Today on across the fence an event that requires teamwork the determination and heart. It's the annual Citizens Bank Lake Champlain Dragon Boat Festival—a fun and inspiring way to help fight cancer. The good afternoon and thanks for joining us I'm Judy Simpson. This coming Sunday marks the sixth annual Citizens Bank Lake Champlain Dragon Boat Festival on the Burlington waterfront. Over the past five summers the festival's efforts have resulted home giving almost 1/2 million dollars to support a variety of cancer related needs in our Vermont’s community. Its success is due largely large part to the city of high in our area and the dedication of dragon heart teams and the efforts of today's guests. Marianne Eaton and Linda dyer are both founding members of the festival and part of the dragon heart Vermont team that brought dragon boats to Lake Champlain. SS welcome to both of you it's great to talk to you again.

Linda.: Thanks for having us.

Marianne. We love coming here.

Judy.: Tell us a little bit about the history of the dragon heart organization and how the festival all got started?

Linda.: Surely. Dragon heart Vermont is a breast cancer survivor and supporter team here in town and this is our 7th year that we've been paddling out on Lake Champlain. A lot of people have some misconceptions about dragon heart we are first and foremost about breast cancer survivorship and our mission is about teamwork fitness and about community. Our labor of love for the team is the lake Champlain dragon boat festival and six years ago we came up with the idea of trying to get community involved for the fun of it for the fitness of it and for a way for us to help cancer survivors in our area with specific needs that we have and we have been very successful. We're the host and we're thrilled to be able to do it again this year.

Judy.: What is it about these boats and this festival that gets people so excited?
Marianne.: There's nothing like teamwork. This sport defines the word team in that everyone has to paddle in sync. There are 20 people paddling the boat there's a drummer sitting in the battle and a steering person in the stern of the boat and everybody has to paddle as one and when you get the feeling of the boat gliding and it's your power propelling it forward it's an incredible feeling very emotional activity because it's not just you there's not just one star in the boat it's everybody doing their best to propel that both forward.

Judy.: And working together.

Marianne.: That's all it's about.

Linda.: It's all about teamwork.

Judy.: Tell me a little bit about how many teams were talking about?

Linda.: We're so lucky our community embraces this event so completely. All of the teams are made up of people from the community coworkers friends family's team up to get these 21 people and the boat. They come up for practice week and which we just had a short time ago and we tell them how to drive vote and what it means to actually paddle together. This year we have 74 teams made up of the community teams then we have 14 teams that are breast cancer survivor dragon boat teams from the U.S. and Canada that we've invited to be part of this special event as well.

Judy.: So the teams each get one practice week and before the race. That's going to be intimidating because of all the sudden you realize how much you don't know.

Linda.: We come to feel like since it's the ultimate team sport we want to keep an equal playing field. So everybody has the same boats the same paddles the same life jackets and we have one practice session even though they would love to have more to keep that equal playing field so that on race day when the war goes off anything can happen.

Marianne.: And we have some teams return but also we have new teams. But people are constantly changing even with the old standby teams that keep coming back. So you're constantly rotating in new members who may not know anything about dragon boating which is very common so it is an even playing field in that regard. It's really nice to have the old standbys come back because you know that means they had a really great time and their encouraging there other friends and family to come back but the new teams are equally as joyful to see out there because they really capture the sport of why we're doing what we're doing.
Judy.: We were talking a little bit before we started the broadcast and you're saying once the people on the team get it as far as the synchronization and rowing paddling it changes them.

Marianne.: It does change them they just have this infectious spirit and energy is just pouring through their body and they're cheering and if you can imagine a Daylong event was nothing but that kind of energy and spirit you just have to come and see it it's quite something.

Linda.: We have this athletes' village that we set up on the waterfront park which has all ninety team's and it's sheer energy smiles laughter and for the team's is a chance to have a little down time together to connect on land and then on the water so it's a very memorable event for everybody.

Judy.: It is an event that people say you have to see to believe. I think we have a clip that we want to show to folks so they can see for themselves the kind of fun that happens in this event.

[music]

Judy.: Wow I think those people need to cheer up.

Linda.: Joy is the order of the day.

Judy.: Tell me what you have planned for this Sunday?

Marianne.: What don't we have planned. We have a saying in Vermont if you don't like the weather wait 20 minutes or half an hour. It's going to be the same Sunday, August seventh. We have so many entertainers we have coming down every hour there's a new band or dance performance. Japanese dancers Taiko drumming Samba tu kata jazzercise. At the end of the day we have a great rock and roll band to keep people's energy up in going. We have silent auction throughout the day and we still would love to have silent auction items donated by the way. We have raffle items a beautiful print by local artist will be given away. So many great food vendors it's constant.

