

**Tierney Duffy, sophomore, North Riverside, IL – TEAM MEMBER THAT GOT US INVOLVED**

**Why did you participate?**

If there is one thing I truly believe in, it is equality for all people, especially those with disabilities. I am very passionate about Special Olympics and love to contribute to the cause in any way that I can. Even if that means jumping into a freezing cold lake in the middle of February!

**What were you feeling the day of the plunge?**

PURE EXCITEMENT! This was my 3rd year plunging so I knew what to expect. It's a complete rush of adrenaline that you can't feel by doing anything else! Even though you feel miserable and cold, the fact that you're a part of something so much bigger than yourself makes it all worthwhile.

**What did it mean for the cause?**

Special Olympics is a completely non-profit organization so it needs all the financial support it can get. This event raises thousands of dollars for the organization every year. In turn, that gives thousands of athletes with disabilities the opportunity to compete in the sports that they love.

**What did it mean for the team?**

This experience brought our team even closer. It took a lot of work (several months) to fundraise and organize ourselves. Even though it was stressful at times, it was a huge success! We had set a fundraising goal for our team at \$1900 but surpassed that by almost \$2,000! This was an especially emotional plunge for me for two reasons. 1. I convinced my entire team to plunge with me. It's one thing plunging by yourself, but when you get to share the experience with your best friends it's another feeling entirely. I can't even describe the gratitude I have and the pride I feel in my team. 2. I completed a practicum in an Autism classroom this past fall and became really close with one of the 1st graders in my class. He passed away suddenly over winter break so I decided to dedicate my plunge to him. I think this plunge was the perfect way to honor the person he was and the joy he brought to my life while, at the same time, supporting an organization that brought him and other children like him joy in his own life. This is an experience I will never forget and I hope will continue as tradition for the LU softball team!

## **Mary Diduch, Senior Co-Captain, Park Ridge, IL**

### **Why did you participate?**

Our teammate Tierney asked the team as a whole if we would like to participate in this event as a team. We all jumped at the opportunity! We knew it was a cause close to Tierney's heart, and we really wanted to support not only the cause, but her as a teammate.

### **What were you feeling the day of the PLUNGE?**

I was nervous because I have never participated in an event such as this. But I was also really excited because it was a new experience!

### **What did it mean for the cause?**

In terms of the cause, compared to the amount that other teams raised in terms of the number on the team, we did awesome! I can't believe we almost reached \$4000. We raised a similar amount of money compared to teams with many more people on their team.

### **What did it mean for the team?**

This event brought us closer as a team. We supported one of our teammates in a cause that is very special for her. For me personally, Tierney showed me how much of an impact one person can make. She had done this event two times before this year, but this year she changed it up, and by asking the team if we would want to participate in the event, a much larger number was raised for the Special Olympics...all because of one person to start it off!

## **Marisa Thackston – freshman, Lake Villa, IL**

### **Why did you participate?**

I participated in the plunge for my teammate, Tierney Duffey. This event is very important to Tierney and I wanted to show her that I fully supported her because that's what teammates are for. Also, I wanted to support a great organization.

### **What were you feeling the day of the PLUNGE?**

The entire day leading up to the plunge was surreal. I was filled with excitement because I was supporting my teammate and a great organization. I will honestly admit that I was scared because I had no idea what to expect. Excitement suppressed my fear when we arrived at the Plunge because of the positive energy that surrounded me.

### **What did it mean for the cause?**

We may have not raised the most money, but we brought two vans full of college girls ready to show the participants of the Special Olympics that they are supported by their community.

### **What did it mean for the team?**

We came together to support our teammate in an event that means so much to her. Seeing the excitement on her face throughout the entire day brought the team together in an entire new way. The plunge showed the team we are willing to support each other in any aspect, all we have to do is reach out to one another.

## **ALEX CHIODO – Senior Co-Captain, Chicago, IL**

### **Why did you participate?**

I participated because the Polar Plunge is for a cause that's extremely close to Tierney's heart. Our team is like a family we do everything together, so it was a no brainer (no matter how cold)

### **What were you feeling the day of the PLUNGE?**

I was feeling cold very cold. No, but honestly we were all really pumped and excited but of course we had to give Tierney a hard time about it.

### **What did it mean for the cause?**

As athletes sometimes we forget how lucky we are to have the opportunities that we are given. Special Olympics is a great organization that shows how powerful being on a team really is. I have seen some of the special olympics play basketball and the utter joy they get out of it is simply amazing.

### **What did it mean for the team?**

Like I said previously our team is a family. We are always there to support one another. No one ever even thought "ugh I can't believe I have to do this" because we were all together and having a blast. We even all jumped in the same hot tub together (in case you didn't know you can fit 17 people in a hot tub). It was also great to have 2 coaches do it with us, it really showed the team unity that we preach. This is a story to continue for years and a new tradition. Even though I will be gone next year I know that (senior) Mary Diduch and I are already planning a trip up to support the team and participate again.