythm and gives a little tremble which is exhilarating.

"The camaraderie between the women is the best part. We have all been through a very tough time. And we have come out the other end very strong."



Pink Paddlers' Coffee

Members of the Ascot Radiology Pink Dragons dragon boat team hosted a recent coffee morning at the Squadron. The theme of their presentation was the benefits of leading an active life after surviving breast cancer.

Among those at the morning tea were (clockwise from right): The Pink Dragons (l-r) Leonie Caufield (Sponsorship co-ordinator), Sue Jenness (Squadron member) and Robin Gamble (Project Leader); Patricia Miller and Doreen Allen; Beryl Pollock and Beverley Heron; Jenny Simpson and Faye Hayman.



Pictures: Debra Douglas



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