



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Special Olympics Invites Individuals and Teams to Plunge
into Lake Tahoe March 20**

WE'RE FREEZIN' FOR A REASON!

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE – Last year they came dressed as pirates, princesses, penguins, jumbo shrimp and other unusual characters and jumped in Lake Tahoe in the middle of winter all for fun and raising money for a good cause. Special Olympics' event organizers are hoping they return once again next month and bring lots of their friends. At a time when many funding sources have dried up, the Polar Plunge® fundraising event has become increasingly important for Special Olympics Northern California & Nevada. The organization relies on the grassroots fundraiser so that it may provide thousands of developmentally disabled athletes with free training and competition opportunities in 2010. Individuals and teams are invited to sign up now.

Last year, 199 people from Carson City, Reno and various Lake Tahoe communities plunged for Special Olympics and raised more than \$53,000. That translated into significant help for local athletes who rely on contributions for uniforms, equipment and continued training and coaching opportunities.

For the second year in a row, South Lake Tahoe resident Joyce Whitney-Silva will be among the many hearty souls who will be "Freezin' for a Reason" for the Polar Plunge®. She has pulled together her work colleagues from Greater Nevada Credit Union in Carson City and formed a team called "*Greater Nevada Super Heroes*." Joyce will enter the water as a mild-mannered working gal, and run out of the lake as none other than "Super Woman."

"A few of our employees tried it last year and just loved it," said Whitney-Silva, who also happens to be a coach for Special Olympics. "This year our little group expects to grow to 30 team members." That thrills Joyce who sees first hand what this program does for the athletes. I won't ever forget Tony, a 17-year-old



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athlete who didn't talk and lived in a group home. We were told he would not participate. Well, we trained him to snow shoe, and he just takes off with a big smile on his face. Now, it is the thrill of his life."

The Polar Plunge® is organized much like a walk-a-thon. Participants will get donations from people who sponsor them to enter the freezing water. Many plungers create personal web pages to seek donations from friends and family. To support the entrants, see how the pledges are accumulated or to become a Polar Plunger, visit www.sonc.org/polarplunge and click on the Lake Tahoe location.

"The Tahoe Plunge is the grand-daddy of all the plunges we have in the area," said Maggie Schwarz, Regional Vice President of Special Olympics in Nevada. "We have a lot of community support for our program, and it would be great to see that translate into participation. The athletes demonstrate their bravery in everything they do, every day of their lives. All we need to do is be half that courageous and be willing to get a little wet in some chilly water!"

Although plungers are not required to totally submerge, they must register for the activity and sign a waiver. People also should be healthy enough to participate and take precautionary safety measures – including wearing shoes to protect their feet from debris before entering the water. Many plungers jump into the cold water in costume. Athletes, coaches and volunteers will be on hand to share their experience with Special Olympics programs.

The Plunge is supported by officers from several local law enforcement agencies and the California Highway Patrol whose year-round support of Special Olympics helps provide training for thousands of Special Olympic athletes.

Lake Tahoe's KTHO Radio AM 590/FM96.1 will provide continual coverage on the fundraising effort and big plunge. Montbleu Resort & Casino is providing the official Polar Plunge housing for the event. Non-resident Tahoe plungers who want a fun weekend while they plunge, can call 1-800-648-3353 and book a room with a special "polar plunge rate".

THE EVENT

Special Olympics Northern California & Nevada will host the "Freezin' for a Reason" 2010 Polar Plunge® at noon March 20 at Zephyr Cove at South Lake Tahoe. The event also will include entertainment, a costume contest, awards and prizes. Registration begins at 10 a.m., followed by a parade of costumes at noon. The event concludes at 1 p.m. with a post-plunge party at the Montbleu Resort & Casino. Special room rates at the Montbleu are available to all who attend the Plunge event. Call 800-648-3353 and mention Special Olympics, Polar Bear Plunge or Group Code STSPECO.



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About Special Olympics Northern California & Nevada

Special Olympics Northern California is a free year-round sports training and competition program for children and adults with developmental disabilities. More than 17,000 athletes compete in over 170 competitions in 12 sports. This requires the extraordinary support and time of some 12,000 volunteers. Financial support comes almost exclusively from individuals, organizations, corporations and foundations. Find out how you can be a fan and visit www.SONC.org or www.SONV.org