Chair’s Report
A Year of Growth and Change

We are coming off of an unbelievable year! 2018 was a wonderful year in many ways. It definitely was a year of growth and a year of change. We began our 13th season with the traditional Blessing of the Boats, by Father Greg Skrypek. This is always a special and emotional time for our group, as he blesses the paddlers, our two boats, and the waters that support us.

The biggest event this year was travelling to the International Breast Cancer Dragon Boat Festival held in Florence, Italy! Thirty-four Divas attended, and to fill out the remainder of the second boat, we combined with several members of the Prairie Dragon Paddlers from Champaign, Illinois. Out of 125 teams from all over the world, the Divas finished 11th overall and the Divas and Friends boat finished 44th! We were pleased with the results we experienced from all of the hard work we did in preparing for this competition. Meanwhile, the ‘stateside paddlers’ competed in three other Midwest Festivals this season, and brought home medals from all. The Divas are always active on and off the water, still practicing 2-3 times a week. The off season training finds us doing Zumba, spin classes, yoga, and strength training. Few know better than us the impact of regular exercise on our overall well-being, and paddling is only part of it.

We also serve our community. This year we helped build a home with Habitat for Humanity, cooked meals for the Ronald McDonald House and held our second annual Toys for Tots drive. We even had an appearance on KARE 11 delivering our collected toys and cash donations.

As our organization grows, we experience some growing pains along the way. We accept those challenges, make changes and grow from the experience. Staying true to our mission of embracing newly diagnosed survivors, supporting those who fighting the disease, and honoring those who have passed is what keeps us going and grounded in who we are and why we were founded in 2006.

As I reflect on this past year, I am filled with gratitude to our sponsors, donors, and supporters who, with their generosity, carry us forward to bigger and better goals. I am thankful for each beautiful DIVA, who infuse our group with unconditional love, healing and positive energy in their own special way.

Thank you to all who have contributed their time, talents and resources to the Dragon Divas, we couldn’t do it without you!

Paddles Up!
Cindi /Board Chair
**Mentee**

I started paddling with the Dragon Divas in June of 2018, Having been diagnosed at age 47, Thanksgiving 2016. I felt a lump in my left breast a few weeks prior to diagnosis which kicked off the numerous appointments, scans, biopsies, mammograms and treatment. I had both breasts removed plus all lymph nodes in my left arm the week before Christmas 2016. Twenty weeks of chemotherapy began three weeks after surgery, followed by 33 rounds of radiation. Now I’m taking an anti cancer oral medication for a duration of 5-10 years. I have no family history of breast cancer and was low risk as I do not use tobacco or alcohol. When I joined the Divas, I was paired with a mentor, and everyone around me was helpful, answering my questions as they came to me. I love being on the water and connecting with others at practice and the festivals has brought me joy.

Debora

**Mentor**

I joined the Dragon Divas in 2015, about three years after my cancer diagnosis at age 56, and am grateful for the guidance I received from my mentor. With my mentor as my motivator I came to understand the importance of being among others who have a common bond. After all, we were all literally and figuratively, “in the same boat.” In 2018 I became a mentor for the first time to our youngest Dragon Diva member. Thirty-four years old. She is my daughter’s age. I cannot begin to explain how glad I am to be in the role of mentor to this young member. She is one of the bravest people I know. She has taught me a lot about strength and courage. Her cancer journey is for her to tell, but I can say what she endured helped me understand how important it is to mentor our newest members.

Leah
Big Blue Festival

The Big Blue Dragon Boat festival in LaCrosse was the first competitive experience for many of us new to Divas in 2018. Twenty-two paddlers, including ten nervous newbies, competed in three races on the Black River. What a rush each race was! It really didn’t matter where we placed, although it was fun to come in first in the breast cancer division.

The Big Blue festival is known for its beautiful breast cancer ceremony and we were deeply touched by the love and support shared by the entire dragon boat paddling community. As Divas, we know the win is being on the water paddling and in camaraderie with other enthusiastic, vibrant survivors.

Gail

Badger Lake Dragon Boat Bash

It’s always fun to participate in the Badger Lake Dragon Boat Bash held in Fort Dodge, Iowa, and touch base with those who helped us organize our team…the Fighting Angels Abreast, Barb, and the Donners. This year it was a special honor for me and a few other Divas to be able to paddle with the Fighting Angels and help fill their boat. The Angels have always been such a welcoming, friendly team. The first breast cancer race the Dragon Divas ever participated in was with the Fighting Angels in 2007 in Ft. Dodge, and we have learned so much from them. They showed us that they truly live their motto, “Friendship Through Paddling.” In addition, they are such strong community supporters of breast cancer patients…contributing funds and hands-on support to local hospitals, Relay for Life, making Care Kits and Comfort Bags for patients and more. Their community outreach has made such a difference in Ft. Dodge and the surrounding community. They truly have helped us learn that a dragon boat breast cancer support group is so much more than just winning races.

Carolyn

Superior Festival Story - Experienced Paddler

I was diagnosed with stage 3 breast cancer in 2010 and had just finished 8 chemo treatments, surgery and 33 rounds of radiation when I was introduced to the Dragon Divas through a neighbor. To say I was exhausted, weak, and emotionally drained would be an understatement. At my neighbor’s encouragement, my husband and I attended the Dragon Divas annual fundraiser at O’Gara’s in St. Paul. At that event I saw women, cancer survivors, with hair, laughing, dancing and full of energy. As I sat there many of them came up and introduced themselves. No one shared their cancer story, only how many years they’d been a Diva and encouragement to join the team. I thought there must be magic in this dragon boating team and I joined in 2012. With two international festivals and 7 seasons under my belt, I can say with certainty there is magic in this team. The Superior Dragon Boat Festival is the last festival of the season and a time for the team to celebrate the season, life and each other.

