

DragonFlies Win Gold in Portland

By Cashauna Hill

On September 8 and 9, the OWLS DragonFlies capped off an exceptional local race season with a first-place finish in the Dragon Sports USA Portland Dragon Boat races. After winning gold at Vancouver, Washington, (the DragonFlies' first gold since 2001), the 'Flies took bronze in their division at races in Victoria, Canada (at a venue with no women's-only bracket). By the time the Portland races rolled around, the 'Flies were in fine racing form.

In the first race on September 8, the 'Flies finished third, as determined by a photo-finish. The next race was the final qualifier and established the roster for the Competitive and Challenger divisions. To make the Competitive Division (the top four teams), the 'Flies needed to place first or second in that Saturday afternoon race. Although the DragonFlies started well behind the other boats, they managed to overcome the deficit and

take a second-place finish, placing them as the bottom seed in Sunday morning's semifinal match in the Competitive Division. (And thus the 'Flies did not need to accept the race officials' offer to rerun the Saturday afternoon race after the team won its protest.) On Sunday morning, the team dug in and finished second in the semifinal race.

By the time set for the final women's race on Sunday afternoon, the winds were strong and the water choppy. As with most of Sunday's races, the conditions were not conducive to an even start. The 'Flies, though, won the race, beating the second-place team by more than six seconds! The victory would prove short-lived, however, as one of the teams protested the start, and the other teams voted to do the race over.

The 'Flies trudged back down to the dock, trying to remain upbeat and determined to win. After the team loaded

into the boat, 'Flies co-captain Kristin Sterling noticed a dog near the finish line. The dog appeared to be in trouble, so the team decided to guide her back to shore. After saving Roxy, the 'Flies joined the other teams at the start line. The buzzer sounded, and the teams were off! The 'Flies proved their mettle and won again, a perfect end to the 2007 local race season.

OWLS members interested in joining a winning, dog-rescuing dragon boat team should contact co-captains Heather Brann at branns@earthlink.net or Kristin Sterling at kristinsterning@gmail.com. The 'Flies welcome anyone who can commit to the hard work that racing requires. The 'Flies have received an amazing outpouring of support and sponsorships, for which we are grateful. Thank you, all.

Cashauna Hill, a judicial clerk for Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge Ronald Cinniger, is on the OWLS Board.

Report Examines Exodus of Women from Law Firms

If you work for a firm, you might be asking: do flexible work arrangements reduce the costs associated with attrition? That is one question the report does not answer directly. And, unfortunately, none of the firms systematically collect those data. It is clear, though, that flexibility lowers attrition rates.

In summary, the report concludes that law firms are not safe places for women to work, with regard to the firms' effects on women's careers. Women are penalized for working shortened days to spend time with children and for leaving the practice of law for a few years to care for young children. Women are also much less likely to be promoted to partner than men.

What Can Firms Do?

What makes establishing flexibility as "normal" so difficult? Changing the norm requires a cultural change—not just in the legal profession, but much more broadly. For example, the responsibility for child/family care must be shared more widely; caring for family must be viewed by all social institutions as acceptable; schools must consider the effect schedules have on parents and teachers, and tax policies must be considered.

There are, however, specific things that law firms can do address attrition and satisfaction for both men and women who want flexible work

arrangements and reduced schedules, including these:

- ◆ Prohibit the imposition of penalties for reduced schedules and flexible arrangements. In other words, the firm should continue to assign important cases to people on reduced schedules, keep them on partnership track, apply policies consistently, etc.
- ◆ Change the culture—view individuals on reduced or flex schedules as just as valuable as any other member of the firm.
- ◆ Embrace flexibility rather than hiding it or keeping it quiet, and end the practice of saying that the firm embraces reduced schedules when it also has subtle ways of discouraging them. The surveys highlight two strategies:

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a parallel work-family strategy and an episodic life-cycle strategy. Some women surveyed have adopted the first strategy, adjusting their work hours and work locations to satisfy the needs of children. Being able to adjust hours, work from home, etc. can allow enough flexibility to care for children without negative consequences on advancement opportunities. The second strategy allows women to leave and re-enter the practice of law, thereby responding to a woman's long-term career ambitions.

What is your firm doing to address these issues?

Terri Kraemer, RN JD, is a director with Deloitte & Touche. You can find the study online at <http://web.mit.edu/workplace-center/>.



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