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DRAGON DREAM TEAM CONTINUES TO SEND MESSAGE OF HOPE A YEAR LATER

AKRON, Ohio, August 25, 2008 — A group of Northeast Ohio breast cancer survivors continue to send a message of hope and support for women fighting the disease by participating in the sport of Dragon Boat racing. The sport, which is similar to rowing or canoeing, involves a team of 22 paddlers racing in 40-foot-long hulls decorated to look like dragons.

Participation in the team offers women living with breast cancer an opportunity to develop their support system. Equally important, team members find the physical exertion a welcome diversion from the emotional strain of living with breast cancer.

“The bonds we’ve developed with each other are indescribable,” said Karen Koch, a member of the Dragon Dream Team. “The first time I set foot on our Dragon Boat, there was an instant sense of belonging and understanding. Everyone on the team is, literally and figuratively, in the same boat.”

After its first year, the Dragon Dream Team has continued to grow in popularity and is now 90 women strong. The team has participated in six competitions over the last year, traveling as far as Windsor, Canada to race with thousands of other breast cancer survivors from around the world.

“Competing in Dragon Boat racing sends an important message to our friends and families, as well as the community at large,” said Susan Balmert, a member of the team. “We truly exemplify that there is life after breast cancer.”

The team practices three times a week in two-hour increments on the Portage Lakes. At each competition, the team races against four to five other Dragon Boat teams at 300-500 length distances.

Dr. Douglas Wagner, M.D., a physician practicing with Akron Plastic Surgeons and Founding Sponsor of the Dragon Dream Team said, “I see many women that come through my door who feel defeated by breast cancer. I believe that Dragon Boat racing empowers these women and allows them to get back some semblance of control in their lives.”

Continued Wagner, “When you see the team come together, whether it’s practicing on the lake or competing, their unity and strength really speaks for itself.”

The team is currently working to recruit corporate sponsorships, which will help to offset travel expenses and cover costs for those without the financial means to participate. Sponsorship dollars will also be used in support of breast cancer research.

According to *Paddler* magazine, Dragon Boat racing is the fastest growing water sport and, in general, is considered the second most popular sport in the world. The Dragon Boat movement made an impact on breast cancer survivors when Dr. Don McKenzie proved his theory that upper body exercise has a positive impact on recovering breast cancer patients.

This year, the team will hold its first summit to educate the community about the impact Dragon Boat racing has on breast cancer survivors. The event will be held on Saturday, August 30th, 2008 at 10:00 am at 4450 Rex Lake Road in Akron, Ohio. For more information, visit www.dragondreamteam.org. The American Cancer Society is sponsoring the summit with support from Summa Healthcare System.

ABOUT AKRON PLASTIC SURGEONS

The doctors of **Akron Plastic Surgeons, Inc.** have been providing quality health care since 1985. A leading regional provider of cosmetic and reconstructive surgery, Akron Plastic Surgeons, Inc. is composed of three board-certified physicians with over 50 years of combined experience: Michael G. Parker, M.D., Douglas S. Wagner, M.D., and John C. Pedersen, M.D. For more information, call 330.253.9161 or visit akronplasticsurgeons.com.