

Oklahoma Women Row in Historic Vogalonga Regatta Held in Venice, Italy With One Goal in Mind: Row the World

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[/EINPresswire.com/](http://EINPresswire.com/) -- Two ambitious rowing amateurs from Oklahoma City, Mary Frates and Debra Murray, President of BLUESPRING Wellness, have returned to Oklahoma from Europe after the adventure of a lifetime: rowing in the 43rd annual Vogalonga Regatta in Venice, Italy, on June 4th, 2017.

This annual Venetian boat race welcomed thousands of rowers from Italy and across the world. There were a record number of 5600 participants in 1500 boats of all types; kayaks, dragon boats, gondolas and racing shells.

The race began in Bacino San Marco, the gateway to the Grand Canal from the Venetian Lagoon. From there all of the boats entered the open waters of the Lagoon and wound through the canals of the islands of Murano and Burano and after 30 km (almost 19 miles) reentered Venice via the Cannaregio Canal, the northern entrance to the Grand Canal.

At the finish line, all participants received medals and certificates from judges on a barge in the Grand Canal.

The Vogalonga is a fun race with a serious purpose: to educate people on the fragile state of Venice, a unique city that has long been threatened by rising waters and waves caused by the influx of motorboats that damage the lagoon ecosystem and ancient Venetian buildings. Only boats without motors can participate in the race.

Frates and Murray rowed with two experienced rowers from England, Nettie Cox and Cassie White,



Debra Murray and Mary Frates traveled to Italy to row in the 43rd annual Vogalonga Regatta in Venice.



Nettie Cox, Debra Murray, Mary Frates, and Cassie White rowing through Venice, Italy in the 43rd annual Vogalonga Regatta along with their Venetian coxswain.

members of the Nottingham Rowing Club. The British women are former rowers who rowed in the prestigious Henley Women's Regatta in the UK.

The foursome, aided by a Venetian coxswain who navigated the course, rowed the Vogalonga in an open water quad. To honor the festive spirit of the race, they wore matching outfits with plumed masks atop baseball hats. There were not many all-women teams in the race; consequently, their team received enthusiastic applause and spirited cheers from spectators gathered on the embankments along canals in Murano and Venice.

The two Oklahomans started their rowing training in Oklahoma City at the Oklahoma City Boathouse. They attended a rowing camp at the Florida Rowing Center in Wellington, Florida and practiced for the Vogalonga at a boat club in San Miniato, Italy.

A highlight of their practice in Italy was a long row on the Arno River in an Italian Fillippi sculling shell launched from the Società Canottieri Firenze, a boat club located on the lower level of the Uffizi Museum in Florence.

Frates and Murray are members of the International Women's Forum, a world-wide organization that educates its members about global issues important to women and women's rights. IWF sponsors two conferences annually: one in the United States in the Fall and the other abroad in the Spring.

The Oklahomans are planning to row with Houston rowers in October and with members of the Melbourne Rowing Club in Australia in May, 2018.

Murray, inspired by her company BLUESPRING Wellness, an Oklahoma-based provider of pure and natural products that promotes balanced health and wellness, started rowing because it was a physically and mentally challenging workout. She also wanted to explore safe and interesting physical activities that could help her customers.

"The Vogalonga was a big goal for Mary and me. We trained hard but being relatively new to rowing, we arrived in Venice with trepidation about our skills and staying power," Murray said, "Tears came to my eyes as we turned into the Cannaregio Canal with all those people cheering us on to the finish line in the Grand Canal."

Frates, President of the Oklahoma Chapter of the International Women's Forum, was grateful that they were able to complete the race. "To be honest, we were a bit ambitious and naive; the Vogalonga was a real stretch for our rowing skills and the course was much longer than we had ever rowed. After five and one-half hours of hard rowing, we were really ready to get out of that boat," she said.

Both Murray and Frates credit the Oklahoma City Boathouse Foundation for getting them started in a sport they both love and plan to pursue on their travels.

In September, they rowed with the Grand Rapids Michigan Rowing Club before traveling to Sarasota, Florida to join leaders of the Oklahoma City Boathouse Foundation in viewing the 2017 World Rowing Championships, September 24-October 1.

"Oklahoma City is very fortunate to have this outstanding organization and boathouses with top coaches here on the Oklahoma River. Everyone we talk to in every place we visit is amazed when they learn about these extraordinary resources here in Oklahoma City," they said.

About BLUESPRING: BLUESPRING International is a comprehensive health and wellness company based in Oklahoma City, OK. specializing in natural pain relief creams, nutritional supplements and a variety of natural facial and hair care. Quality ingredients, outstanding customer service, and guaranteed results all underscore BLUESPRING's commitment to innovation and on-going

improvements. With free downloads on health information and resources, BLUESPRING's balanced health and wellness approach truly helps their customers 'rejuvenate, replenish, refresh and revive.' BLUESPRING is a certified woman-owned business. To learn more about BLUESPRING and their products, please visit www.bluespringwellness.com.

About Oklahoma City Boathouse Foundation: The Oklahoma City Boathouse Foundation's mission is to develop and operate facilities and programs to improve the quality of life in Oklahoma City, pursue the highest goals of sports and fitness, attract diverse involvement in the boathouses and related events that generate a positive public image and economic opportunity, and promote the use and development of the Oklahoma River as a world-class urban aquatic venue. For more information www.boathousedistrict.org/okc-boathouse-foundation/.

About The Florida Rowing Center: The Florida Rowing Center, located near Palm Beach, Florida was established in 1985 and serves to instruct people of all skill levels with experienced coaches who work to refine your sculling techniques and help promote a healthy lifestyle. The center has the newest, top-of-the-line boats for training in the placid waters of Lake Wellington. For more information on The Florida Rowing Center visit www.floridarowingcenter.com.

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