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## **United States' Most Accessible Dock Takes Center Stage at Paddle! Lake Crabtree**

Collaborative effort among Bridge II Sports, MetLife and Wake County serves as model of paddling accessibility for persons with physical disabilities

MORRISVILLE, NC – On Saturday, September 23, paddlers of all abilities will be on the water competing in Paddle! Lake Crabtree, the annual fundraiser of the Bridge II Sports ParaKayak Racing Club. The event will include a 3-mile challenge and a 10-mile marathon race for sea kayaks, canoes, K1s, tandems and paddleboards beginning at 9:00 a.m.

What was once just a dream for local paddlers with disabilities is now a reality with the most accessible dock in the country open at Lake Crabtree County Park. In its first year of use the dock has granted access to countless individuals and played host to several Bridge II Sports kayaking clinics for Veterans with physical disabilities.

The Lake Crabtree dock is the lowest profile dock ever installed by EZ Dock making the ability to get on and off the water easier for those with disabilities. The dock allows people with disabilities to station a kayak or canoe securely as they transfer from the dock to their watercraft. Seat set-up, supports and stabilization can be done with ease creating independence for the paddler.

“Access takes a team who understand what needs are. This dock took a committed team of individuals with diverse disabilities to bring to life,” said Ashley Thomas, Founder and Executive Director of Bridge II Sports. “The plan took five years of generous donors, experts and municipalities coming together as a community with the goal of creating water access for everyone. We are excited for the benefits to the community as the dock draws watersport competitions and paddlers from all over to the Triangle.”

Ashley Thomas spearheaded the effort partnering corporate and government agencies with the non-profit. MetLife financially sponsored the dock and has stayed involved in the development of the project.

“MetLife has a long history of supporting people with disabilities, with our first policies insuring Civil War soldiers against wartime-related disabilities,” said Eric Latalladi, Chief Technology Officer, MetLife. “We’re continuing that commitment not only through the products we sell, but also by actively recruiting people of differing abilities across MetLife.”

The Wake County General Services Administration and Parks and Recreation department have worked to make sure Lake Crabtree County Park matched the accessibility of the new dock. Accessible bathrooms have been installed close to the dock along with a beautiful winding path to the water that meets ADA requirements.

For more information on Paddle! Lake Crabtree and Bridge II Sports:

[www.bridge2sports.org/paddle-lake-crabtree/](http://www.bridge2sports.org/paddle-lake-crabtree/)

### **About Bridge II Sports**

Bridge II Sports is a North Carolina non-profit organization dedicated to developing and implementing opportunities for children and adults with physical disabilities to realize their potential through sports participation. Through adapted sports programming, special events, awareness initiatives and team development Bridge II Sports aims to empower persons with physical disabilities to “Find The Player Within” and change community perceptions of disability. Bridge II Sports is proud to host and coordinate Valor Games Southeast- a three day introductory adapted sports competition for over 100 Veterans and members of the Armed Forces with disabilities. For more information on Bridge II Sports and Valor Games Southeast visit [www.bridge2sports.org](http://www.bridge2sports.org)

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