

THE MARYLAND STATE POLICE

POLAR BEAR PLUNGE

JANUARY 2020



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A Message From Special Olympics Maryland



Dear plungers, volunteers, sponsors, donors and friends,

Welcome to the 24th annual Maryland State Police Polar Bear Plunge to benefit Special Olympics Maryland! Thanks to your efforts, the Plunge will raise \$3 million and go a long way toward providing year-round training and competition in 27 sports for more than 8,033 individuals with intellectual disabilities in Maryland. You are helping us transform the lives of our athletes, their families and communities every day through meaningful sport experiences, health promotion, and leadership programs, while also promoting awareness and education. The year 2020 marks the 50th anniversary of Special Olympics Maryland, which we will commemorate throughout the year with a range of celebratory events including a signature celebration at our Summer Games at Towson University from June 5-7. We will also leverage the 50th anniversary to launch a three-year campaign under the banner "Experience Inclusion," where our athletes lead the way in continuing to interactive inclusive communities of dignity and respect across Maryland.

We want to thank the Maryland State Police and the entire law enforcement community across Maryland for their tireless efforts in organizing this event and for their year-round support of our athletes. Since 1986, law enforcement initiatives have been responsible for raising over \$50 million for Special Olympics Maryland athletes, all of whom compete free of charge. In addition to the Plunge and other fundraising efforts, law enforcement officers and administrators are fixtures at our state competitions and games, where they present awards to our athletes.

We are grateful for the significant financial investment and extensive volunteer support provided by our founding partner, Aerotek, which recently committed to extending their partnership with us through 2025. We extend our thanks to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Sandy Point State Park for their generosity in hosting this exceptional event. We are indebted to our media partners – WBALTV 11, 98Rock, and WBAL 1090AM/101.5FM – for their extensive efforts to promote the Plunge and our mission. Additionally, we thank our many loyal partners featured in this event program who support our athletes and make the Plunge possible.

Special Olympics Maryland is not just a one-time event. In 2019, we conducted nine single-sport state championships along with our three multi-sport events - Fall Sports Festival (five sports), Winter Games (two sports) and Summer Games (five sports). We engage over 6,300 volunteers to run these state games and championships. Leadership volunteers and coaches provide regularly scheduled training and competitions locally throughout the year. We work closely with 21 school districts to deliver Interscholastic Unified Sports, which combines Special Olympics athletes with their non-Special Olympics athlete peers on teams to compete against one another in regularly scheduled matches and meets leading to district and state championships. We are working hard to expand that Unified Sports model to elementary and middle schools to reach students of all ages starting in early childhood.

For every athlete competing, there are 14 on the sidelines. In fact, there are 115,000 individuals in the state with an intellectual disability who are eligible for our program. Through sport, athlete leadership and health/fitness activities, we want more people with and without intellectual disabilities to experience the transformative power of Special Olympics Maryland. Our goal is to reach 20,000 athletes by 2025. Inspired by our athletes, with your continued support as plungers, donors, friends and volunteers, we will recruit more athletes, unified teammates, coaches, volunteers and donors, which will generate more interactive inclusive experiences. Through sport, we are creating a world where opportunity is not limited by disability. Thank you for plunging for our athletes and for making Maryland better for everyone.

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A Message From The Maryland State Police



The Maryland State Police is proud to be a founding member of the Polar Bear Plunge for Special Olympics. We are honored to work with such a great team of law enforcement, state agencies and corporate partners.

For the 24th year, the best and bravest of Maryland will gather at Sandy Point to participate in what has become a tradition of cold temperatures, warm hearts, great fun and outstanding support for the athletes. Our partnership with Special Olympics Maryland has given the Maryland State Police and our law enforcement partners a variety of ways we can help those children and adults in our state with intellectual disabilities.

As part of the Maryland Law Enforcement Torch Run, thousands of local and state police officers, sheriff's deputies, correctional officers and federal agents throughout our state participate in different events and initiatives during the year that raise funds to help support the year-round sports training and competition provided free of charge by Special Olympics Maryland. Just as important is the awareness these events raise among citizens and police officers about people with intellectual disabilities. Thank you for helping us keep the Flame of Hope burning bright for Special Olympics athletes in our state.

**- Colonel William Pallozzi
Maryland State Police**







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Don't Be A Fish Out Of Water — Join The Crowd At The Polar Bear Plunge

Annual Event Asks Marylanders To Brave The Cold For Special Olympics

By Zach Sparks
zach@pasadenavoice.com

Anything worth achieving is worth effort and sacrifice. For a small sacrifice — a quick dip into the cold Chesapeake Bay — about 10,000 people are about to record a personal achievement while supporting Special Olympics athletes, and you can

join in the fun, too.

