

## **April 25<sup>th</sup> 2011:**

The Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce in conjunction with our local Dragon Boat Club, the Charlotte Harbor Paddlers, attracted over 3000 visitors to our City on Saturday as they hosted Punta Gorda's First Annual Dragon Boat Festival in Laishley Park. Club teams travelled from Miami, Tampa and The Villages to participate as well as twenty-five community teams made up of local entities. The event was so successful and well received, that the Chamber and Charlotte Harbor Paddlers are set to make this an annual event, with next year's date already slated for April 14<sup>th</sup> 2012. The Captain of the Club Division trophy from the Tampa Tarpons was first to congratulate Punta Gorda on what he described as " simply the best first festival ever. Punta Gorda welcomed us. We love it, the venue, the people and we'll be back to defend our title!"

With thirty-one teams in the water, there were nearly 700 competitors and a huge crowd on shore cheering them on. Each team paddled three times in three separate races and the overall results were as follows:

The Division A Championship was won by the Tampa Tarpons with a time of 1.40.31. Silver medalists were the Dragon Slayers of Miami with a time of 1.40.87 and bronze medalists, also from Miami, was Your Mom with a time of 1.41.50. With a great effort, our local team, the Draggin' Dragons from the Charlotte Harbor Paddlers pulled off a very respectable fourth position with a time of 1.43.13. The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> place finishers were the two teams from The Villages, who were later found to be enjoying the "bars" of Punta Gorda.

The Division B Championship Final was won by the Fantastic Fitness Fanatics of the Punta Gorda Club with a time of 1.51.59. The pressure on the Punta Gorda Club to win was very evident from the very beginning as their pride as fitness gurus was at stake. They stretched and strutted all day, as they savored their victory by lifting the Community Team trophy high at the awards' ceremony. Excellent performances by the Cape Island Dragons of Cape Coral/Pine Island with a time of 1.53.58 and the Life Care Dragon Flyz from the Life Care center of Punta Gorda with a time of 1.55.33 made the Punta Gorda Club's race a very tight one.

The Division C Championship was won by the Harbor Dragon Slayers of Re/Max Harbor Realty, with the Punta Gorda Chamber's Longwei Wongwei and Harbor Dragons Two of the Charlotte Harbor Yacht Club putting the pressure on.

The Raging Bulls of Merrill Lynch won their division as did the Punta Gorda Chamber's Wongwei Longwei. Congratulations to them all.

The first heat also qualified teams for a community award and those winners were:

1. Community Division Cup – Maple Leaf Puffin Dragons Red
2. Health & Wellness Division Cup – Peaceful Warriors
3. Fitness & Activity Division Cup – Cape Island Dragons
4. Grow Punta Gorda Cup – Harbor Dragon Slayers