



The Mission of Silver Lining Foundation is to help western Montana women diagnosed with breast cancer achieve and maintain wellness of mind, body and spirit through emotional support, education, and physical activity.

How it all started: In the spring of 2015, a small group of “sisters” began gathering to support each other in the aftermath of breast cancer treatment. A few of us had met during chemo, others were referred by friends. It evolved very organically. We were brought together by the common experience of being in the trenches and trying to decipher how to move forward after the “battle”; post-surgery, post-chemo, post-radiation, post-the life that we used to know. Our group has grown to over 150 members who meet once a month for educational gatherings and weekly for physical training. Our gatherings include listening to educational speakers, sharing meals and focusing on moving forward with healthful habits that can significantly reduce the risk of recurrence—clean eating, regular exercise, practicing mindfulness, embracing nurturing relationships and.....



DRAGON BOAT RACING!

Why Dragon Boating? Dragon boat racing originated in China over 2000 years ago and is recognized as an international competitive sport. In 1996, an amazing Canadian physician, Dr. Don McKenzie, published a paper that challenged the long-held medical belief that vigorous, upper-body exercise would lead to lymphedema in women who were at risk due to treatments for breast cancer. That study supported the hypothesis that dragon boat paddling is SAFE for women recovering from conventional breast cancer therapies and also precipitated the movement of dragon boating as a complementary exercise therapy by cancer survivors. From that advent of the world’s first breast cancer survivor dragon boat team in 1996, there are now more than 200 breast cancer dragon boat teams worldwide. We were honored to have Dr. McKenzie as our guest speaker at our first annual Silver Lining September Fling fundraiser this year in Lakeside at the Montana Dragon Boat Festival. In 2018, the Silver Lining Dragon Boat team competed in both Canada and the US. We are also the first team from Montana to be a member of the International Breast Cancer Paddlers Commission, an organization that encourages dragon boating as post-operative rehabilitation for survivors.

How we roll: We have formed strictly by word of mouth, through friends, family and providers. We meet once a month at the Loft and feature educational speakers (integrative medicine, surgeons, acupuncturists, physical therapists, health coaches, mindfulness/breath work, oncologists, nutritionists, etc). This casual comfortable setting provides an easy non-intimidating platform for much dialogue regarding many facets of survivorship. We come from a variety of socio-economic, political and religious backgrounds. The beauty of our sisterhood is that none of these are relevant to our friendship. Every one of us are keenly aware that every day is a GIFT.

Social Media: We have two FB pages, a public Silver Lining Foundation page and a closed FB page that is only for survivors. The closed account is a safe place for all to discuss whatever might be on their minds and for all to give comfort, guidance and non-judgmental love. We also have a website that was created by one of our survivors, www.silverliningmt.org.

Physical Activities: Weekly Monday afternoon hikes, 1-2x/week strength training with Rankin Fitness at the Peak and with Momentum Athletic Training, local running events, dragon boat camp this April in Florida and during the summer months, we drive every week up to the north end of Flathead Lake for dragon boat practice. Our coach resides there and that’s where we rent the Flathead team’s dragon boats. It is our hope to train this next summer on Salmon Lake—much closer to home.

Wish List/Expenses: It is our goal to purchase our own boat this year. We are close to reaching our goal (through various fundraisers) but there are many extraneous expenses (PFD’s, paddles, registration fees, travel expenses, insurance, uniforms and boat trailer). Unfortunately, this is a “pay to play” sport. Most of us self-fund but we want to make this accessible to ALL.

Since that first gathering just a few years ago, our Silver Lining numbers are growing all too quickly. In this past year, we have lost 3 of our sisters, one of whom was one of our founding members. We know this is the reality of this disease but we also realize that our sisterhood is the “Silver Lining”and our camaraderie and friendship has become as vital as air. We firmly embrace the philosophy that EXERCISE IS MEDICINE and we have found that dragon boat racing allows us the opportunity to continue to nurture the athlete in each of us and to appreciate the value of working together toward a common goal.



WATCH OUR VIDEO: