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## Sunday Night: I'm not plunging, but you can for the cause

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By MaryHelen Swanson, editor

It's a strange activity, particular to Minnesota and other states north - the polar plunge. Maybe it's because we're tougher or maybe just crazy. I'm not sure which. I know we need some diversions as the long, cold season stretches on, but this phenomena of jumping into a hole in the ice for the fun of it, well, that's another thing.

When I was a kid, a polar dip was a swim at sunrise when the mist was still rising off the lake. Staggering from a warm, comfy bed, one would - with or without suit - enjoy a refreshing wake-up swim in the nearby lake. Sometimes it happened at night. Some people called it skinny dipping. I always thought that was an interesting choice of words, because not all people were skinny, not all people dipped.

And, yes, I understand what it really means.

As a kid, I was used to swimming in the cool waters of White Bear Lake in late spring, because it was right after school was out that we had our swimming lessons in the lake at the end of Bellaire Ave. It wasn't an official beach yet, but a spot the locals claimed as a decent place to swim, not counting the fish attacks and the bloodsuckers. You just made sure you brought along a salt shaker.

But the air was sometimes, and the water was always about 65 degrees. That's a far cry from what's under the ice in February.

So on Saturday, February 6, when the folks gather at Fish Lake Regional Park for the first ever NB Rotary-sponsored Polar Plunge, I'll just be there with my camera, fully clothed, with no intentions of putting this body into any water that's got a cap of ice a foot thick.

The "Plunge" is going to be a fund raiser for "Dollars for Scholars" and that's an excellent cause, and a good reason, I guess, to submit oneself to this icy brutality. There will be prizes for the highest fund raiser and best costume.

You will be required to sign a waiver stating, among other things, that "I acknowledge that the nature of the Winter Plunge involves jumping into icy cold water outdoors in the winter in Minnesota and that I and/or my minor child am qualified, in good health, and in proper physical condition to participate in such activity."

You will be asked to sign off on permission to use written statements, photographs, videotapes and recordings of yourself, and that's where I come in.

I'll try to get as close to that hole in the ice as I can with my camera, possibly even my video camera, and I'll be ready for your facial expressions as your body meets the H2O. I'm anticipating some great shots.

There may have been a time when I might have considered taking such a plunge; there may have been a time when my body could stand it. But now, a warm shower is more my style. Yet, I'll be there at noon, Saturday, Feb. 6 to capture the excitement, the thrill, the insanity of plunging into a Minnesota lake in mid-winter. So smile pretty!