The Maryland State Police's annual Polar Bear Plunge returns to Sandy Point State Park in Annapolis on Saturday, January 25.

"It is amazing to think this will be the 24th Maryland State Police Polar Bear Plunge for Special Olympics," said Greg Shipley, spokesman for the

Maryland State Police. "When we met on the beach at Sandy Point on a cold day in 1997, we were shocked to see that about 350 people had shown up. We had no idea that many people would jump into cold water, even for a great cause. Now, because of the efforts and generosity of so many, » **Continued on page 12**



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Don't Be A Fish Out Of Water — Join The Crowd At The Polar Bear Plunge



» Continued from page 9
Special Olympics Maryland hosts three days of Plungefest and three plunges in order to accommodate all the incredible people willing to support this important cause.”

The fundraising goal for this year's event is \$3 million. To participate, you need to pledge \$75, which can be raised through crowdsourcing, sponsorships or a donation. To make fundraising even more appealing, Maryland State Police offers incentives. The minimum \$75 pledge comes with a sweatshirt. For \$250, you get a sweatshirt and a hat. Marylanders can also look forward to a sweatshirt and

blanket (\$500 pledge), a sweatshirt and backpack (\$1,000), a sweatshirt and portable speaker (\$2,500), a tablet or Ring doorbell (\$5,000), and a big-screen TV or cruise (\$10,000).

Once you've collected the money from any family members or friends who are supporting you, it's time to get ready for the big day. Charge into the bay and stay in until your ankles are submerged or until the water is up to your shoulders — it's all up to you.

After taking the plunge, warm up in the heated Ice Lodge tent, feast on food from local vendors, and stay toasty by sipping on hot chocolate (or try a cocktail if you're looking for something with a kick).

No matter what time you head to Sandy Point, there will be plenty of entertainment. Registration will begin at 9:00am, and the band Hot Tub Limo will get the party started at 11:00am with a mix of rock, pop, hip-hop and punk tunes. At the same time, a family-friendly plunge will be led by the Rath family.

At noon, the 98 Rock Plunge





will get underway with Sam Livingston, a Baltimore County athlete who competes in five sports. Monique Matthews, who traveled to Seattle for the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games, will headline the next plunge at 1:00pm as Johnny Bling gets the crowd going with music ranging from, as band members put it, “funkt-up Lionel Richie ballads to reggae-inspired rock to ‘80s underground classics.”

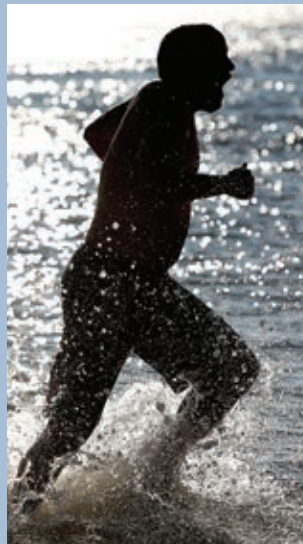
Kris Stone — an Anne Arundel athlete who plays soccer, basketball, and does track and field — will rally everyone plunging at 2:00pm. Twenty-two-year Special Olympics veteran Annu Singleton will plunge at 3:00pm. If you like jokey raps, indie electronica beats and lots of tomfoolery, stick around for the Colorado duo 3OH!3. The last plunge at 4:00pm will feature Faith McLuckie, who competes in basketball, cheerleading, golf, tennis, and track and field.

Can't make it on January 25? Several opportunities on other days will allow Marylanders to plunge as a team. The Cool

Schools Plunge for middle and high school students is January 23, followed by the Police Plunge and Corporate Plunge on January 24.

To learn more about Plungefest and to support Special Olympics Maryland athletes, visit www.plungemd.org.

“The Maryland State Police is proud to still be a part of the Plunge team and we are looking forward to another great year of supporting the athletes of Special Olympics Maryland,” Shipley said. ●



A Chance To Do Something New

By Julie Oltmann

Saturday, November 2, was not just another day for Teri Burtis. She'd been raising funds and awareness for months in support of her participation in the 2019 Over the Edge event for Special Olympics Maryland.

For Teri, a longtime Special Olympics supporter, volunteer and family member, this was new. It was a chance to do something different: rappel down the side of a city building.

