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PLAIN TALK

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Freezin' for a reason



Ryan Larsen, the assistant women's basketball coach at the University of South Dakota, is the last of the "plungers" to enter the frigid water at Vermillion's Polar Plunge Sunday. He attempts to convince his two hunting dogs, Tess and Zoe, to take a chilly dip. See a gallery of photos from the event by logging on to spotted.plaintalk.net.

(Photo by David Lias)

Locals 'take the plunge' for Special Olympics

By Travis Gulbrandson

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The first year the Polar Plunge benefitting Special Olympics was held in Vermillion, there were 46 participants who raised \$8,000.

Last year, there were 94 jumpers who raised \$18,000.

This year, organizers more than met their goals of 100 jumpers and \$20,000.

"We are pleased to announce that today we have 109 plungers," said event MC, Pastor Steve Miller of the United Church of Christ-Congregational. "Last year we raised \$18,000 for Special Olympics. Today, friends, we raised \$28,977."

The parking lot at Vermillion High School was crowded with onlookers and plungers – many of whom were in costume – on Sunday's chilly, overcast afternoon.

Participants were required to raise a minimum of \$100 to take a plunge into the freezing water-filled tank.

"You can either go out and ask businesses for money, or just your friends and family," said Special Olympics coach Jen Law. "We have a really neat Web site where you can go on and create a fundraising page. Then you can put in your goal of how much you want to raise."

The top money-raiser this year was Little Italy's employee Chrissy Gillies,

who raised \$1,705.

"It feels great to raise money for such a great cause," Gillies said. "Last year, I raised \$1,600-and-some, so I topped my dollar amount this year."

One of the primary purposes of the event is to raise funds and awareness for Special Olympics.

To help in this end, Kathie Herrera – the Special Olympics South Dakota Athlete of the Year for 2011 – was on hand to lead everyone in the Special Olympics oath. "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

Area Special Olympics athletes were onstage during the oath, as well.

A Burbank resident, Herrera

participated in the World Special Olympics Games in Athens, Greece, last year, where she won the silver medals in the 100M Breast Stroke, the 4x100-meter Medley Relay and the 100M Free Stroke, and the bronze in the 200M Individual Medley.

"It was really fun, and I got to meet a lot of new people," she said of the competition. "I made a lot of new friends from all over the world."

Although Herrera had participated in the plunge before, she opted only to take part in the ceremony Sunday.

"It was freezing cold," she said. "I didn't like it – my body couldn't take it." "Freezing cold," is exactly how Gillies described the experience of plunging, as

well. "You wouldn't think so, but it is. I don't care what people say," she said.

That's not too surprising. At the beginning of the event, Miller announced that the water was about 48 degrees.

That is, it was until several large coolers filled with ice were dumped into it.

"Don't look, plungers, it'll be better if you don't look," Miller implored them from the stage.

The plunge began after it was announced the water temperature had dropped to 40 at the surface, and colder farther down.

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Candidates file petitions for local elected offices

By Plain Talk staff

Area county and legislative races shaped up Tuesday as the deadline arrived for candidates to turn in petitions for the June 5 primary election.

Candidates had until 5 p.m. to submit their petitions to the Secretary of State's office, but petitions sent via registered mail prior to the deadline could be added in the next few days.

"We should have the final tally of petitions in over the next two days," Secretary of State Jason Gant stated in a media release. "On Friday, March 30, at 1 p.m., we will draw for ballot position for the legislative and statewide primary election candidates."

The last day for independent candidates to file nominating petitions with the Secretary of

State or county auditor for all offices except president is June 5.

According to The Associated Press, the Republican Party will apparently once again field more candidates than Democrats in South Dakota legislative races.

State Democratic Party Chairman Ben Nesselhuf says he expects that by the time all candidates have filed, Democrats will compete for about 25 of the 30 Senate seats and 55 of the 70 House seats.

State Republican Party Executive Director Tony Post says the GOP expects to run candidates for 32 Senate seats and 65 House seats.

Candidates who have filed as of Tuesday afternoon for legislative District 17 (Clay and Turner counties), which includes Vermillion, are – State Senate, Republican John Chicoine of

Parker and Democrat Tom Jones of Viborg; State House, Republican Nancy Rasmussen of Hurley and Democrats Ray Ring of Vermillion and Marion Sorlien of Viborg.

The following are local candidates for county, city and school races as of Tuesday afternoon:

Clay County: County Commissioners (at large), Democrats Ruth Bremer of Vermillion, Raymond "Dusty" Passick of Burbank and Leo Powell of Vermillion; and Republican Travis Mockler of Centerville; State's Attorney, Democrat Teddi Gertsma of Vermillion; Treasurer, Democrat Catherine Powell of Vermillion; Coroner, Democrat Tim McClelland of Vermillion.

Vermillion City Council: Central Ward, Kelsey Collier-

Wise and Jenny French; Northeast Ward, Clarence Meins; and Northwest Ward, Howard Willson.

Vermillion School Board: Mark Bottolfson, Tim Schwasinger and Dave Stammer.

Special districts fielded the following local candidates:

Vermillion Water Development District: Area 1 Director, Roger Tigert of Vermillion; Area 4 Director Lowell Anderson of Hurley; Area 5 Director, Barry Olson of Chancellor.

Heartland Consumer Power District: District 1 Director, Mark Joffer of Parker; District 2 Director, Dan O'Connor of Burbank; District 3 Director, Larry Nielsen of Tulare; District 4 Director, Kay Anderson of Beresford; District 10 Director, David Westbrook of Madison.

Guard unit will not deploy to Afghanistan

The South Dakota Army National Guard's 730th Area Support Medical Company, of Vermillion, will not deploy to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The 730th's 48 assigned members received word this week from U.S. Central Command they would not be deploying in July to provide health care support to service members overseas.

The change in deployment status is a result of the gradual draw down of U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

The mission of the 730th is to provide echelon I or basic emergency medical services. The unit is equipped with ambulances to quickly evacuate and provide care to patients en-route to a medical treatment facility. The unit is also able to provide echelon II care - of an emergent inpatient-outpatient nature - and return service members back to duty or evacuate them on to definitive care.

The unit is composed of combat medics, medical doctors, physician assistants, nurses, lab technicians, radiologists, dental technicians, mental health technicians, and maintenance and support staff.

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