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**qboro**  
 ARTS, CULTURE & LIVING



# ENTER THE DRAGONS

*Boat race festival roars back into Flushing Meadows*

by Sophie Krichevsky

One of Flushing's largest and most-anticipated annual events will celebrate its 30th year next weekend: the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival New York. Held at Flushing Meadows Corona Park, programming will kick off at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, July 30, and run through 4 p.m. Sunday.

While there are several different origin stories behind the Dragon Boat Festival, the most common one says that it is meant to honor the death of Qu Yuan, a poet, minister and high political officer who was exiled during the Zhou dynasty for his opposition to the state's military alliance. After 28 years in exile, he drowned himself in the Miluo River. His supporters attempted to rescue him and searched for his body in the river, but it was never found.

Though last year was technically the 30th year of the Queens event, David Archer, the marketing director for the festival, explained that because last year's programming was on a smaller scale due to Covid-19, the festival chose to celebrate the milestone this year.

It's fitting, then, that two of the festival's three goals this year are to work toward the borough's and the city's economic recovery and to promote healing physically and mentally from Covid.

Following a performance from the Chinese Music Ensemble of New York, the festival will hold its opening ceremonies at 11:30 a.m. Saturday. The dragon dance, which will be led — for the first time — by the Wan Chi Ming Hung Gar Institute, will be front and center. Elected officials and other area VIPs will be invited to “dot the eye” of the dragon, which marks the festival's official beginning.

“It's a traditional thing,” Archer said. “It's a blessing for the folks that get to do it, and an opportunity to awaken the dragon and get everything started for the festival.”

Approximately 150 teams will hit the water next weekend as they compete on Meadow Lake, according to Henry Wan, who chairs the event. Though many are corporate teams (often from one of the

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# Dragon Boat Festival to make fierce return

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companies sponsoring the event), there are plenty of community-based ones, as well.

The boats themselves are a sight to see. Each craft, which is equipped to hold 20 people, weighs about a ton and features the head of a dragon in the front and its tail in the back. The festive, colorful vessels are custom-made by craftsmen in Hong Kong.

But the festivities will include much more than the dragon boat races themselves:

Numerous community performance artists and groups will take the stage. Those include violinist Daisy Joplin and the Shaolin Martial Artists, the latter of whom have been a big hit in years past.

Archer is particularly excited for young rapper Cameron Sean to perform; though he's not from Queens, his song "Please Don't Hate!" fits in perfectly with the festival's third goal, which is to spread awareness about anti-Asian hate. "His song ... it's really fabulous," Archer said. "We're just really excited to have him."

Area nonprofits and community-based organizations are also offering traditional Chinese arts and crafts activities for the festival's younger attendees.

While the event and its many attributes are free and open to the public, the one exception is the food. Attendees are in for a treat: Several food trucks will be on-site at the festival, including a halal truck, one from Kim's Korean BBQ and another from Cousins Lobster, all the way from Maine.

Due to the limited amount of parking at Flushing Meadows Corona Park, guests are highly encouraged to take the No. 7 train to the Mets-Willets Point stop. The Metropolitan



**Above, one drummer leads the way for his team as his crew paddles in one boat race. At right, the dragon makes its appearance at a previous year's opening ceremony. On the cover: Another dragon boat glides across Meadow Lake.**

PHOTOS BY RICK MAIMAN / FILE

tan Transportation Authority is providing free shuttle buses from the train to the festivities.



## Crossword Answers

S	A	V		S	T	R		O	S	A	V	S
A	N	A		P	S	E		D	A	H	E	H
N	E	D		S	I	L		P	A	N	N	A
A	P	E		A	B	R		U				
R	O			A	U	A		E	Z	U	S	
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S	I	L		O	P	O		A	C	V	S	I
W	O	I		D	I	O		A	O	M	A	L
A	L	M		I	L	W		I	C	A	L	C