

PRESS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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It's time for the Aloha SOMO Plunge! The official party of winter is Saturday, Feb. 24

LAKE OF THE OZARKS - The 29th Annual Lake of the Ozarks Polar Plunge and Polar Bear Strut 5k will take place on Saturday, Feb. 24. Brave men and women from around the area will don Hawaiian-themed costumes and swimwear and take "polar" dips into Lake of the Ozarks. Their Reason for Freezin' is the athletes of Special Olympics Missouri (SOMO)! All proceeds from this year's event will benefit training and competition for the thousands of SOMO athletes across the state, including right here in Mid-Missouri.

There is no age limit for the Strut, however, the Polar Plunge is open to anyone 10 years or older who is a fan of having a good time for a good cause. The event is hosted by City of Osage Beach and the Osage Beach Police Department. The Strut and the Plunge will both begin and end at the Lake of the Ozarks State Park / Grand Glaize Beach. Day-of registrations are welcome for both events. Strut and Plunge registration begins at 9 a.m. The Strut will begin at 10 a.m., and the Plunge will start promptly at 2 p.m.

Back for the 10th year is the Pee Wee Plunge! This event is open to any child through 9 years of age and will be held in the parking lot near the registration tent at 1 p.m. the day of the Plunge. There is a \$25 registration fee, and each "Pee Wee" will receive an official event t-shirt. If your Pee Wee decides to fundraise - and they raise \$100 - they will receive a fun Polar Plunge prize as well. If you would like to register your child online, please go to www.somo.org/plunge, click on the LOZ link and choose Pee Wee Plunger for your registration type. For more info, please contact Crystal Schuster at cschuster@somo.org or 573-469-7839.

"The Polar Plunge is one of my favorite events because it brings people from all walks of life together, for the same great cause – the SOMO athletes," said Crystal Schuster, SOMO's Sr. Director of Community Development. "It's so fun to see the effort that goes into the costumes, and I'm always amazed at how hard everyone works to beat their fundraising totals from the previous year. It's just an overall fun event, and it's something that I look forward to every year!"

In 2023, Lake of the Ozarks Polar Plungers raised more than \$280,000 for SOMO athletes. Each participant must raise a minimum of \$75 to take the Plunge and can earn incentives by reaching fundraising goals. This year's goal is \$285,000, and organizers hope to break the million-dollar mark across the state with more than 10 events.

SOMO is also offering a Super Plunge option for its most dedicated participants, beginning the day before the Plunge. Super Plungers must raise at least \$2,500 for the privilege to Plunge 24 times in 24 hours. In 2023, our Super Plungers raised a total of \$179,900. The Super Plunge will begin on Friday, Feb. 23 at 2:30 p.m.

“The Super Plunge is an added bonus to our Plunge weekend,” Schuster said. “These individuals endure the cold water 24 times, and the money they raise for our athletes is incredible. The time and effort that they put into their fundraising is amazing, and SOMO is so blessed to have them on our team!”

For those not interested in the cold water, SOMO invites everyone out to the Polar Bear Strut 5k! This 5k is another way to show your bravery in the freezing cold! You can run, walk, roll or strut through the cold winter air. Whatever works! You can sign up for the [Polar Bear Strut 5k here!](#)

Costumes are highly encouraged. Awards will be given in the following categories: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place honors in these categories: schools, individuals, teams, and law enforcement.

No wet suits are allowed, and shoes are required.

The easiest and most efficient way to register and fundraise is online! Simply go to www.somo.org/plunge, and click on the LOZ event to sign up. Make sure to email your friends and families to support your Plunge. Paper registration forms are also available at the SOMO Training for Life Campus (305 Special Olympics Dr. – Jefferson City). Mail or deliver pre-registration forms and the minimum \$75 contribution to Special Olympics Missouri Plunge - 305 Special Olympics Dr., Jefferson City, MO 65101.

Plunging participants will receive an official Polar Plunge commemorative shirt, bragging rights for freezing your fur off, and free admission to the Pre-Plunge Chili Cook-off / Silent Auction. The Pre-Plunge Party admission for the general public is \$5 per person. Participants can also receive incentives for reaching fundraising goals: \$250 – Towel, \$500 – Sling Backpack, \$1,000 – Stanley Cup & Towel, and \$2,000 – All of the above PLUS Gloves.

SOMO is lucky to have one Plunge Ambassador helping with this event. Our Plunge Ambassador for this year’s Plunge is Bobby Bates. Bobby is a SOMO athlete, and he has been working for months to help spread awareness of the Plunge!

“I enjoy being a part of Special Olympics Missouri, and I think the Lake of the Ozarks Plunge is one of the best ways to support our year-round program,” Bates said.

If you’d like to set up an interview with our Plunge Ambassador or receive any additional information about the Polar Plunge, please contact Crystal Schuster at 573-469-7839 or email cshuster@somo.org.

Thank you so much to our sponsors!

- Our Polar Level sponsors are Mid-Missouri Honda Dealers, KRCG-TV, MO State Parks, Jolly Rogers and Benne Media
- Our Tundra Level sponsors are LO Profile and Margaritaville Lake Resort

Special Olympics Missouri

Special Olympics Missouri (SOMO) is a year-round program of sports training and athletic competition for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Thousands of athletes participate in 13 Olympic-type sports throughout the state. SOMO provides people with intellectual disabilities continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, and experience joy as they participate in the sharing of gifts and friendship with their fellow athletes, their family and friends, and communities across Missouri.

SOMO is proud of our financial health, returning 82% of every dollar back to program services. We are privileged to be recognized with these honors: Better Business Bureau A+ Charity Accreditation,

Guidestar Gold Level and Charity Navigator 4-star rating. Special Olympics was also recently named Morning Consult's No. 4 most trusted nonprofit.

Thank you for trusting us with your donations, volunteer time and your goodwill.

Visit Special Olympics Missouri at www.somo.org. Engage with us on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Tik-Tok](#), [Threads](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).

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