

# MAKING A SPLASH

## Cardboard boats ply Aurora lake for Fox Valley United Way

BY LINDA GIRARDI

For The Beacon-News

The rain was no match for voyageurs navigating Mastodon Lake in Phillips Park on Saturday.

Despite a 20-minute rain delay and intervals of moderate to heavy rainfall, supporters of Fox Valley United Way stayed the course for the annual "What Floats Your Cardboard Boat Race," a campaign to kick off the 2011-12 fundraising year.

Kane County Sheriff Pat Perez and Kendall County Sheriff Richard Randall took to the waters in a yellow dual pedal boat, where their feet appeared to move in synchronize with the 1974 hit "Rock the Boat" blasting from the main stage sound system.

"It was a weird sensation peddling facing each other — it actually went much faster than anticipated," Perez said.

Perez and Randall, honorary chairmen for United Way, named their boat "We're in this Together" to represent the good works of the non-profit organization.

Michael Meyer, CEO of Fox Valley United Way, said the annual event, now in its ninth year, serves more as a "friendraiser" to celebrate the kickoff of United Way's new fundraising campaign.

"The economy is challenging right now — it all has an impact on us," Meyer said. "We are optimistic going into the new campaign. Our hope is to raise \$1.3 million this year." About 60 volunteers helped to organize the races.

The Aurora Police Department created a "paddle wagon" equipped with an emergency red light and siren, with team members Police Cmdr. Kristen Zeman and Evidence Technician Alvin Soto on board.

"Our design team was the mastermind behind it," Zeman said.

The Aurora Fire Department had a canoe-style watercraft, with Aurora Fire Chief Hal Carlson and Lt. Glen Hasenhayer on board. Both teams finished the 200-yard course intact.

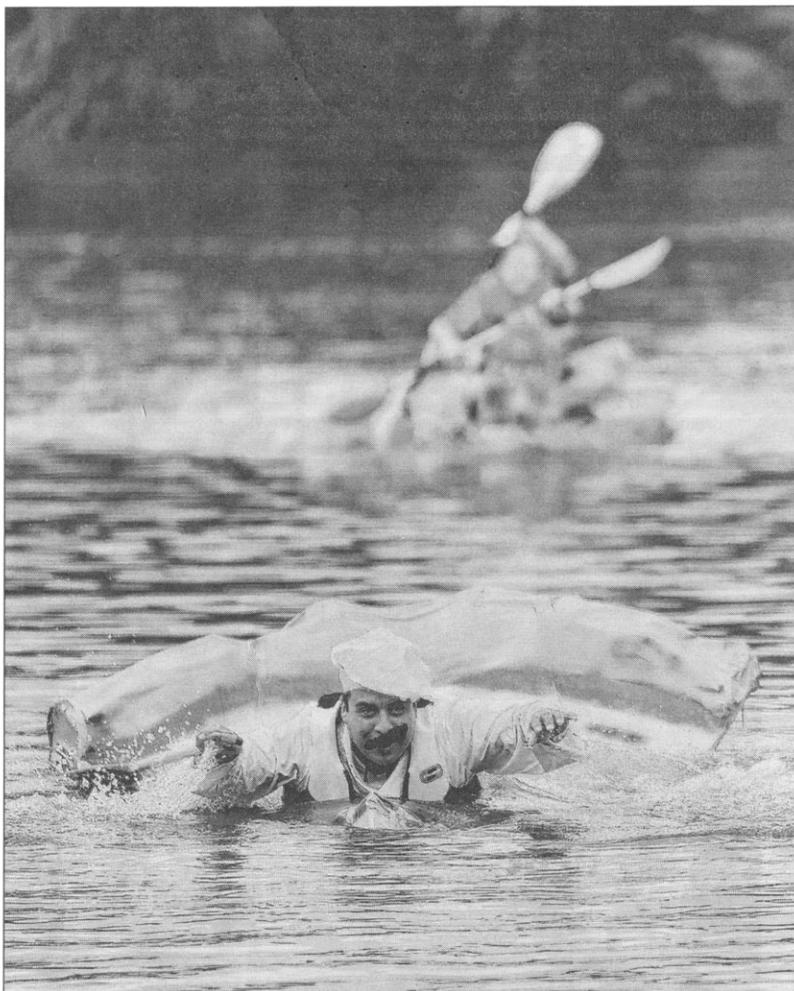
"The Aurora PD put a lot of time in their boat — it looked good..." Hasenhayer said, laughing.

Alvin Hudson, Dan Mumaw and Sundar Rajamohan represented Caterpillar in a replica of Caterpillar's "D7E" — an electrically driven dozer — the first of its kind that is currently in production and recently won an EPA sustainability award for design.

Jonathan Shafer paddled a replica of Caterpillar's 1935 "RD7," which was the worldwide earth moving manufacturer's first machinery built with a diesel engine.

The difference — they were on water. "We build marine engines, but we don't build watercraft yet — maybe some day," said Shafer, a process control engineer for Caterpillar.

Hesed House, which provides shelter for the homeless, had a cardboard boat reminiscent of the 1960s Volkswagen bus, with six people on



**Gandi Falcon tries to swim his pizza slice cardboard boat to the finish while competing in the What Floats Your Cardboard Boat race Saturday in Mastodon Lake in Aurora's Phillips Park. The race kicked off the 2011-12 Fox Valley United Way campaign. | PHOTOS BY MARY BETH NOLAN-FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA**

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RYAN DOWD, Hesed House executive director

board dressed as hippies. The boat started to collapse around 50 feet from the finish.

"We actually didn't expect to make it 15 feet out, much less almost to the end. It got soggy and soggy," said Ryan Dowd, Hesed House executive director.

"The United Way has been really good to Hesed House, so we obviously want to be supportive," Dowd said. "The second reason is that it is a lot of fun."

Fox Valley United Way provides support for more than 50 agencies in 15 communities. Donations are accepted online at [www.uwfoxvalley.org](http://www.uwfoxvalley.org) or can be sent to 44 E. Galena Blvd., Aurora, IL 60505.



**Aurora police officers Kristen Zeman and Alvin Soto celebrate as they cross the finish line in their "paddle wagon" Saturday in Phillips Park's Mastodon Lake. Their craft featured lights and sirens and a "prisoner."**