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PLAIN TALK

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Taking the polar plunge



A Polar Plunger reacts to the icy water at the fourth annual Vermillion Special Olympics Polar Plunge, which was held at the Vermillion High School parking lot on Sunday. (David Lias/Vermillion Plain Talk)

Annual event raises \$16K for Special Olympics

By Travis Gulbrandson

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Close to 100 Vermillion and area residents “took the plunge” this past weekend in the name of Vermillion Special Olympics.

Sunday afternoon they lined up at the Vermillion High School parking lot, awaiting their turn to dive, jump or just plain fall into a vat of ice-cold water as part of the fourth annual Vermillion Special Olympics Polar Plunge.

Not only that, they raised approximately \$16,000 in the process, money which will be used by the Vermillion team to pay various fees when they participate in different meets and competitions.

“It went very well. It was definitely a success,” said Jen Law, chairperson for the event. “The committee is very happy with how things went. We’re happy it didn’t rain on us and that we had a great turnout.”

Despite the lack of precipitation, the general consensus of those who took the plunge was the same: It was very, very cold.

“The temperature is an icy 42 degrees,” announced Mitchell Olson, who emceed the event along with Mary Hulac. “We thought you should know before you jump.”

Just in case the water began to warm up after having nearly 100 people swim their way through it, coolers filled with ice were tossed in to keep the temperature as cold as possible.

“It’s really cold,” said Katie VandeVege, who jumped with the

Local schools enact peanut ban

By David Lias

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A traditional staple of school sack lunches – a peanut butter and jelly sandwich – will no longer be allowed at Austin and Jolley elementary schools under a new allergen policy recently approved by the Vermillion School Board.

The school board, after accepting several months worth of conversation, study and input from a citizens’ committee, has crafted and approved the policy with the goal of minimizing health risks and providing a safe educational environment for all students.

“We know that peanut allergies and nut allergies are potentially life threatening,” said Kim Johnson, Austin School administrator, who helped organize the committee and the study that led to this formation of the policy. “We wanted to be sure that we were doing everything possible to keep our students safe.”

She noted that from 1997 through 2008, the number of children with peanut allergies has tripled in the United States.

Under this new policy, Austin and

Jolley schools will be declared nut/peanut safe, and nut products will not be allowed in either building. As a proactive practice to prevent exposure to allergens or infectious disease, only prepackaged items with ingredient labels will be allowed for classroom snacks.

If a student brings nut/peanut products in a home lunch, the lunch will be taken. A teacher or staff member will explain why the lunch was taken, and an alternative lunch will be provided. School staff will also call the parents that day, explaining the incident. The foods the child brought that contained nut products will be identified so future problems can be avoided and the parent will be informed to pick up the lunch.

Johnson said signs will be placed near every entrance of the two schools stating that they are “nut safe” facilities. A dialogue will also be held with the community and especially parents of students attending the schools explaining that no peanut products are allowed in the two buildings.

The policy calls for offering education and awareness training to

students, parents and community groups concerning the policy’s guidelines. Plans shall be put into place for responding in a timely manner to emergency situations involving students with food allergies.

School Board member Dave Stammer, noting the difficulty of keeping all peanut products out of a school setting, asked if designating the two schools as “nut safe” may give a false sense of security.

“We talked about that a lot,” said Chris Esping, president of the school board who also served on the committee that helped craft the policy. “Ideally, we would want to be peanut free, but we also said there is no way that we can guarantee that. They (the school staff) are going to police it as best as they can, but there could be a child that brings a peanut butter sandwich to school.”

Stammer also noted that typical fundraisers sponsored by student or children’s groups often feature the selling of candy bars and other food products that could contain nut products.

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GRAND OPENING



On Tuesday, April 16, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held to celebrate Classic Area 106.3/ESPN Radio 1570 – Five Star Communications, new location at 18 East Main St., Suite 1 in Vermillion. Along with KVHT Owner Jeff Fuller and Manager Simon Fuller, various representatives from the city, including Mayor Jack Powell and VCDC Director Steve Howe were also on hand. For more information, call (605) 658-2001 or at visit www.kvht.com and www.kvht.com.

(Travis Gulbrandson/Vermillion Plain Talk)



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