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MSP Polar Bear Plunge to Celebrate its Sweet 16 in Style in 2012

Annual Dip into the Chesapeake Bay to be held Sat. Jan. 28, 2012; Returning will be PlungeFest, the Free Winter Festival Surrounding the Plunge, as well as an All-New Pee Wee Plunge for Pint-Sized Participants, and Live Performance by FUEL Ravens QB Joe Flacco Again Named Honorary Chairman, and Will Return for 4th Year

Baltimore, MD – The Maryland State Police Polar Bear Plunge - aka THE coolest event of winter -- is celebrating its **Sweet Sixteen** on January 28, 2012, enticing thousands upon thousands of warm-hearted citizens into the Chesapeake Bay for a chilly dip, while thousands of others take part in the frigid fun of PlungeFest, the free winter festival surrounding the Plunge.

Ravens QB **Joe Flacco**, once again named Honorary Chairman of the MSP Polar Bear Plunge, will be returning for his 4th straight year.

The winter-time event has become a regional tradition for Flacco and thousands of others, raising an estimated \$19 million for Special Olympics Maryland over the past 15 years. Participants in the Plunge take a daring dip into the Chesapeake Bay at Sandy Point State Park in Annapolis, soliciting pledges from friends and family members in support of their chilly challenge. Thanks in large part to the generosity of Aerotek, Sam's Club, Constellation Energy and other sponsors, the event remains free of charge to spectators.

The event has become so popular in fact, that it now includes **Frigid Friday**, a special Friday Plunge exclusively designed for school teams; the **Super Plunge**, a super-sized event that features a team of about 60 dedicated souls who brave the Bay every hour on the hour for 24 hours, and raising \$10,000 each; and new this year, the **Pee-Wee Plunge**, a special dip for pint-sized Plungers. The main Plunge events, now offered at 11 a.m. (Family Plunge) and 1 and 3 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 28 remain the highlight of the day though, and organizers are expecting to exceed last year's total of 12,000 participants.

The Plunge events are all part of the fun of **PlungeFest**—a FREE winter festival surrounding the Plunge that offers fun for Plungers and spectators alike. PlungeFest 2012 includes popular

returning areas and attractions like the **Carnival FunFest tent**, a separate and larger **Astro Events Kids Zone**, the costume contest, and an area hosted by the **Robert Andrew Salon & Spa** where attendees can get a variety of spa treatments on site, including a massage, a paraffin dip, micro-dermabrasion or teeth whitening, all for a suggested donation to SOMD. Also returning is the **Rams Head Ice Lodge and Beer Garden**, with a great line-up of live music that includes FUEL as well as local favorites Sticktime, Hot Tub Limo and The Rovers. Tent flaps open at 8 a.m.

Brand-new to the 2012 Plunge is the **Pee Wee Plunge**—an 11 a.m. dip in a kiddie pool offered to children ages 8 and under. In addition to that, there is now a special Family Plunge, open to families who want to enjoy the full experience of plunging into the Bay, but in a less congested environment that is safer for younger children. This Family Plunge is also open to seniors.

Another new addition is the Wawa Coffee Center. As the Official Coffee of the MSP Plunge, Wawa will have a team of people on-site brewing up complimentary coffee for attendees. They will also have juices and teas to give away.

The afternoon Plunges will again take place at 1 and 3 p.m. on Saturday.

The 3rd Annual Frigid Friday Plunge is set for Noon on Friday, Jan. 27 and is expected to attract as many as 2500 students from middle and high schools around the region.

Registration for the 2012 MSP Polar Bear Plunge and the Cool Schools Challenge is now open at www.plungemd.com. Participants must raise a minimum of \$50 in pledges, and for that, they will receive a commemorative event sweatshirt, official event photo, and the great feeling of freezing your fur off for a great cause. Those raising more than \$50 are eligible for additional incentives like Plunge gear.

If you are a member of a local TV or radio station or on the staff of a daily, weekly, or community newspaper, please contact Special Olympics Maryland Public Relations Representative Kelley Schniedwind (410-242-1515x117, kschniedwind@somd.org) for interview requests, background materials, photos, and full details on everything-Plunge.

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