She had traveled, she had run marathons, but she had never done anything this extreme. She saw videos from the first year of the event and thought, "It doesn't look all that bad." She spoke to a few participants; volunteered at the event in 2018; and she made her decision — she was going to go over the edge.

Over the Edge, a self-described "adventure experience company with a passion for positive impact," has been holding its fundraisers for nonprofits since 2008. The idea is simple, yet thrilling. Participants agree to raise money in support of a nonprofit organization and are then given the opportunity to rappel down a tall city building. Special Olympics Maryland has held the event since 2017, raising more than \$250,000 in support of its athletes over the past three years. The building of choice? Chevy Chase Land Company's 2 Bethesda Metro Center, a 15-story office building in the heart of



Teri Burtis, a longtime Special Olympics supporter, recently rappelled down the side of a city building in honor of her brother, Ricky.

Bethesda that offers stunning views of neighboring Washington, D.C.

Participants chose this event for a variety of reasons. Some enjoy rappelling. Some were looking for a new thrill. But for Teri, it was more than that. It was personal. Her brother, Ricky, was a Special Olympics athlete. He began competing in the mid-1970s, starting with the events offered at Summer Games. He ran the 50-yard dash, the 100-yard dash and competed in the softball throw. Later, he competed in various aquatic events and bowling, which ended up becoming his favorite sport.

When Teri took him to the local lanes, she was no match for his skills.

"He beat me unmercifully," she said.

Ricky loved training

and competing in Special Olympics Maryland's sports programs, starting out in Kent County, and then in Queen Anne's County when the family later moved. He was a proud athlete, showing off his medals and ribbons whenever guests would visit their home.

When asked how Special Olympics affected her family, Teri said that it was a way for Ricky to get out of the house and be active, something he otherwise did only to attend his specialized school program.

"It gave him a chance to do something different," Teri said.

She accompanied him to his various competitions, and the whole family traveled to watch him participate in Summer Games each year, many serving as volunteers.

When Ricky died, Teri stopped volunteering. Three years ago, by chance, she received an email promoting a volunteer opportunity for the state kayaking championships at Washington College.

"I used to live near Chesertown, and I liked kayaking, so I thought it would be fun," she said.

Her experience was so impactful that she hasn't stopped. Since then, she's served as a volunteer at Summer Games, Fall Sports Festival, golf, bowling, basketball, the Fort McHenry Tunnel Run, Over the Edge and the MSP Polar Bear Plunge to name a few. She's even started fundraising for the 2020 Plunge, captaining a team called Ricky's Ladies, comprised of a group participating in memory of her brother, which was also her motivation to raise money for Over the Edge.

Her fundraising page tells Ricky's story and describes why giving to Special Olympics is so important to her. Her efforts paid off well, raising nearly double the required amount and fifth-most among this year's event participants. She didn't just stick to the typical email and social media appeals to fundraise, either — Teri employed some unique tactics.

"I did odd bits of fundraising," she said. "Things like decorating gloves and socks, pet sitting, a bake sale."

But it was the support of her friends that put her over
» Continued on page 22



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Preparing To Plunge

Whether this is your first time or you're a veteran, make sure you are prepared to plunge.

What To Expect

The water is cold, but the rush of running in might give you an extra dose of energy. The cold will likely set in once you leave the water. Also, it is recommended that you don't stay in the water for more than 15 minutes — which, we suspect, will not be an issue.

There is no right or wrong way to plunge. Some people will get their ankles wet and others will go underwater. Only go into the water as far as you are comfortable.

Parking at Sandy Point State Park will be difficult on the day of the event. Get a group

together to carpool if you can. On January 23 and 24, you do not need a special pass, but on Saturday, January 25, you will have to purchase a pass to park at Sandy Point. Shuttles will go to and from the park starting at 8:00am. You can catch a ride from Anne Arundel Community College, the Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium or Kent Island High School.

What To Bring

- **Plastic Bag.** Once you've changed out of your wet clothes, you'll need somewhere to put them. Avoid soaking your belongings, and bring a separate bag for wet clothing.
- **Towel and Blanket.** It is important to dry off and



stay warm after the plunge. Make sure you have plenty of towels or robes and blankets handy.

- **Water Shoes.** The ground will be cold and your feet can go numb, so protecting them is important as you are running into — and quickly out of — the water.
- **Loose-Fitting and Comfortable Clothes.** Heated tents will be available for peo-

ple changing into dry clothes after the plunge. Make sure the clothing is comfortable and easy to get on.

