



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Ladies First Boat Promises to Lead Dragon Boat Race

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BURLINGTON –The Ladies First paddling team that will participate for the first time in the annual Lake Champlain Dragon Boat Race on Aug. 7 at Waterfront Park in Burlington promises to be “First in Fun, First in Spirit, and First in Our Lane.”

They do not plan on finishing in first place.

“We haven’t practiced that much,” said Nina Dahlstedt Buss, an outreach coordinator for the Vermont Department of Health’s Ladies First program. “But we just might lead the way when it comes to enthusiasm and passion for the event.”

Buss is a breast cancer survivor, diagnosed with a small lump in December 2009 that was detected early during a routine mammogram. Buss is a longtime Health Department employee. After her diagnosis and treatment, she moved to a position where she could work directly with women who were eligible for annual mammogram screenings. Buss knew she had been fortunate to be diagnosed early, because early diagnosis is key to successful treatment of breast cancer.

“After my own experience it made me sad to think that some women don’t get a mammogram because of the cost, so it’s really rewarding to work in a program that addresses that,” Buss said. “In most instances I don’t share my personal experience with people, but occasionally I will with a woman who is a Ladies First member and is not sure she needs the exam. Some women are still putting off getting mammograms.”

Ladies First pays for free breast and cervical cancer screenings as well as heart health screening for lower income, uninsured, or underinsured women. More than 1,300 health care providers are part of the Ladies First effort. A Vermont woman living in a two-person household can earn up to \$36,775 a year and receive free services. One out of four Vermont women age 40-64 are income eligible for Ladies First.

The Dragon Boat Festival is a day-long celebration with 90 teams in 41-foot long boats and 2,000 paddlers coming together to raise money for breast cancer research and prevention. The Scoopers, the Congo Paddlers, the Purple Cobras, and the Draggin’ R Hineys team could blow past the Ladies First team on the water during the race.

“We know there will be fast teams out there,” Buss said, “But there is no doubt – we are going to have a lot of fun.”

For more information on the Ladies First program, visit: www.ladiesfirstvt.org.

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