Jenny
Living Our Mission: Community Service

The grounds crew organizes events throughout the year where Divas come together to give back to the community that supports us. Some examples from 2018:

Second Harvest Heartland
On October 20th, thirteen Divas and one Divo packed 1,944 lbs of rice for neighbors in need at Second Harvest Heartland. It was a great fun, and collectively we contributed 28 hours of Diva power to help others thrive.

Toys for Tots
Nine Divas appeared on KARE 11 News December 8th to present games and toys collected by our members for the annual Toys for Tots drive organized by the Marine Corps. Toys were collected at the Diva Fall meeting as well as by drop off at organizer Nancy’s home. Toys for Tots enlists participation from the community to ensure children who may not otherwise have gifts for Christmas receive a toy or two.

Cooks for Kids
On December 9th, 2018, nine Divas (plus a friend) had the opportunity to shop, cook and serve brunch for the families of children in our community who are ill and who are currently residing at the Ronald McDonald House, Children’s Hospital, Minneapolis. We had such a fun time working together and getting to know our Diva sisters a bit better. It was incredibly gratifying to be able to give the gift of a warm, home-cooked meal to those who are carrying the weight of the world right now. Many of the families we interacted with visibly brightened when they heard our stories and saw the joy with which we survive together. You could tangibly feel our collective courage and hope being transmitted to those who greatly needed both sentiments.

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Dragon Divas
Statement of Financial Position
December 31, 2018

Assets
Current Assets
Cash $50,871
Clothing and Apparel $2,556
Total Current Assets $53,427

Other Assets
Dragon Boat, Cover; Trailer $23,329
Dragon Boat; Cover $11,254
OC-2 $1,500
Dock $1,000
Accumulated depreciation ($22,102)
Total Other Assets $14,981
Total Assets $68,408

Liabilities and Unrestricted Net Assets
Liabilities $0
Unrestricted Net Assets $68,408
Total Liabilities & Net Assets $68,408

Revenue
Contributions $4,988
Dues $4,650
Interest $45
Earned Income $14,670
Other Earned Income $22,569
Restricted fund Released $8,191
Total Revenue $55,113

Expense
Depreciation Expenses $3,482
Program Expenses $46,318
Supporting Expenses $6,240
Total Expense $56,040

Change in Net Assets* - $927

*(For 2017 and 2018 Dragon Divas Net Assets were effected by the 2018 IBCPC Dragon Boat Festival-Florence. The Dragon Divas Change in Net Assets in 2017 was $7,270 and in 2018 was $-927)

Dragon Divas of St. Paul, Minnesota is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization
2018 Supporters

**Cash Contribution of $1000 or more**

K Foundation-GiveMN.org
Kowalski's
Lakeview Hospital - Ruth Hugenson-Rufford
Dr. Mark Migliori
Mingo Holdings LLC
Minnesota Masonic Charities - Forest Lake Lodge
Modern Woodman Fraternal Financial-Jeannette Ethier
Schroeder & Mandel, P.A.

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Becker Installations, Inc. - Floor Covering Specialists
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Fusion 7 - Miriam & William Shook
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Holcomb-Henry-Boom-Purcell
Funeral Home
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Cynthia Johnson
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KW KellerWilliams - Michele & William Ilc
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Roland Marketing, Inc. - Larry & Virginia Meuers
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Nancy Ruppenthal

**Cash Contribution of $10 - $99**

K Foundation-GiveMN.org
Kowalski's
Lakeview Hospital - Ruth Hugenson-Rufford
Dr. Mark Migliori
Mingo Holdings LLC
Minnesota Masonic Charities - Forest Lake Lodge
Modern Woodman Fraternal Financial-Jeannette Ethier
Schroeder & Mandel, P.A.

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Rhonda Feist
Flaherty's Arden Bowl
Dan Flaherty
Julie Frakes
Matt Frakes
Cindi Fitch
Fresh Thyme Store
Terry Gardner
Tanya Gerald-Compass North Studios
Renee Heimer
Suzette Henschell
Kris Hogquist
Don & Pam Hoye
Mandy Hyatt
Innovative Growth-Julie Sampson
Iron Cycle
Carolyn Jacobs
Jerry Foods
Gia Johnston
Joe's Sporting Goods
Joke Joint Comedy Club
Carolyn Jonason
Susanne Jungmann
Mary Knudsen
Mary Knudsen
Mary Knudsen
Mary Knudsen
Mary Knudsen
Mary Knudsen
Mary Knudsen
Mary Knudsen
Mary Knudsen
Margie Kron
Megan Kress
Karen Krueger
Kwik Trip
Lake Elmo Coffee
Lake Elmo Inn
Legends Book Club
Lift Bridge Brewing Company
Gary & Ione Livingston
Sherry Lucas
Sheila Ludden
Carrie Lyles
Kaye Magnuson
Mall of America
Laurie Marsh
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Joan Miller
MN Science Museum
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Stillwater Olive Oil Company
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