

Freedom on the River

THE STORY OF THE BAYADA REGATTA

On a warm summer day in 1981, a small group of rowers gathered by the banks of the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The boats were prepared. The oars were set. Nine rowers prepared to race. Up until now, this may seem like the story of just another rowing race. But on that summer day in 1981—when the first rowers launched and the race began—history was made. Because these rowers were no ordinary athletes—they were disabled rowers participating in the first Bayada Regatta, one of the first adaptive rowing competitions in the United States.

Since that first race more than two decades ago, the Bayada Regatta has grown steadily—becoming one of the largest adaptive rowing events in the world. Competitors from across the country—and from as far away as Europe and Africa—have competed in a variety of adaptive rowing events in the past.

THE ATHLETES

The heart and soul of the Bayada Regatta are the athletes themselves. Rowers may have a number of disabilities, including blindness, visual impairment, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, post polio problems, paraplegia, or quadriplegia. Using single and double Alden Ocean Shells that have been adapted for stability, the athletes competing in the Bayada Regatta, train throughout the year to prepare for the event. For the 2007 Regatta, rowers—classified according to their abilities, age, and experience—will compete in mixed and single events designed for novice, veteran, and youth rowers. For many of the athletes, training for and competing in the Bayada Regatta is one of the highlights of their year.



THE SPONSOR

Throughout its 26-year history, the Bayada Regatta has been solely sponsored by Bayada Nurses—an independently owned home health care agency that employs more than 10,000 nurses, home health aides, and therapists working from more than 140 offices in 16



states. “The strong determination, energy, endurance, pride, and self-esteem of all of the rowers make for a triumphant day,” says Mark Baiada, president of Bayada Nurses. “We are committed to celebrating, supporting, and promoting the rowing program for the disabled.”

THE HOST CLUB

The Philadelphia Rowing Program for the Disabled (PRPD) is the host club for the Bayada Regatta and trains many of the competing athletes at its facilities on the Schuylkill River. Staffed by volunteer instructors and helpers that include Registered Nurses (RNs), Physical Therapists (PTs), and Occupational Therapists (OTs), PRPD provides recreational and competitive rowing opportunities for the physically disabled and has been a leader in the movement to make the sport of rowing available to everyone. The PRPD also worked with the U.S. Olympic Committee to list the Bayada Regatta on the organization’s National Sports Information List in the area of Handicapped Sports Activities.

THE 2007 BAYADA REGATTA

This year’s Bayada Regatta will take place Saturday, September 8, from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. As always, the event takes place in Philadelphia on the Schuylkill River near the Strawberry Mansion Bridge on Kelly Drive (East River Drive). Admission is free, and the event will feature something for all ages, including music, clowns, balloons, and complimentary soft drinks and pretzels. As in years past, the event is staffed entirely by volunteers.

