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PPSC Executive Director Takes Plunge: Birthday Fundraiser Nets Over \$1,500 for Sailing Center

By John Lynds

Most people wouldn't dream of spending their birthday jumping into the freezing Boston Harbor on a cold winter day but that's exactly what Piers Park Sailing (PPSC) Center's Executive Director Alex DeFronzo did on his birthday.

To mark his 30th birthday on Saturday, December 30, DeFronzo emerged from PPSC's trailer dressed in shorts and a life vest and with the water temperature in the low 40's he took the plunge into the harbor as part of his annual birthday fundraiser for the Sailing Center.

"The online fundraiser totaled \$1,690, which will be used for PPSC's Ocean Science After School program at the Samuel Adams School," said DeFronzo. "The program is for 4th and 5th graders and students learn about marine life and do experiments in the Adams STEM Lab and on the PPSC dock. During the winter most people are not thinking about going out on the harbor so fundraising slows down at the sailing center."

DeFronzo explained that the winter is the time of year that a fundraiser helps a lot with covering payroll for its after school instructors and buying educational supplies.

"PPSC started Ocean Science After School and the EBHS Sailing Team last year, both of which happen in the off-season so PPSC has been doing more off-season fundraising," he said.

This was the second year in a row that DeFronzo jumped into the harbor off the Sailing Center's docks to raise money for the beloved community program.

"Last year I had to cut a hole in the ice to jump in – this year it has been pretty warm so the harbor hasn't frozen over—although it's still cold," said DeFronzo. That made the experience quite a bit nicer. I'm also happy to have this new birthday ritual and I am planning on keeping it up. I am hoping that next year some other people might jump in with me. I saw a few volunteers online so I hope they're serious and they take the plunge December 30, 2019."

Back when he was a kid at the Sailing Center there was an old tradition of dunking instructors in the Harbor on their birthday. While PPSC has had a lot of success with community fundraising efforts DeFronzo came up with the idea to jump in the cold winter water on his birthday as a fundraiser.

DeFronzo said he bounced the idea off of some PPSC co-workers and the board of directors.

"I told Mary Cole (board chair) I thought I could raise a couple hundred bucks," said DeFronzo. "She thought I should shoot for a lot more so I set the goal at \$1,000."

The jump was quick and DeFronzo was in and out of the water in just a few seconds.

"All of us that work at PPSC truly love the program and would do anything for it...I would jump in every day if that's what it takes for us to thrive and succeed," he said. DeFronzo said he plans to jump again this March for Save the Harbor/Save the Bay's 2018 Harpoon Shamrock Splash, this time with a big PPSC team by his side and as well as his annual birthday plunge next year.