

Breast cancer survivors challenge the waves



The Pink Challengers show their positive side ... "that there is life after breast cancer".

by Isaac Hiew
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

THE Pink Challengers – a group of 15 gutsy breast cancer survivors recently rowed a dragon boat across the 5.8km Penang channel to drum up the message: "There can be life after breast cancer."

The event organised by the Breast Cancer Welfare Association (BCWA) with the theme "Paddle for Courage, Strength and Change" saw the Pink Challengers rowing from Bagan Ajam, Butterworth to Tanjung City Marina.

On hand to support them was Royal Australian Air Force personnel who rowed another dragon boat alongside the Pink Challengers. Present to welcome them after the event was Penang State executive councillor Danny Law Heng Kiang.

Their arrival at Tanjung City Marina was greeted by honks from the biking fraternity, including members of the Harley Owners Group Malaysia Chapter.

To mark the end of the Penang Channel Challenge, the Pink Challengers observed a moment of silence, before casting flowers into the water in memory of women the world over, who had lost the battle with breast cancer and for those who are still battling the disease.

The Pink Challengers, formed in March 2007, is the country's first

dragon boat team made up entirely of breast cancer survivors, for whom rowing across rough waters is a symbolic activity – resonating with their personal battles against the disease.

Through the Penang Channel Challenge, they hoped to inspire others that having cancer does not render them hopeless, even through the roughest of journeys in life.

Over the years of training together, these women have formed a mutual companionship and camaraderie and consider themselves "sworn-sisters" who have gone through thick and thin.

As one of the team members said: "We are in the same boat."

"This event is significant to us as we take on the waves, and push through the resistance, symbolising the battle that everyone in this team has experienced breast cancer," said BCWA president Ranjit Kaur, who was also the drummer for the team.

She said the physical action of paddling, which builds up body strength and flexibility of the arms, is also a way of preventing lymphoedema or arm swelling – a side effect of breast cancer treatment.

Earlier, BCWA received a RM10,000 donation from ceramics tile manufacturer MML Marketing Sdn Bhd, a brand under Malaysian Mosaics Bhd.