

Hundreds participate in Lake Padden Polar Dip



Water temperature drops to 36 degrees

by **TOM CALLIS**

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BELLINGHAM – The ice around the edges of the lake did not deter approximately 400 local residents from participating in the sixth annual Lake Padden Polar Dip on New Years Day.

The temperature of the lake

go in as fast as possible," Klein said, who has participated in the plunge since it began. "A small amount of body fat is helpful too."

Plunge participants were able to warm up with heat lamps and hot coffee. Locker rooms were also available for those who wanted to change as soon as possible and lifeguards were on hand just in case anyone had trouble getting out of water.

The event coincides with the Birch Bay Polar Plunge and is



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– Polar Dip co-founder Jim Williams

reached a bone-chilling 36 degrees, but at least it wasn't windy like last year, said third-time polar plunge participant Greg McCracken.

"Last year was miserable," he said. "As soon as you got out of the water, you froze."

Some participants consider the plunge to be a family tradition, including 58-year-old Bob Klein who brought his brother Peter, sister-in-law and their two kids.

"I like to get in front of the mob so everyone forces me to

sponsored by the Bellingham Parks and Recreation Department.

Lori Jacobson, manager of the Arne Hanna Aquatic Center, said the idea of having a polar plunge in Bellingham came from former Bellingham Bay Swim Team Coach Jim Williams.

"He approached us, and we thought it was a great idea," Jacobson said.

Williams, 51, said the reason he thought of the idea was because he was getting tired of having to drive up to Birch Bay

every year where he would watch his mother jump into the frigid water.

Williams said Boulevard Park was the first location considered but there weren't enough safe entry points. Lake Whatcom was also considered until Jacobson brought up the idea of holding the event at Lake Padden.

"I thought, 'shoot, that would

be fine,'" Williams said. The availability of locker rooms and its beautiful location made it an ideal choice, he added.

Williams said he has participated in the event at Lake Padden every year while he would previously only stand on the shoreline while his mother

dived into Birch Bay each New Years Day.

"I have to (participate)," he said. "I am committed."

When describing the plunge, Williams said, "It's invigorating. It is the best one-minute sports event and a great way to start the new year." ■WI

Approximately 400 people participated in the sixth annual Lake Padden Polar Dip in 36-degree water as their friends and family watched from the shore.
Photos by Tom Callis

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information

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