

Inspirational words from our newest board member:

Dear Paddlers,

My adventure with the Ottawa Dragon Boat Race Festival began in 2003 when I was recruited as a spare for the RCMP team. At the time, the team had planned on participating that year only. Luckily, another paddler and I decided that the festival would be a good, annual event for the RCMP and, well, the rest is history. I've now been the team captain for three years and I'm proud to say that aside from our first year, the RCMP team has been the second highest fundraising team each of the following years. This year it was an honor for me to join the Board of Directors for the Ottawa Dragon Boat Foundation.

I've participated in charity events in the city before, but none have managed to catch my attention and interest like the Dragon Boat Race Festival. The reason why is simple: many other events in the city have a national feel, while the Dragon Boat Race Festival has a local flavor. All of the money raised by the annual Pledge Challenge stays in Ottawa. It's one of the only events I know where you have the opportunity to see what great things are done with the money raised. As for me, well, I got the opportunity to see this first hand.

In 2006, one of the charities benefiting from the festival was a palliative care facility for children by the name of Roger's House, named after Roger Neilson, the late assistant coach for the Ottawa Senators NHL hockey team. The organization had a booth at the festival and gave out flyers to anyone who took the time to stop and listen to what they had to say. I was one of those people. Like many of us do, I discarded the pamphlet and forgot about it. I guess there were other plans for me that year as the pamphlet kept making its way back to me somehow. One afternoon, I decided to take the time to look at their website. The place immediately caught my eye. For the longest time, I had wanted to do something where I could make a difference in my community. This was my calling...my opportunity to make a difference in the lives of people who really needed it.

On September 3rd, 2008, I will celebrate 2 years as a volunteer at Roger's House, and what an adventure it's been. It hasn't always been an easy road, but it's been most fulfilling. This experience has taught me many life lessons and I've learned more about myself than I could have imagined. It's also shown me how important an event like the Dragon Boat Race Festival is to the community. Places like Roger's House could not exist without funds raised by events like the Festival. We have a perception that charity organizations do well with the small donations made by the general public and some of the private donations that are made. The truth is that much work goes into running a charity. Non-profit does not mean that there are no costs. Buildings must be heated and lit, staff must be paid and materials must be bought. The money raised through the Pledge Challenge helps to cover these costs. That's why my team and I keep coming back every year. WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE. Come to think of it, so can you. It's that simple.

Marc J. Charron
Team Captain
RCMP-GRC 22 Horsepower
22 Hearts, One soul, One goal!