Judy.: Let's talk for a minute about the money that's raised because that stays right in the community and each year you pick a particular need that you see and donate the money for that. Can you talk about what you've done in the past and what's coming up this year?
Linda.: Of course we're very proud that the money we raise goes right back into the community. In the past we've bought state of the art beds for hospice ultrasound machines for radiation oncology cancer patient support programs. The last two years we did Camp Ta-Kum-Ta. Which there about ready to open up the activities building that we helped build. This year we're so excited because were embarking on a new initiative called survivorship now. Our plan is to provide wellness programs for cancer survivors in our area. As I mentioned dragon heart Vermont is a breast cancer survivor group and all of us feel we had great medical treatment and great doctors. We're lucky in this area to have that but we also feel there's a gap in services from the time you finish treatment and then you wonder what happens now how to lead deal with the challenges of what happens afterward from treatment. So our plan is to provide ways in which we can connect survivors where we can empower them and equip them and provide better support for them. We're very excited that you can get this off the ground.

Judy.: That is exciting. If you just joined us we're talking about the annual lake Champlain dragon boat festival which is this Sunday, August 7 at the Burlington waterfront. A lot of people are going to be there. How many people show up for this event?

Marianne.: We have 2000 paddlers that's quite a large amount of people just participating. But there's friends and family and everyone comes down. We estimate 10 to 15,000 people come down.

Linda.: It's free admission so everybody can come on down. There's free parking on Sunday in Burlington so there's a race going off every 10 minutes all day long from 8:00 AM until 4:30 PM.

Judy.: So you'll miss any of the action.

Marianne.: O gosh no in fact the more exciting races are in the afternoon when the boats are really very close finished. Sometimes it's tenths of hundredths of a second that they win by so it's quite exciting.

Judy.: By a nose.

Linda.: By a whisker.

Marianne.: But in the middle of the day we'd like to point out at 1230 we're going to have a ceremony that honors breast cancer people who have passed away as well as celebrating life for those who are still living. That's a very moving ceremony we call the flower ceremony. We you really think it's important for people to come down and understand that it's who dragon heart is and why we're here and the festivities continue on after that.
Judy.: You could use some volunteers understand.

Linda.: Absolutely what event can't. Dragon heart is a volunteer organization we depend on the community to help us put on this event. We would love to have more volunteers out that day. They can go to ride the dragon.org to find out about that. We need silent auction items and I have to say we've been so lucky we have our sponsors back again that really helped us put on this event. Citizens Bank Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont and Bariatrix are our top sponsors and without them we couldn't do it.

Judy.: That's fantastic. Now the volunteers need any special skills?

Marianne.: Actually no. There's a slot for everybody. I must say though I'd love to find videographer but yes we will absolutely take anyone who will come down.

Linda.: With a smile.

Judy.: And we should mention this is going to go on rain or shine.

Marianne.: And we've had lots of rain in the past but.

Linda.: Where due for sunny weather so we can do this rain or shine and it is great fun rain or shine.

Judy.: If people are interested I know for this event for this year it's too late but if they're interested in next year getting a team together where they have to start thinking about doing?

Linda.: They need to start thinking about gathering together 21 people and they should come down and watch it this year so they get an idea what it's all about so they can get everybody excited about it. The beautiful part about this is that our racers help us raise the money for the event. Each of those racers goes out and gets supporters and raises just a little bit we don't ask that much but a little bit of money that all goes to the cause. What it takes is somebody to serve as a captain and 21 people to get together willing to hop in the boat and have some fun.

Judy.: Time commitment?
Marianne.: You have a practice weekend just a few hours two weeks before the festival but it is a commitment from 8:00 AM if you're on the top 25 teams to 5:00 it is a long day but it's a very fun day and there's so much to do that today just flies.

Judy.: So there's no reason to worry about going to a lot of practices because as only one.

Linda Marianne.: There's only one that's right.

Judy.: If it's a great event for a great cause it's the annual lake Champlain dragon boat festival this Sunday, August 7 at waterfront park in Burlington. For complete details you can logon to the website ifride the dragon.org. If you want to volunteer you can also find out more information on the website or we encourage you to call 802999 5478 give a few more days to make your plans to attend or to volunteer to be part of the 2011 lake Champlain dragon boat festival. I want to thank you both for joining us.

Linda.: It's a pleasure Judy.

Judy.: Good luck.

Linda.: We're excited.

Marianne.: Thank you.

Judy.: That's our program for today I'm Judy Simpson will see you again next time on across the fence.

Across the fence is brought to you as a public service by the University of Vermont and WCAX TV.