

Penguin Plunge

dled together for the noon count-down that signaled the march of the penguins into the frothy waves. Even a few bikini-clad young ladies were spotted among the sea of shivering bodies. The countdown was more determined than it was enthusiastic, but it was loud and inspiring as wave after wave of shouting screaming and squealing participants took the plunge into 49-degree water in 45-degree air with a wind-chill factor of 38 degrees.

The rain and wind were unremitting throughout the event, but the brave, tough, and determined did not allow the foul weather to deter them from their goal. The Hopkins Hill Fire Department of Coventry wasn't able to raise their gigantic inflatable penguin because of the high winds. The inflatable penguin has been a landmark for the annual plunge

for years. However, the department was well represented, as they are every year. Woonsocket and Smithfield firefighters also braved the elements and showed up in good numbers, McGovern said.

Jamestown Police Lieutenant William Donovan sat in his cruiser at the end of the town beach for over an hour before the noon countdown, waiting to help direct traffic. "It looked as if very few were going to show up," he said. "Then big buses pulled over to the side of the road, and pickup trucks with campers started to fill the parking area. By 11:30, finding a place to park was next to impossible. But there still didn't seem to be many people. Fifteen minutes later, they seemed to come out of the vapor and fog. Bodies started jumping out of

buses, campers, cars, and trucks and headed for the shoreline," Donovan added. "It was amazing."

The police lieutenant was happy to report that despite the weather the atmosphere was festive, everyone behaved, no arrests were made, no injuries, and a good time appeared to be had for a good cause.

McGovern, one of the founders of the annual event, has taken the plunge every year since its inception. Thirty-one years ago, McGovern and 12 of his friends made the New Year's Day plunge into the icy bay waters on a lark. They did it for a dare. Their initial plunge grew into this major fund-raising event that made the Rhode Island Special Olympics what it is today, an organization of which Rhode Island is very proud, McGovern said.



A man and his duck

It took a good sense of humor to have a good time at this year's Penguin Plunge, which was held under a cold, steady rain. Photo by Andrea von Hohenleiten



Plunging right in

Penguins and other hearty folks jumped into the surf at Mackerel Cove for the annual Penguin Plunge held Jan. 1 to benefit Rhode Island Special Olympics. Photo by Vic Richardson

Shores

continued from page 1

be an affront to all of us," they said.

They noted that an earlier objection to a wetlands application on the same property was negated by the court action by the applicants, after what the Zarlengos called a "royal screw up" by local officials who did not meet procedural requirements. The Zarlengos said it would be "unconscionable" that the Thurston proposal continue when the Shores area is experiencing so many environmental problems, they said. The ISDS application is separate from the wetlands application the Thurstons filed.

The variances requested involved distances, a well, septic system, property lines and the site plan, including a proposal to create a five-foot mound of earth in the center of the lot to enable the ISDS to be above the water table. The lot also is known to have a ledge, compounding the lot's other problems. The Zarlengos asked that development of the lot be blocked "once and for all." They noted that a culvert connected to West Passage of Narragansett Bay exists from the lot, and they were concerned about the ability to use that culvert from the Thurston lot.

The councilors agreed to schedule a discussion for Jan. 22 so they could meet requirements for notifying the Thurstons of their intended discussion. Local officials now need to determine

if the DEM rejection of the Thurston application negates need for the council discussion at this time

Teen Center

Continued from page 1

the teens, and the Conanicut Community Coalition, the group that originally wrote the grant to start the teen center in Jamestown.

Minto said she had met with folks from the Rhode Island Foundation, who expressed interest in the teen center project and offered some funding.

"Right now, we're making a plan and then we'll try to solicit bids from local contractors, Minto said.

"I don't know how long it will take," she added, "but I'd like to see it cranked out" by the end of January.

The harbor office will not be moved until the project is "ready to go," Keiser said. At that time, the harbor office will be moved to the golf course building and then be permanently housed in the new town hall, he added.

Keiser said that at this point he has no idea how much the project will cost. After the bids are received, "we'll know how much fund-raising we have to do," he said, noting that they will ask the Rhode Island Foundation for some help.

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