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Frigid fundraisers net more than \$54,000 at Shamrock Splash



Hundreds ran down Carson Beach on Sunday to raise money for Save the Harbor Save the Bay after budget cuts threatened beach programs.

While many residents may have thought this year's Shamrock Splash would be a lukewarm endeavor, Mother Nature had other plans.

With temperatures in teens and 20s on Sunday and the winds making it feel even colder, hundreds came out nevertheless to support Save the Harbor/Save the Bay. SHSB President Bruce Berman said previously that they needed the funds now more than ever, as the Massachusetts State Legislature cut \$5 million out of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation during the last budget cycle, and many of the beach programming they did came from DCR. They were shooting for \$40,000, but cleared that number with a hefty bonus at \$54,770.

The costume contest is always a big draw for residents as well.

"This is my third year doing it and I think it's a great cause," said resident Jane Kepros, who dressed as a sea turtle for the event. "SHSB does so many great things for the community and obviously they had cleaned up the beaches. The first year I did it, everyone had a costume and I didn't, and I said look at all these people with these wonderful costumes, I've got to do it next year. Last year, I actually won the costume contest, and this year I thought I've got to do something special."

Mix 104.1's Kennedy Elsey kicked off the event on the beach, and lauded the crowd for coming together in SHSB's time of need.

"You are making things great for all the beaches – the beaches didn't used to be so pretty, and now they're gorgeous and we take advantage of them," she said. "This year we got hit hard with some budget cuts people, the man did come and take our money! And we're sad about

it and we need your money to bring it back. So we thank you so much for coming out today and doing what you did and raising money and dressing like an idiot and running into the water when it's freezing cold and your mom's going 'you're doing what today?' Because mine did. We appreciate it so much."

Kennedy added that participants should be careful when choosing their attire, as she found out firsthand.

"This is my fifth year, doing stupid things like jumping into water when it is much too cold outside to be jumping in water," she said. "So three or four years ago, we did prom dresses, and I had bought this really cute prom dress that had gone on sale and it was gorgeous. It had the biggest skirt you have ever seen, and as soon as I stepped into the water, 14 people stepped on it and I was like 'I'm dying I'm dying!'"

Resident Jack Skahan said he's been doing the Splash for years now, and finds it an amazing time.

"For SHSB, this is my sixth year doing it," he said. "I live on Nahant Beach, and I'm a big advocate for scuba diving, snorkeling, kayaking, all that stuff, and we really have to protect what's here. It's a lot of beautiful stuff."

Shakan admitted there are probably easier ways to raise money than risk hypothermia.

"This is way more fun," he said. "Why not do something that's a little out of the way, a little ridiculous and have a good time doing it?"

Resident Tamara Ball said she initially signed up for the plunge when the weather was a bit nicer, but she said she agreed to it and would do it regardless.

"Well, it was during that nice stretch of 60 degree weather that I signed up, but now I'm thinking, why not, it's a bucket list you know?" she said. "We're fortunate to have the beautiful waters, and I walk on the beach every day so I thought I could give back."

Resident Mike Bruno said he came out because he wanted to raise funds for his neighborhood's sailing club.

"We're here to support Pierce Park Sailing Center in East Boston, trying to raise attention to the fact that we don't have enough funding for the program," he said. "We're doing everything we can to get the program started this year. We need about \$100,000 total, but just with this event we raised about \$8,000, so we're chipping away and on track."

