

## **Dragon Boat Racing at the Fair!**

**Row for fun, fitness and funds for your favourite charity.....**

**Dragon Boat Racing** at the Fair ticks all those boxes. It arrived at the Fair in 2006 and in those 10 years it has grown. In 2016 twenty teams competed in Adult, Youth and the Most Entertaining categories. Most teams entering raise significant funds for a charity of their choice (last year combined total of in excess of £9,000 was raised by teams themselves). Many of the teams have taken part for years – some have told the Fair’s Committee what the event means to them.

### **The Hub Yeovil – Clive Tuck**

The Dragon Boat Racing is firmly etched in The Hub's annual calendar of fundraising events. As a small charity that supports the employment and independence of vulnerable and disabled people the £1,200- £1,500 that we are able to raise through family, friends and corporate sponsorship goes a long way. Dragon Boat Racing at Sherborne Castle Country Fair signals the start of fund-raising season for The Hub. All of our “trainees” are given opportunities to come along and take part. For many this is about rowing in a team blended with staff and family members, but for others it’s about bringing along the hot and cold drinks, snacks and dry towels all of which are much needed. As important as the rowing is the sense of “family” we have on the day where we are regularly supported in all ways by parents, carers and siblings all keen to see how well we do, despite the low expectations we have of ever out-rowing the Sea Cadets and the like!

### **Dorset Youth Association (DYA) – Dave Thompson, Director**

DYA is one of the oldest youth organisations in Dorset and has been providing services for children and young people continually since 1943.

Like many organisations we are finding it really difficult to raise the money to provide services and to support a network of youth groups and nearly 500 volunteers. This is the most difficult financial period we have experienced and to put this in context last year saw the closure of the National Youth CVS, South West Regional Youth Work Unit, our sister Association which covered Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and more locally Toby’s Advice Centre in Shaftesbury and the former Runaway Support Service based in Sturminster Newton. Larger national and local charities have reduced funding to offer as a result of the low Bank of England base rate which has impacted on investments. Local Authorities have experienced cuts of approximately 33% since 2010 and sadly earlier this year Dorset County Council decided to cease funding to provide youth centres which resulted in a cut of £2.2 million.

Many communities have come to the rescue of Youth Centres and volunteer management committees are now running services throughout Dorset supported by DYA. This has increased our workload and its complexity as these new organisations are setting up as charities, employing staff and adding to the number of groups locally who are desperately trying to raise money to support young people.

Dorset is a beautiful county and we are very proud of it, but it is not without problems for young people and more so if they need help. Young people tell us that they are under increased pressure, it is extremely difficult for them to find and be able to afford accommodation, average wages are low, and transport networks are extremely poor, access to mental health services in

some wards are amongst the worst in the country and official statistics now tell us that one of the wards in Dorset has the highest levels of child poverty in the Country.

For many charities the support offered by the Sherborne Castle Country Fair Committee and the funds raised at the annual Country Fair are essential for their very survival. The funding is not restricted or offered to meet someone else's agenda as is the case with many funds. Members of the Country Fair Committee listen to the needs of local organisations and provide funding to help, for which we are very grateful.

The Country Fair itself is an ideal time for us as a small, friendly charity to bring together Trustees, staff, volunteers, young people and our families and our focus for the day is the annual Dragon Boat Race. We are frequently able to boast the widest age range within a Dragon Boat team and are constantly striving to improve our times year on year to reach the final!

### **A-Stars**

Since 2014 the A-Stars team have participated in the Dragon Boat Racing at the Fair. Established in 2006 our charity provides a family-based support group for children across Dorset with Asperger's or an Autism Spectrum Condition. The first year we entered a team we did so with some trepidation but after the very first race we were hooked! Our yearly racing provides A-Stars with a critical lifeline. The money the Show donates to us and the sponsorship we raise from the Dragon Boat Racing enables us to provide this service, the only one of its kind in Dorset. It helps pay for rent, specialist teachers, the library, games and supported trips out for the children. Our thanks go to our supporters, parents, grandparents, the siblings, the aunts and uncles, the teenagers and friends who man the boat and cheer from the bank. Also our thanks go to all the volunteers who work so hard to make the May Bank Holiday at the Sherborne Castle Country Fair such a success.

### **Julia's House**

Penny Mogg has been raising funds for the amazing charity Julia's House for six years by getting together teams of rowers. Penny says: the first year we entered the Dragon Boats Racing at the Fair, the oldest member of the team was 75 and the whole of our village supported our local WI rowing in the event. We raised £5,000, despite the really awful weather! Since then I have organised and found eclectic teams including family members, Scouts and their families and friends. We do not practice together and often they do not know each other. The magic of this event is, at the end of the day they are a real team, have enjoyed it despite weather or any other obstacles. This year we even had a parent of a child being supported by Julia's House, how good is that!

Penny says: I could write a short book about each of the Dragon Boat Races I have organised over the years, the laughter, the camaraderie, finding new friendships, getting wet, and raising money for an amazing cause. I would encourage everyone to have a go; until you have tried you will never know the fun, the absolute commitment to do your best, and the feeling that you have done something so worthwhile is wonderful.

The Dragon Boat Racing attracts teams from local pubs, companies, Army, Sea Cadets, Scouts, Young Farmers' Clubs and schools.

To enter just go to the website [www.sherbornecountryfair.co.uk](http://www.sherbornecountryfair.co.uk) to complete an online form, email [info@sherbornecountryfair.com](mailto:info@sherbornecountryfair.com) or telephone **01749 814041**.