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The Neighborhood Files

Icy Polar Plunge A Huge Success

In Your Shoes raises close to \$10,000 for local organizations

By [Nancy Wright](#) | [Email the author](#) | December 12, 2010

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After diving into the icy waters of Lake Chauncy yesterday, 29 brave Polar Plungers are counting on the Westborough community to dive into their wallets. The second annual In Your Shoes (IYS) Polar Plunge is hoping to surpass last year's inaugural Polar Plunge total, which was a little over \$10,000. At the event's end, In Your Shoes, a nonprofit organization that provides emergency funds to Westborough residents with financial hardship, had already tallied \$9,312.

"It was cold, but it was so worth it to help the Westborough community," said Karen Ross, one of the plungers and the vice president of In Your Shoes. "It amazes me how companies like Panera, Starbucks and Ted's Montana Grill really do pitch in on a local level - not to mention all the plungers and volunteers."

In addition to the IYS committee, about 30 volunteers were on hand to help. Among the volunteers were members of the [Westborough High School National Honor Society](#), Boy Scouts and Youth Commission.

Ross was quick to add, "We could not have done this without the help of the DPW [Department of Public Works]. They went above and beyond to break the ice and set up the beach with designated areas for plungers, concessions and the bonfire."



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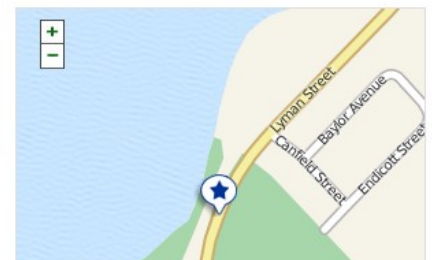
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Also on hand to entertain the crowd was the a cappella group Consummate Gentlemen and several Westborough Community Chorus singers.

This year, In Your Shoes will share the proceeds with two other local organizations. [Westborough Youth and Family Services](#) (WYFS) and the [Westborough Food Pantry](#) will each receive 25% of the profits raised. The other 50% will go to the In Your Shoes general fund to help Westborough residents throughout 2011.

At a recent In Your Shoes meeting, John Badenhansen, director of WYFS, explained how they had to scale back some of their programs due to financial limits. One of their popular programs, in its 15th year, is Hot Summer Nights, which provides safe, recreational activities for Westborough teens during the summer months.

They also run the [Free Holiday Store](#) for over 100 needy families, allowing residents to "shop" between Dec. 1 and Dec. 23. Badenhausen mentioned that they could still use some donations for younger children. "We're running a little low on toys for children around the age of one," he mentioned.

Terry Gavin, one of the co-founders and co-president of [In Your Shoes](#), was happy with the turnout. "We're so happy to be able to help people close to home," she said. "I'm not sure everyone realizes the number of families that need assistance right here in our own backyard."

Few know better than the [Westborough Food Pantry](#), an organization that has been handling an increasing demand, up 40% from last year. The number of families using their services hovers around 100.

"The Polar Plunge is a great way to show we care about our neighbors," said Debi Ledoux, [IYS'](#) other co-founder and co-president. "Not only are we helping others, we're having fun." Most plungers, whether participating as a team or solo, donned costumes for the frosty plunge.

Capturing the prize for best costume was the team We Are Sparta, who also won the most spirited award. Winning first place for the P⁴ (Practically Perfect Polar Plunger) award was Team Lifesavers. The award for the person who raised the most money went to Mike Bernatchez, who brought in an impressive \$2,615.

Last year, donations trickled in through the new year. "We know it's a tough time," said Ross, "but we're hoping people will dig deep and do what they can to help their Westborough neighbors."

She mentioned that people can still send in contributions. Anyone interested in donating can make a check out to [In Your Shoes](#), with Polar Plunge in the memo line, and send it to [In Your Shoes](#), PO Box 19, Westborough, MA 01581.