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Local police officer challenges County Council to participate in polar plunge

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Dufferin County councillors have been challenged by Dufferin OPP to take part in the 2025 Shelburne Polar Plunge for Special Olympics Ontario.

At their first meeting of the year on Jan. 9, Dufferin County Council received a delegation from Dufferin OPP Const. Jeff McLean regarding the annual polar plunge challenge.

?I'd like to challenge everybody sitting at this table to jump in,? McLean told Council. ?I want to encourage those who did participate last year, whether it was donations or participating in the event, to come out again. If you jumped in previously, you know it's not really that bad.?

The Polar Plunge for Special Olympics Ontario is an annual fundraiser that sees community members ?freezin' for a reason? by jumping into a cold body of water to raise money to support Special Olympics athletes.

The money raised through the event is used to assist the athletes in a number of ways such as training and purchasing uniforms.

?It allows them to grow, it gives them the opportunity to fit in and become champions,? said McLean.

According to Special Olympics Ontario ? Dufferin, there are more than 50 athletes registered locally, who participate in sport clubs year-round.

The local chapter of Special Olympics Ontario offers seven sports for athletes to participate in, including basketball, bocce, curling, snowshoeing, softball, swimming and track and field.

Last year, the Shelburne Polar Plunge for Special Olympics Ontario saw close to 80 ?plungers? take part in the event and raised over $18,000 for Special Olympics Ontario.

?It's amazing for such a small community to continue to raise this amount of money,? said McLean.

As part of the event, Dufferin OPP hands out an award called the ?Frozen Belt,? which is given to the individual who raises the most money for the event.

?This year, we're officially announcing it. We'll be presenting it on stage at the event to make sure that whoever wins gets the recognition they deserve,? said McLean.

McLean noted to Council that the 2024 recipient of the ?Frozen Belt? raised over $5,000 by himself, which contributed to their fundraising total of $18,000.

The 2025 Shelburne Polar Plunge for Special Olympics Ontario will be held on Feb. 17 (Family Day) from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Shelburne Fairgrounds, located at 377 William Street.

The Polar Plunge has been moved from its original location at Fiddle Park to coincide with the Town of Shelburne's annual free family day skate, and allow residents to attend both community events.

?People can have the free family skate and then they can go watch people be uncomfortable by jumping in the pool,? explained McLean. ?We're not splitting the community; it's walking distance basically everywhere in town.

Those interested in registering to take part in the 2025 Shelburne Polar Plunge or would like to donate to the cause can do so by visiting, www.polarplunge.ca.