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For Immediate Release**THE 17TH ANNUAL CHICAGO POLAR PLUNGE BREAKS FUNDRAISING RECORDS WITH 5,500 PLUNGERS AND OVER \$1.53 MILLION DOLLARS RAISED TO DATE**

CHICAGO (March 7, 2017) - - Special Olympics Chicago announced today that the 2017 Chicago Polar Plunge, which took place Sunday, March 5 at Chicago's North Avenue Beach, has broken all fundraising records for the fourth consecutive year, with the 2017 event raising \$1.53 million dollars to date. That number is expected to continue to climb higher as donations are accepted through the end of March. The event, which raises funds for the SCC/Special Olympics Chicago program, attracted 5,500 plungers who dove into the 40 degree waters of Lake Michigan throughout the morning and early afternoon.

The Chicago Polar Plunge once again attracted major star power and national attention with actor, writer and director Dax Shepard serving as VIP (Very Important Plunger) for this year's event. Shepard, one of the stars of Warner Bros. Pictures' upcoming action comedy "CHiPS", in theaters nationwide March 24, 2017, jumped into the Lake wearing his CHiPS police uniform. Former Chicago Bear Brian Urlacher also attended, grilling brats and serving guests at the Johnsonville display.

Also on-hand greeting plungers was Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne Burke, one of the founders of Special Olympics, as well as Jack O'Callahan, a member of 1980 US Olympic "Miracle On Ice" Hockey team. Additional Chicago Polar Plungers included: cast members of Chicago Fire, Chicago PD, Chicago Med; and Chicago Justice; personalities from NBC5 Chicago; elected officials including: Aldermen Matt O'Shea, Patrick Thompson, John Arena, Howard Brookins, Jr. Derrick G. Curtis, Michelle Harris, Raymond Lopez, Deborah Mell, Ariel Reboyras, Michael Scott, Jr., Daniel Solis, and Gilbert Villegas.

The Chicago Polar Plunge is the largest fundraiser of the year for Special Olympics Chicago, which provides year-round activities and events to nearly 6,800 athletes.

"This year's Chicago Polar Plunge was unlike any other, with beautiful weather temperatures, a balmy 40-degree Lake Michigan, and incredible support from thousands of plungers and spectators," said Kevin Magnuson, president of SCC/Special Olympics Chicago. "The Chicago Polar Plunge is an enormously important day for our 6800 athletes, as it helps to fund everything from lunches and medals to sports equipment and transportation to events. We are incredibly grateful to all of our plungers, who once again broke all fundraising goals and records. And, thank you also to Dax Shepard - we could not have had a better celebrity lead the first group into the Lake. He was gracious, engaging and was genuinely happy to support our athletes."

This year, the ComEd Coolers was once again the largest team in the history of the Chicago Polar Plunge with 675 participants and over \$271,000 raised to date.

Donations will be accepted through the end of March. To donate or view photos from the 2017 Chicago Polar Plunge, please visit www.chicagopolarplunge.org

The 2017 Chicago Polar Plunge was generously sponsored by the Chicago Park District, ComEd, Mariano's, Peoples Gas, Uber, Home Depot, Hills Bros., Johnsonville, Chicago Athletic Clubs, Subway, Inspired Catering & Events, NBC5 Chicago, Telemundo Chicago, 670 The Score and 93-XRT.

About Special Olympics Chicago:

The Special Olympics Chicago program is the largest in the State of Illinois. The Chicago Program alone is larger than 26 other complete State programs. Chicago is the birthplace of Special Olympics and is now held in nearly 170 countries, worldwide.

Special Olympics provides year-round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic type sports for children (ages 8 and older) and adults with mental disabilities or closely related developmental disabilities. The program gives them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendships with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community. In Chicago alone, more than 6,800 athletes are involved in the program.

Since 1969, Special Children's Charities has been the fundraising co-sponsor of Special Olympics Chicago, in partnership with the Chicago Park District. Special Children's Charities mission statement is to promote, foster and encourage physical and mental health and improvement through athletics, recreational and social activities among youth and adults with disabilities.

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