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COARC's polar plunge: 'Water wasn't so bad once you get in'

By Jamie Larson
Hudson-Catskill Newspapers

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WEST COPAKE— More than 50 swimmers braved the cold winds and freezing water of Upper Rhoda Pond in Copake Saturday to test their mettle and dive in for a good cause.

The second annual COARC Polar Plunge once again offered the thrill seekers a shock and raised more than \$11,000 for a new playground for The Starting Place preschool in Hudson and other COARC recreational services for people with disabilities.

Plungers shivered with anticipation as they stood on the beach waiting to dive into the large hole cut into the thick ice by the Copake Fire Department. The first group to dive into the water were employees and people connected to The Starting Place.

Assemblyman Marcus Molinaro, R-Red Hook, took the icy bath himself Saturday along side team Starting Place, saying the event highlights the important work COARC does in Columbia County.

"I thought there would be plenty of people who would want to see a politician jump in a lake," Molinaro said. "Seriously though, the advocacy and programs COARC provides for those with special needs is so vital. As a parent of a child with special needs we know we need partners like COARC in our communities. If you want to show support you've got to jump in."

Two more rounds of swimmers then took the plunge, many in eccentric costumes. There was a Viking, a polar bear standing by on shore. COARC Associate Executive Director Bruce Drake was dressed as cupid. "It's a lot of fun, and it is so people are aware of COARC," said Drake, who was one of the originators of the idea to hold a plunge event. "There are things people need that just aren't funded. I encourage everyone to come out and dive next year."

Drake said the water wasn't so bad once you get in and that the run up to the heating tent is the worst part. He also thanked the participation and presence of the Copake Fire Department, Copake Community Rescue Squad and the Greenport Rescue and Columbia County Sheriff dive teams.

After climbing out and running up the hill to the warming tent to dry off, participants were treated to hot refreshments. "It wasn't bad at all," said Starting Place teacher Christy Parrish of



Assemblyman Marcus Molinaro took the plunge into the freezing water of Upper Rhoda Pond in Copake to support COARC. (David Lee/Hudson-Catskill Newspapers)



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Ghent. "I'm dripping wet and only my hands are cold."

"I'd definitely do it again," said first time plunger Rian Burger, "Maybe."

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" As long as special needs people don't vote absent tee Molinaro supports them. Maybe he should have supported the absent tee reform act and his actions would not looks so hollow. "

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