- **A Group To Plunge With.** Whether they are running in the water with you or watching bags from the shore, your friends make everything more fun.

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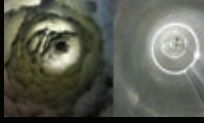
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1:00-1:30PM **LifeBridge Health Plunge**

2:00-2:30PM **Ravens Plunge**

3:00-3:30PM **3OH!3 Plunge**

4:00-4:30PM **Owen United Plunge**

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Special Olympics
Maryland



Students Brave The Chilly Bay For Special Olympics



Photo courtesy of Diane Casey
Teachers and staff from Broadneck High braved the frigid bay in 2017 as part of the Cool Schools Plunge, now in its 11th year.

By Brenda Wintrode

This January, Anne Arundel County students will join an estimated 4,500 of their peers from across the state to take a plunge into the chilly Chesapeake Bay and raise money for Maryland Special Olympics.

Event organizers hope the student efforts will bring in around \$400,000 for the 24th annual Maryland State Police Polar Bear Plunge, according to Jessie Hayes, senior director of special events for Maryland Special Olympics. However, none of these results would be possible without the efforts of teacher volunteers.

South River High School English teacher Mary Kokosko has volunteered as the school's plunge team captain for the last 10 years. Along with student leaders, she organizes multiple fundraisers each year, facilitates transportation to the event, and even takes the plunge herself.

The Severna Park High

alumna said there was so much interest this year, she had to limit the number of students to 300. Last year, South River's 320 dippers raised \$52,000, the most in the state, thanks to the group's creative fundraisers.

Kokosko and student volunteers planned a pie-in-the-face contest, sold school merchandise and cotton candy at sporting events, and hosted a student-faculty basketball game, just to list a few fundraising efforts.

"I think we've done a good job here at South River and in the community ... really instilling the importance of Special Olympics and the value that everybody gets from it," Kokosko said.

Last year, Maryland high

school and middle school students raised \$380,000 through the Cool Schools Plunge program, now in its 11th year. Each student must raise a minimum of \$50 to go to the January 23 event, which kicks off three days of plunges at Sandy Point State Park.

Patty DeLaet, who teaches eighth-grade science at Severna Park Middle and captains the school's plunge team, challenges students to each raise \$75.

"We participate because it gives the kids a nice sense of belonging and being a part of the community," said DeLaet, who signed up 40 swimmers as of January 6.

Photo by Brenda Wintrode

South River High English teacher and Cool Schools Plunge team captain Mary Kokosko ran a basketball shooting contest during the halftime period of the school's home game against Southern to raise funds for Special Olympics Maryland. Kokosko, an alumna of Severna Park High School, has been a team captain for the last 10 years and is also a plunger herself.

Northeast High's captain and math teacher Julia Lebowitz, who happens to be Kokosko's older sister, said kids have varied motivations for participating.

"For some kids it's a trend, and some kids have some sort of personal experience with Special Olympics, and for some it's a bucket list, and for some kids they don't ever get to go on a field trip," Lebowitz said.

South River junior and student fundraising co-captain Kaylee Bates has been motivated to brave the brisk winter water every year since seventh grade because the cause hits close to home.

"We have a really close family friend who has Downs syndrome, and being able to do something that directly affects him and all the money goes toward [Special
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Meet The Team Captains

These team captains are charging into the Chesapeake Bay during the Polar Bear Plunge. Read on to learn their reasons for getting involved.



Super Plunge Team Captain:

Adam Hays

I am a Special Olympics Maryland athlete from Frederick County. I currently compete in cycling, swimming and skiing, and I've been participating in Special Olympics Maryland sports since 1996. For the 13th year in a row, I'll be Super Plunging into the freezing cold waters of the Chesapeake Bay on January 17.

Cool Schools Plunge Team Captain:

Carmen Houston-Ludlam

I am a Special Olympics Maryland athlete from Calvert County. I currently compete in dance, cheerleading, swimming and Unified Sports, and I've been participating in Special Olympics Maryland sports since 2011. I have cheered on many plungers over the year, but never as a team captain. This year, as the Cool Schools Plunge team captain, I am determined to make the Cool Schools Plunge the biggest one to date!



Police Plunge Team Captain:

Elaina Camacho

I am a Special Olympics Maryland athlete from Anne Arundel County. I currently compete in basketball, soccer, swimming, golf and snowshoeing, and I've been participating in Special Olympics Maryland sports since 1995. Police Plungers, I'm here to light a flame under your fundraising efforts this year!



