

# Press Release



13<sup>th</sup> March 2009

## DIANE MODAHL LAUNCHES 2009 TWO CITIES BOAT RACE

Former Olympic athlete Diane Modahl visited Salford Quays this week to officially launch the 2009 Two Cities Boat Race, which takes place on **Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May**.

Rowers from the Universities of Manchester and Salford joined Diane on the quayside on Wednesday (11<sup>th</sup> March) to discuss the art of rowing and share sporting knowledge before launching their boats onto the water to mark this year's rowing event.

Speaking at the launch, Manchester born Diane said:

" It's wonderful to spend time with such committed young athletes. The students are really determined and dedicated to their sport, so it's definitely going to be a nail biting event this year. I'll be there cheering them on! "

Money raised during the 2009 race will be donated to SPARKS, the children's medical research charity. On Wednesday, Diane presented SPARKS representatives with a £4k cheque raised during last year's race. A family which has benefited from the charity's funding was also present at the launch, parents Heidi and James Ribchester and their fourteen-week-old baby daughter Chloe.

Heidi, who was diagnosed with pre-eclampsia during her pregnancy, said:

" I would like to say a massive thank you to SPARKS for their funding of past and future research into pre-eclampsia because any help or information we can gain from research can only go to help the care and treatment of any future cases. I would also like to thank St Mary's Hospital for all of their efforts and the care of Chloe, especially on the neonatal unit when she was on a ventilator for two weeks.

As a midwife, I deal with women who have suffered, or are suffering, from pre-eclampsia and it is very different to be in that situation yourself. It is a very scary and distressing time worrying about your own health and that of your baby. I had no symptoms except a slightly puffy face and it was thanks to my friend who is also a midwife that it was diagnosed so quickly."



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Chloe's father James added:

" Chloe was twelve weeks premature because Heidi suffered from pre-eclampsia during her pregnancy. Knowing that there is such great research work going on behind the scenes brings a lot of peace to parents like us. The SPARKS research team are doing a great job. It's a very worthwhile cause and I'm delighted that the Two Cities Boat Race is supporting the charity again this year."

The rowers are now in full training for the event in May, which involves a combination of rigorous land training, weight training and regular water sessions.

The crews will compete along the traditional River Irwell course, which starts at Sam Platts Pub and finishes at the Lowry Bridge. The event is now recognised as one of the top events in the region's sporting calendar and hundreds of spectators are expected to line Salford quays to watch the fiercely contested spectacle.

The Universities of Manchester and Salford are challenging local businesses to do battle in the fast and furious dragon boat contest during the morning of the Two Cities Boat Race. Organisers are appealing to North West companies to enter 17-person teams, with money from the event being donated to SPARKS and the two university boat clubs.

It's a fun day for everybody, providing a festive atmosphere along the quayside with food, drink and live entertainment throughout the day. Admission is free.

Ends

For further information about the event please visit

[www.twocitiesboatrace.co.uk](http://www.twocitiesboatrace.co.uk)

If you are interested in taking part in the Dragon Boat Racing please contact Jan Seymour at Salford University 0161 295 6287 / [j.m.seymour@salford.ac.uk](mailto:j.m.seymour@salford.ac.uk)



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