

Fifty-two Canoeists and Kayakers Raise \$4,522 for the American Cancer Society in Roe Jan Race

Fifty-two competitors, plus a few untimed paddlers, braved the Roeliff Jansen Kill on Saturday for the third annual Roe Jan Canoe Race, collectively raising \$4,522 for the American Cancer Society.

Thunderstorms in the early forecasts held off and the course of the race on a hot spring Saturday flowed and cascaded for approximately 14 miles, from just below Elizaville Falls to the Roe Jan Creek Boat Club at the mouth of the stream in Linlithgo.

Not everyone began at Elizaville Falls, however, and not everyone made it to the finish line—or the halfway. One canoe didn't survive the first half. Another canoe team opted to stop racing at the halfway point at Bingham's Mills. And a few others helped raise money but decided to begin at Bingham's Mills.

Competitors racing the entire course portaged around three tree blockages and, with the help of a truck driven by Collin Brown of Columbia Tree Care, portaged around the former mill site at Bingham's Mills, where volunteers and property owners hosted a halfway-point barbecue to ensure no racers began the second-half—the one with many more sets of rapids—malnourished.

The canoe carrying John Phelan and Jamie Larson became pinned against a large rock at the final major rapid of the race, near where Route 9G crosses the stream. The canoe, which had to be abandoned after the current crushed the vessel against the obstacle until the boat broke almost completely in two, did not survive the race. "It was a textbook wrap," Phelan said, while he and Larson stood on a dry boulder in the stream minutes after the incident. The two made it to the boat club celebration, where they reunited with their salvaged vessel.

Phelan later said he thinks the canoe pieces will become supports for a bookcase or shelf in his workshop.

"It was that canoe's third time in the race with me," he said. "I was at least the third owner and from its constructions I figure that it was built in the '80s or early '90s. So, needless to say, it lived a good long life, but that had to come to an end sometime."

Many racers sought sponsors to donate to the cause, while competitors who did not seek sponsors were encouraged to donate \$25 at the start. The top fundraisers were Adam Crawford and Shawn Crawford, who raised \$1,250; Rob Schroepel, who raised \$750; and Craig Dombrowski and Alex Jennings, who raised \$665. In all, the more than \$4,500 raised in the 2017 race nearly matched the combined total raised in the 2015 and 2016 races.

Joe Hoffman and Shane Johnson, who have paired up on the stream many times over the years, including in earlier incarnations of the race, came in first place for canoe teams, beating the second place finishers by exactly a minute, with a time of 2 hours, 56 minutes and 23 seconds. Among kayakers, Henry Haddad placed first with a time of 2 hours, 40 minutes and one second.

First-place finishers received trophies donated by the Columbia County Deputy Sheriff's Benevolent Association.

Overall, racers maneuvered 40 boats—12 canoes and 28 kayaks—down the stream. Among the more than fifty racers was the first-known canine competitor, who bravely co-piloted most of the course but was sent home at Dale's Bridge after the dog began jumping into every rapid.

The race was organized by a committee of the Roe Jan Creek Boat Club. The organizers wish to thank the land-owners who graciously allowed access to racers Saturday at portage and put-in spots, as well as all who volunteered to record times, cook at the halfway point, help with parking and all who assisted in clearing more than a dozen tree blockages prior to the race. Organizers also thank members of the boat club who hosted a well-attended open-house potluck overlooking the finish line and all competitors who raced and all who donated to perhaps get humanity slightly ever-closer in paddling toward a cure.

Anyone who would like to volunteer for next year's race may email roejanrace@gmail.com.

Top Fund-Raisers

Adam Crawford & Shawn Crawford—\$1,250
Rob Schroepel—\$750
Craig Dombrowski & Alex Jennings—\$665
Chris Hoilund—\$205

Top Canoe Team Finishers

1st Place: Joe Hoffman & Shane Johnson—2:56:23
2nd Place: Brad Fix & Ryan Kastner—2:57:23
3rd Place: Andrew Burka & Bobby Burka—3:07:43
4th Place: Craig Dombrowski & Alex Jennings—3:34:39
5th Place: Rich Coons & William Saltis—3:35:06

Top Kayak Finishers

1st Place: Henry Haddad—2:40:01
2nd Place: Kenneth Hale—2:51:42
3rd Place: Blake Hale—2:52:13
4th Place: Gregory Kline—3:04:08
5th Place: Robert Bruggeman—3:04:33