Corporate Plunge Team Captain:

Thomas Smith

I am a Special Olympics Maryland athlete from Howard County. I currently compete in powerlifting and track & field. I started competing in Special Olympics Maryland sports in 2002. This year, as a team captain, I will coach your Corporate Plunge team to victory!



Maryland Plunge 11:00am Team Captains:

The Rath Family

We started attending the Young Athletes Program in spring 2016, when Tyler was 3 and Grady was 2, at Marley Glen in Glen Burnie, and we have been loyal participants ever since. Tyler loves the moderators and Grady loves being able to participate in an organized activity with his brother. Our whole family looks forward to our YAP sessions and we rarely miss them if we can help it. We are especially grateful to SOMD and the Young Athletes Program for this amazing opportunity for our family.



Meet The Team Captains

Maryland Plunge Noon Team Captain:

Sam Livingston

I am a Special Olympics Maryland athlete from Baltimore County. I currently compete in softball, basketball and bowling. I started participating in Special Olympics Maryland sports in 2012. In 2017, I plunged for the first time and absolutely loved it.



Maryland Plunge 2:00pm

Team Captain: Kris Stone

I am a Special Olympics Maryland athlete from Anne Arundel County. I currently compete in basketball, soccer, and track & field, and I started participating in Special Olympics Maryland in 2012. In 2019, I plunged for the first time and I absolutely loved it.



Maryland Plunge 3:00pm Team Captain:

Annu Singleton
I am a Special Olympics Maryland athlete from Baltimore City. I currently compete in basketball, bocce, flag football, and snowshoeing, and I've been participating in Special Olympics Maryland since 1998. I have plunged many times, but I'm looking forward to my first year as a team captain.



Maryland Plunge 1:00pm Team Captain:

Monique Matthews

I am a Special Olympics Maryland athlete from Baltimore County. I currently compete in track & field, and I've been participating in Special Olympics Maryland sports since 2012. I have never plunged before but am super excited to be a team captain this year. I'm still trying to decide how far I am going to go in, but remember, toes count!



Maryland Plunge 4:00pm Team Captain:

Faith McLuckie

I am a Special Olympics Maryland athlete from Montgomery County. I currently compete in golf, tennis, cheerleading, kayaking and long-distance running, and I have been participating in Special Olympics Maryland sports since 2004. I am plunging for the first time this year and could not be more excited about it!



A Chance To Do Something New

» Continued from page 14 the top. A close friend of Teri's holds an annual yard sale in which she donates the funds raised to a charity or nonprofit organization, and this year, Over the Edge was the beneficiary.

"The best part was that while we did sell some stuff, many people simply donated because it was for Special Olympics," Teri said. The yard sale brought in more than \$1,100.

When November 2 rolled around, Teri was ready. She'd been working hard to raise money, but she had also been mentally preparing herself to rappel.

"I signed up as soon as I possibly could," she said. "So I spent almost a year preparing."

She even picked out a song to listen to for motivation leading up to the event — Rod Stewart's "Faith of the Heart."

"I sang and whistled all the way down," she said. Teri said it was everything she expected but that she's glad to be on the ground. In all, she raised \$2,650 in support of more than 8,000 athletes who currently train and compete in Special Olympics Maryland programs year-round and in memory of her brother. ●

Students Brave The Chilly Bay For Special Olympics

» Continued from page 19 Olympics], to watch him play Unified Sports — it just makes me happy," Bates said.

Unified Sports teams invite athletes of all abilities to play together. South River has unified bowling, bocce and tennis teams.

Diane Casey volunteers as Broadneck High School's team captain. Casey said their biggest dollar amount was just over \$20,000 in 2018 because the teachers said they would plunge if students raised a certain dollar amount.

"I had one teacher that said if the team raises \$5,000, they'll go all in," said Casey, whose "price" was \$20,000. She said the staff kept their end of the bargain and

"plunged" with the students.

Kokosko said she hopes the kids gain a sense of being part of something bigger than themselves.

"It's not a day out of school; it's not, you know, get a cool sweatshirt," Kokosko said. "I want them to see the difference that it makes and carry on."

The Police Plunge and Corporate Plunge happen on January 24, and the Maryland Plunge takes place on Saturday, January 25. The Super Plunge that requires plunge participants to take a dip every hour for 24 hours happens on January 17-18.

The progress of all fundraisers and ways to donate can be found at www.plungemd.com. ●

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