

Polar Plunge aids special programs

By Charlie Kanzig
Correspondent

Jumping into the Deschutes River in the middle of winter is a crazy thing to do, but if the cause is right and the camaraderie is strong, the frigid dunk is worth it. At least that appears to be the philosophy of Sherri Hermens and Josh Nordell, who rallied a group from Sisters for the annual Polar Plunge, held Saturday, February 9, in Bend.

For Hermens and Nordell it's all about supporting the Special Olympics and Unified Sports programs for students with special needs in the Sisters School District. The Unified Sports program is designed to allow students with special needs to be able to compete with other teams in sports, including soccer and basketball. The program is coordinated as a PE class at Sisters High School under the direct of Nordell and Bill Mitchell.

Twenty-three students and seven adults comprised the Sisters group.

Not only did 30 Sisters participants literally take the plunge, the team also had the honor of raising more money than any other group in Central Oregon. The group raised over \$4,700 for the programs in total, which included a \$1,000 pledge from one family.

Each "plunger" is expected to get at least \$50 in pledges,



PHOTO PROVIDED

Students and staff took the plunge into the chilly Deschutes River in support of Unified Sports.

according to Hermens. Half of the proceeds go directly to the Sisters High School Unified Sports program and the other half goes to Oregon Special Olympics.

"Everything we do is about inclusion and support of our students," said Nordell.

Sherri Hermens, the ring-leader of this event for the past three years, said, "This year was the best! I hope we can make this an annual event, and even tie it in with Martin Luther King Day. It's such a great way to celebrate diversity and respect for our differences."

Hermens appreciates the enthusiasm of the staff and students at Sisters High. "I am grateful that we truly have a unique culture at Sisters High

School with lots of support for our unified sports teams. Two teachers, Sheryl Yeager and Kristy Rawls, even offered students extra credit to take part, and Yeager was a great role model by submerging herself fully underwater."

Nordell and Hermens are already looking forward to next year.

"I don't have any reason to think we won't have 50 people jumping in the river next year," said Nordell.

Free family day on offer at High Desert Museum

Mid Oregon Credit Union invites the community to enjoy free admission to the High Desert Museum on February 23. The "Free Family Saturday" complimentary admission program supports the community with the opportunity to explore art, wildlife and living history in Central Oregon's backyard.


The museum is located five minutes south from Bend on Highway 97. The Museum is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

"Mid Oregon Credit Union's generous support of two Free Family Saturdays invites the community to experience the museum," says High Desert Museum Executive Director Dana Whitelaw. "The well-known Spirit of the West and By Hand Through Memory exhibitions are open for families, in addition to a limited-time exhibit by celebrated indigenous artist Rick Bartow, Things You Know But Cannot Explain."

"Free Family Saturdays is one of our signature community events every year," said Kyle Frick, Mid

Oregon Credit Union's VP of Marketing. "Our team can't wait to open the doors and welcome local families to the museum to explore. No matter the weather, Free Family Saturdays bring young and old alike to spend the day together enjoying this one-of-kind Central Oregon destination."

The museum is offering a 10 percent discount on all memberships purchased on Free Family Saturday at the museum, giving families the opportunity to save on future visits. For more information about exhibits, wildlife encounters, living history and events, visit the museum's website at www.highdesertmuseum.org.



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