

June 9, 2018

MCHD Cannon Team marks second anniversary

MOBILE, Alabama — The Mobile County Health Department’s Cannon Team reached a major milestone on Saturday. It was two years ago that the squad debuted its own cannon during the Dragon Boat Race at USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park.

It was in 2016 that Dr. Bernard H. Eichold II, Health Officer for Mobile County, started an initiative called “Declaring War on Physical Inactivity.” He points out that Alabama has one of the highest percentages of obesity in America.

In an effort to encourage local residents to go outside and enjoy our beautiful surroundings while exercising, Dr. Eichold arranged to borrow a Civil War re-enactment cannon to serve as the “starting gun” for the Azalea Trail Run that year. The response was so positive that Dr. Eichold acquired funds to purchase our own weapon to battle obesity.

The Lyle Line-Throwing Cannon, which has a 2.5-inch-diameter barrel, was manufactured in the early 1900s by Coston. It is not a replica, reproduction or toy. The cannon was designed to fire a projectile attached to a rope to a boat or a victim in distress. Now it used to inspire those seeking a healthier lifestyle.

The Dragon Boat Race raises money for the Fuse Project, which supports numerous causes promoting health, fitness, education and social responsibility of local children in Mobile and Baldwin counties. At the start of Saturday’s races, organizers said they were very close to reaching this year’s goal of \$250,000.

The traditional Hong Kong-style dragon boats are 46-feet long, with 10 seats for 20 people. A seat in front of the first two paddlers holds a drummer. A steerer guides the boat with the oar in back. Teams compete in numerous races to determine the overall champion.

A group of MCHD employees has been trained to safely use the cannon. Present on Saturday with Dr. Eichold were James Currie, Jerry Folse, Edward Franklin and Barbara Gibbs. Also providing assistance were Guy, Joseph and John Gibbs.

Any other groups interested in having the MCHD Cannon Team attend their event should contact the Communications Office by calling 251-690-8823 or via email at mbryant@mchd.org.

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