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2010 local Dragon Boat Festival to support growing cancer care program at PRHC

Peterborough – The 10th anniversary Dragon Boat Festival will help Peterborough Regional Health Centre (PRHC) offer better breast cancer diagnosis and more treatment options close to home, Survivors Abreast President Joan Bates announced today.

Proceeds from the 2010 local Festival will be used to purchase a vital piece of diagnostic equipment that can not only confirm the presence of cancer, but tell physicians when it has been successfully removed. The remainder of the funds will be held in trust to support PRHC's efforts to install a radiation treatment facility on the grounds of the hospital.

The equipment, an automated tissue processor, is one of many essential laboratory tools that provide PRHC's medical professionals with the information they need to quickly and accurately diagnose cancer. The processor will be used to preserve surgical tissue samples, removing water and embedding the tissue in wax so that it can be effectively examined by a pathologist. More than 100,000 slides were prepared for review in 2009, a large portion of which were cancer investigations.

"The Breast Assessment Centre at PRHC is part of a range of cancer care services that stretches across the hospital, from diagnosis to treatment, with several departments playing an essential role," said Bates. "We need the best equipment in the lab to accurately diagnose breast cancer."

The remainder of the proceeds from the 2010 Dragon Boat Festival will support PRHC's efforts to bring cancer radiation treatment to the region. Working with the RS McLaughlin Durham Regional Cancer Centre, a joint submission to Cancer Care Ontario would see a radiation treatment facility at PRHC, an opportunity Bates is excited about.

"Thanks to ongoing advances in screening and treatment, more women are surviving their fight with breast cancer," said Bates. "Unfortunately, having to travel to receive breast cancer treatment can take its toll, not only physically but emotionally and financially as well. By directing a portion of the proceeds from this year's event to the proposed radiation facility, more people will be able to receive their treatment at PRHC, rather than having to travel out of town." A decision by Cancer Care Ontario on the radiation treatment facility is expected shortly.

PRHC Foundation President and CEO Julie Davis says the support of Survivors Abreast and the hundreds of individuals and businesses that donate to Peterborough's Annual Dragon Boat Festival every year has already been essential to PRHC's ability to expand its cancer care program.

"Thanks to the more than \$1.5 million generated by the Festival over the past decade, PRHC is home to a state-of-the-art Breast Assessment Centre where women who need routine breast exams no longer wait three months, and instead can be seen in less than a week," said Davis. "In 2009 alone, approximately 6,800 were screened for this deadly disease."

Davis also said that in addition to reducing wait times, the hospital's cancer care program has been able to accommodate more patients right here at home.

"In the first year that our new hospital was open, the total number of cancer care visits more than doubled, going from just over 5,000 to almost 12,000," said Davis. "That number has now climbed to a projected 14,000 and we expect it to continue to grow over the next few years."

The 10th annual Dragon Boat Festival takes place June 5, 2010 at Del Cray Park in Peterborough. More than 100 community teams are expected to participate.

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Ten years and still paddling strong!