

WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

2015 Polar Bear Plunge Pledging Underway

Waukegan, IL (December 8, 2014)... Persons planning to jump into Lake Michigan on New Year's morning can maximize their impact by asking friends and family to support them with a donation to the Special Recreation Services of Northern Lake County. Pledge forms are available online or can be picked up at these Waukegan Park District facilities: the Field House Sports and Fitness Center, Jack Benny Center or Belvidere Recreation Center. Register with a minimum of \$50 by December 13 to receive a limited edition hooded sweatshirt. The 2015 Polar Bear Plunge theme is 'Here's A Reason for Freezin'. The Plunge will take place at the Waukegan Swimming Beach from 10-11am on Thursday, January 1, 2015. Proceeds from the Waukegan Polar Bear Plunge go to the SRSNLC-Waukegan Scholarship program which helps individuals with disabilities participate in camps, athletics, health and fitness programs, and much more. Plungers can pre-register for \$10 until 4pm on December 30th. Registration on the day of the event costs \$15 and opens at 9:00am.

Special Recreation Services of Northern Lake County provides individuals with disabilities or special needs the opportunity to be involved in year-round recreation and leisure programs. Programs are available for individuals, ages three through adult, who are in special education programs, vocational workshops, or those who need assistance to succeed in recreational activities.

Each year, more and more families with special needs children request funding to support the registration fee needed to enroll their child in camp, sports and fitness programs, as well as general programs. To address these financial constraints, it is vital to replenish the Special Recreation scholarship program annually. It is through special fundraising efforts like Polar Bear Plunge and its Pledge Program, sponsorships and grants that make scholarships possible enabling participants with disabilities and financial struggles, year round recreational and athletic opportunities they would otherwise be unable to access or afford.

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About the Waukegan Park District

Established on December 26, 1916, the district has 48 sites and more than 735 acres of land, including the 18-hole Bonnie Brook and 9-hole Greenshire Golf Courses. Properties are managed to the highest environmental and conservation standards. Facilities operated by the district include the Field House Sports and Fitness Center, the Jack Benny Center for the Arts, the Waukegan SportsPark, the Waukegan Skate Park, the Waukegan BMX Track, recreational centers, an outdoor swimming pool, disc golf course, dog exercise area, outdoor sports fields, picnic areas, playgrounds, and sports courts including basketball and tennis. A full range of programs and services are offered year round for all ages, from infants to seniors as well as

special needs populations. Healthy lifestyles, wellness initiatives, and a connection with the outdoors and nature are integrated throughout programs, services, and special events. Cultural events are provided by the Waukegan Symphony Orchestra and Concert Chorus, the Bowen Park Theatre Company, and the Waukegan History Museum. There is something for everyone! The award-winning District employs 59 full-time and over 250 part-time, year round, seasonal, and temporary employees. The District is a member of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD), and Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA). The district maintains national accreditation from the NRPA Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), the Illinois Association of Park District (IAPD) Distinguished Agency accreditation and the Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA) accreditation and sustains a Level A Loss Control Program. The district was a NRPA Gold Medal Finalist in 2012 and 2013, and awarded the NRPA National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management in 2013.

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