

**BY SCOTT HADDOW**

The Sudbury Dragon Boat Festival (SDBF) may only be seven years young, but it has grown into one of the biggest and most popular events in the city and beyond.

The festival has grown faster than uncontrolled dandelions on a barren piece of land.

So much so that organizers for the festival are encouraging anyone and everyone connected to the event in any fashion to help them nurture the growth and help create an even better experience for all.

Organizers are asking the public to take part in an on-line survey at the festival's website at [www.sudburydragonboats.org](http://www.sudburydragonboats.org)

The surveys help establish future festival priorities over the next few years.

"We value the input from everyone in our community," said festival chair Jim Smith. "Our event has an outstanding reputation, not just in Sudbury, but the province...and we want to make it better."

List of events at Dragonboat Festival

- Opening ceremonies at Grace Hartman Amphitheatre at 7 pm with pre-show entertainment by the Laurentian University Pipe Band at 6:30 pm. There is Awakening of the Dragon and cultural dances from the Chinese Cultural Association of Toronto.
- Dragon's Den licensed social begins after official opening at 7 pm featuring entertainer Chad Rivette. Also Saturday afternoon at approximately 1 pm to 5 pm, Shaft Bottom Boys and Gladys McEirea perform. Aimee Leonard entertains at approximately 6:30-7 pm.
- The Magic Dragon's Fun Centre is open Saturday, from 10 am-3 pm behind the amphitheatre. Paint a pig, learn the art of Chinese drawing and bring home a unique balloon animal.
- Mad Science will

thrill children with erupting volcanoes and balloon rocket races between 10 am and 3 pm. •New this year is the Climb "N" Fun 24 foot rock wall tower which will be located in the concessions area. There are four different climbing routes ranging from easy to difficult. •Entertainment with Tuba Boy, members of the Chinese Cultural Association and Laurentian Pipe Band will also occur at the Katherine Bell Gazebo and at the Main Beach areas.

The surveys will be ready on July 13 and close on July 30. The surveys are anonymous and require only a few minutes to complete. There is also a ballot system where participants could win \$100 for simply completing the survey.

The SDBF is moving to a new home, the proposed \$6 million Northern Aquatic Centre, on the shores of Lake Ramsey at the public boat launch with the Sudbury Canoe Club (SCC) and the Sudbury Rowing Club (SRC).

Currently, all three share a small building on Elizabeth Street.

"Our problem, like the problem faced by the SCC and the SRC is we can't grow on this site," said Smith. "We need to move to grow. All three of us are experiencing an increase in the number of participants and boats. There's no place to store all the boats and equipment."

In 2000, the SDBF featured 62 boats. In 2003, the event attracted 156 teams. This year, the festival has 86 teams registered as of Thursday.

"This year, the number of competitive boats from out-of-town is up...to 22," said Smith. "We're delighted with the calibre of teams coming to Sudbury. They know it's a great event. They're strong teams and

they travel the province looking for strong competition.”

The SDBF has provided more than \$1 million for not-for-profit groups.

“The SDBF doesn't just help out the charities, it helps the entire community overall,” said Michael Singbush, executive director of the Sudbury Regional Hospital Foundation, who received profits from the festival the first four years. “We got almost \$600,000 and we bought much needed equipment and saved more lives. It had a major impact on our foundation and still does.”

It's also been a big help in the corporate world, where a lot of teams come from.

Brian Hawdon, a project and cost accountant with Mansour Mining and paddler with the company's dragon boat squad, has seen an uplifting environment around the workplace.

“Being part of this...it gives you a different place to engage with co-workers,” said Hawdon. “It creates team unity in the workplace. It makes you proud of your company and your co-workers, who become your teammates. We've seen the benefits in the moral of the people at work.”

The SDBF is also looking for volunteers to assist in a variety of capacities on July 14. Anyone interested can call 671-6067.