



# Time To Take The Plunge?

## Polar Temps Put Fun In Fund-Raiser

BY CRYSTAL KRAUSKOFF

*To be an official Jimmy Buffet "Parrot Head," you must lean a little toward the adventurous side of life.*

So when the members of the Mid-Michigan Parrot Head Club were challenged to participate in a fund-raiser that featured swimsuits, frigid water temperatures and awards of gold-colored, spray-painted toilet plungers, they were up to the challenge.

For the third straight year, proud Lansing-area "Parrot Heads" will throw on their best pair of flip-flops and participate in a chilly event to benefit Area 8 Special Olympics of Michigan participants from Ingham and Eaton counties.

The Fifth Annual Polar Plunge is slated for 1 p.m. March 1 at Hawk Hollow Golf Course, 15101 Chandler Rd. in Bath. Plunger participant registration begins at noon. The post-jump meltdown party starts at 2 p.m.

Plungers?

Meltdown party?

What exactly is the Polar Plunge fund-raiser?

It's a community-based, laugh-filled event that allows participants to take a quick dip in the water outdoors - regardless

of temperature. The courageous fund-raisers get decked out either in outrageous costumes or just typical bathing suits in order to help area athletes with their various endeavors throughout the year.

"People do think we're crazy jumping into cold water, but it's for a good cause - for Special Olympics," said Sylvia Chamberlain, a plunger as well as a Special Olympian from the Lansing area.

Awards are given out to the best jumps and costumes for groups and individuals.

"It's a blast," said 51-year-old Robert Parsons, who plans to wear a penguin costume for this year's dive. "It happens so fast because the firemen are in there as soon you hit the water pulling you out. It happens so fast it takes your breath away."

Those interested can either gather pledges as an individual or a group. A minimum of \$50 is required to jump on an individual basis. Parsons was the top individual fund-raiser last year, bringing in more than \$1,800.

The "Parrot Heads" collectively raised more

than \$8,500 to lead the group donators.

"It's a fun way to raise some money for a good cause," said Kim Dyer, a Holt resident and the membership chair of the Mid-Michigan Parrot Head Club.

Good cause or not, freezing cold is still freezing cold.

"It's not nearly as bad as you would expect," Dyer said. "In fact, sometimes the water is warmer than the air. You do get some confidence because a police diver is right there, so you know you're safe. Your adrenaline is going and that keeps you warm. By the time you're out you're just excited, happy and listening to people cheering."

The fun-filled, chilly gathering attracted 250 plungers and raised \$52,000 last year. Polar Plunge organizers aim to raise at least \$60,000 and to attract at least 275 icy jumpers for this year's major fund-raising event.

Despite the increased goals, organizers are very cognizant of the economic struggles Michiganders are currently enduring.

"In the past, we had several donors who brought in over \$1,000 individually. We're not sure we're going to have as many people be able to solicit pledges on that scale because of the economy," said Anne Goudie, Special Olympics Michigan Area 8 director. "It's either you make a donation to a non-profit or pay your mortgage. We think we're going to see more individuals versus the large groups. That's all fine. The pennies all add up to dollars, so we'll take what we can get."

The event has come a long way in a short time. Just \$7,000 was raised and 25 plungers jumped when the Lansing-area event was first held five years ago.

Jessi Tyrrell was among the jumpers in the event's debut. She's been hooked ever since.

"Once you jump in, it takes your breath away and it's a little disorienting," Tyrrell said. "I do have enough sense to go over to the ladder as quickly as possible. I've worked to contain the expletives. It's not like anything I've ever experienced before."

Those interested in jumping into frigid waters or making a donation can get more information and register online at [www.somi.org](http://www.somi.org).



Chilly Dip Katie, Maria and Sylvia Chamberlain take the plunge as three peas in a pod.

PHOTOGRAPHY Chris Holmes