



# JAMESTOWN PRESS

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## Windy day

High winds on Tuesday kicked up waves and whitecaps across Dutch Harbor as a daysailer rests safely on the beach at Fort Getty.

Photo by Jeff McDonough

## Hundreds expected to take the plunge for Special Olympics

By Sam Bari

Attired in traditional black and white complete with bow tie, tomorrow hundreds of supporters of the Special Olympics will impersonate penguins and dive into the icy waters of Mackerel Cove for the Penguin Plunge. The annual event for charity will take place at noon sharp on New Year's Day.

Last year more than \$80,000 was raised, said Special Olympics Executive Director Michael McGovern.

"In today's economy, we will be very happy if we can match that amount," McGovern said. "Our supporters are very loyal. I expect they will dig deep as they always have, and come up with the funding that is needed for this worthy char-

ity," he added.

The annual Penguin Plunge began 33 years ago and is now a Jamestown tradition.

If all goes as planned, participants will collect pledges for the \$80,000 goal. Anyone wishing to sponsor a "penguin" or contribute to the Special Olympics should go to the police station on Thursday morning or afternoon with their contributions. "That is where all the finances are handled," McGovern said.

A support group of two to three thousand is expected to attend the event and watch the penguin people take the frigid plunge. Every year, dozens of emergency medical personnel donate their services and stand by close to the water in case

of hypothermia or frostbite, which has never happened according to Fire Chief Jim Bryer. Bryer has attended the event "for at least 25 years in one capacity or another," Bryer said. "Fortunately, we've never had a fatality or even a serious injury," he added.

Participants generally arrive early to secure a parking place near the beach where they can stay in heated vehicles to keep warm before taking the plunge. The crowd appears to materialize out of nowhere seconds before the countdown, when the penguin people pack together in a tight mass to waddle across the sand—penguin style with teeth chattering and much screaming, hollering and hysterical laughing as

See "Plunge" on page 13

## Heavy vehicles pay larger toll on Pell bridge

RITBA plans to correct weight requirement

By Adrienne Downing

A small group of local motorists were surprised when they filled out their forms for the new E-ZPass system on the Claiborne Pell Newport Bridge, a surprise that some claim has amounted to an under the table rate hike by the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority.

Under the soon-to-be-abandoned token system, vehicles weighing under 8,000 pounds pay a \$2 cash toll, or are eligible to use a token that gives a discounted passage.

Only vehicles that weigh less than 7,000 pounds are eligible for the discounted rate under the new E-ZPass regulations, causing a gap into which some local contractors and service providers fall.

Chopmist Charlie's owner Chuck Masso is one of those affected by the new weight limit. Masso owns a Ford 250, which he says is under the 8,000-pound limit, but over the new maximum weight allowed by E-ZPass. "I usually travel over the bridge with my truck empty, but if someone with a truck slightly smaller than mine throws even a

See "EZ-Pass" on page 13

## Year in review

By Adrienne Downing

The year 2008 was full of headlines for Jamestown. Some of the news was sad, some celebratory and some a long time in coming. Here, in no particular order, we recap the biggest island news stories of the year.

### Highway barn finally breaks ground

After almost 20 years of trying to site and build a new highway garage for Jamestown Public Works personnel, the Town Council finally awarded a \$1.7 million contract to build the new

facility at its May 19 meeting.

Ten months after Jamestown voters approved the Taylor Point site by a vote of 934 to 753, ground was broken for the construction project on July 2.

The first signs of life at the site started to show on Sept. 30, with the appearance of the salt barn.

Work was briefly halted on Nov. 6 for the town to complete the purchase of 6,200 square feet of land from the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority, but otherwise work has

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## Ready for the snow

Jim Almeida and Pierre Pages of the Jamestown Highway Department on Tuesday afternoon were prepared for the snowstorm predicted to arrive today. They said weather forecasters were calling for 3 to 5 inches of snow and high winds, which could cause drifting.

Photo by Jeff McDonough