

ABOUT

The AZDBA was founded in Tempe in 2003 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is a member of the Pacific Dragon Boat Association (PDBA) of America and part of the United States Dragon Boat Federation (USDBF) and the International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF). Its mission is to promote cultural awareness, amateur sports and education. Bringing to life this ancient Chinese celebration and the practice of the sport on Tempe Town Lake is a focal point of many of its activities.

The Festival provides a window into the Asian culture and an opportunity for our youth, teens, adults, senior citizens and physically/mentally challenged to participate in a team sport while promoting friendships, fitness, health and wellness, and creating an awareness and respect for cultural diversity and of people from all walks of life.

One focal point of the AZDBA festival is the inclusion of Breast Cancer Survivor teams (BCS) since its inception in 2004. Festival registration fees for BCS teams are waived. It is anticipated that this year's teams will arrive from CA, TX, MN, and as far away as Canada. Following the BCS races, a special ceremony is conducted on both land and water to honor those who passed and those unable to race. Each survivor is handed a pink carnation, and the rest of the paddlers welcome the survivors as they disembark and return to shore.

In 2007, the Arizona Dragon Boat Festival invited the Special Olympics Arizona to race at the Festival. Ronda Carlson (AZDBA) and Jim Rudow (City of Mesa Association of Sports for the Disabled) successfully pulled together two Special Olympic and Unified Partner teams, one from the City of Mesa, and one from the City of Tempe, with an athlete count of 24 Special Olympians and 16 Unified Partners.

The program has since expanded to three teams with 75 paddlers. A Special Athletes division has been included in the festival racing schedule ever since. The AZDBA is proud to be the first to showcase Special Athletes Dragon Boat teams as competitors in the United States and has been sharing the Arizona Special Athletes Dragon Boat team's achievements with organizations from other states and countries.

Since then, AZDBA has added additional community partners to promote Dragon Boat paddling to adaptive and disabled athletes. Since 2016, AZDBA has co-hosted the Peddle 'N Paddle Fest **with Arizona Disabled Sports** and **Adaptive360** every October at Tempe Town Lake. This event allows anyone with a physical disability to try their hand at new experiences with an adaptive cycle and/or paddling in a Dragon Boat equipped with special seating accommodations.

And in 2017, AZDBA started **Team Blue**, their first ever year-round Adaptive/Disabled paddling crew. Team Blue is comprised of a group of disabled veterans and they are equipped to support a wide range of disabilities – PTSD, TBI, MS, amputation, hearing/vision impairment, among many other physical limitations. They practice weekly, while looking forward to competing against other adaptive teams each year at our local festival!