

Berkeley Racing Canoe Center

Annual Report for 2011

Introduction

Throughout the year, visitors to the Berkeley Marina and surrounding area have been 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 students 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 unlimited water opportunities. 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 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

(conditions permitting) 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 2011, approximately 30 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 1,000 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 2011. Through these outings close to 300 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 hosts a competitive high school team from San Leandro High School, providing the boats, equipment and volunteer coaching at no charge to the school or to the participants. Race fees are largely subsidized by BRCC when the San Leandro team competes in the local high school dragon boat competitions. Efforts are currently in progress to create a Berkeley High School and an Albany High School team under similar terms.

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 \$100 - \$300 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 2011, Bayer and AT&T worked with BRCC volunteer coaches and steerspersons to develop and hone the skills needed for racing. Ideally, one or both of these groups will become passionate paddlers and join DragonMax as another competitive team under the BRCC umbrella.

Membership

In 2011, BRCC had 99 paid members, of which over two-thirds were active participants throughout the year. While majority of the membership consisted of paying adults, an additional 31 were youth who pay no membership fees. Members ranged in age from 9 to 81.

Finances

In 2011, total income for BRCC was \$11,292, the highest amount in its history. Expenditures for 2011 totaled \$11,995. Year-end cash accounts totaled \$4,330. Income for 2012 is estimated at \$12,625. This includes \$2,500 from a Bingo fundraising event planned for June. Expenses are anticipated to be \$15,430 and include \$2,280 for costs incurred in 2011 and paid in 2012 for restoring a dragon boat, \$7,500 to restore the second dragon boat, \$900 for the small boat fleet, new dragon heads and future miscellaneous repairs. 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, dues and lease/option payment on the dragon boats. Expenses exceed income, leaving a shortfall of \$3,805 that will be covered by the cash carry over from 2011. It is anticipated that cash reserves, which have been drawn down to make major repairs on the dragon boats, dock and locker will stabilize in 2013.

Plans for 2012

BRCC's focus in 2012 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 San Leandro High school team as well as growing the newly initiated Berkeley High and Albany High 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 was 2011's newest strategy for connecting with the community. BRCC posts regularly on Meet-Up 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 is being considered 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. They also handle everything behind the scenes. Of note in 2011 was the extraordinary effort made by the Fleet Captain, her committee and more than 40 BRCC volunteers who together restored one of the two dragon boats central to both the racing and community service programs. The volunteers with guidance and support from the Berkeley Marine Center, put in well over 250 hours of hands on work restoring the boat to like new quality. They will repeat the entire process with the second boat in 2012. 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.