

More than 100 ‘Dip for Dozer’ at Lake Ripley

By *Tristan McGough*
Special to the Reporter

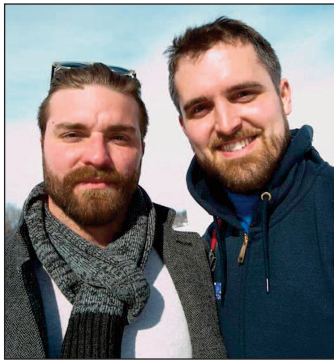
Included in the 100 plus polar participants who took a Dip for Dozer at this 13th annual Lake Ripley-based event were 22 people from the Washington, D.C. area. Several polar plungers came from other states; many more from around the state; one was even from another country—Germany.

Such has the reputation of this charitable affair snow-balled over the years, much of it due to the continued momentum of loyal friends and family who keep the memory of Dustin “Dozer” Zuelsdorf alive.

Honored as a champion football player sporting the number 52, Dozer was taken away on July 27, 2004, by a motorcycle accident when he was only 17 years old. His close knit group of peers joined family members and other friends to build an annual occasion that has fostered a continuing sense of the wonder of and appreciation for life, as well as providing a substantial scholarship legacy for football athletes.

One of those intimate friends of Dozer is Bryce Chinault. Not only had Bryce’s own extended family joined in the jump as a group, many of them coming from their home in Minnesota, Chinault is the person who organized the 22-person troupe arriving from Washington, D.C.

After the ceremonial formalities of the yearly occasion, which included singing the National Anthem, a benediction from a local pastor,



Keifer Allan and Bryce Chinault are two of Dozer's many friends.

Photo by *Tristan McGough*

and introduction of the panel of judges for the best costumes, Chinault struck the golden vein of this multifaceted event with his uplifting paean to his deceased friend.

“Above everything else,” Chinault, an obviously seasoned speaker before crowds, declared, “this is a celebration of the wonder of life.

“We continue to remember our much loved friend, but more than that, we bring meaning to life by using our lives for purposes greater than ourselves. Life is about getting together and making some joy and laughter that wouldn’t have been there if not for us.

“So, let’s honor our friend by living life to the fullest and doing some good for those around us!”

From that, Chinault served as a vivacious example of living life fully by jumping into the frigid waters of the lake three times with three different groups of people.

Dustin’s mother, Kim, affirms, “Our family knows that Dustin’s group of friends is special. Their bond keeps the Dip for Dozer event going.”

Kim, as well as husband and father Dale Zuelsdorf, along with brother Kiefer, all took the plunge, as they regularly do. They, along with the other intrepid jumpers, secured pledges from donors whose contributions will go into a perpetual scholarship account entitled “The Dozer 52 Football Scholarship Fund.”

Dozer’s Fund is specifically awarded to senior football players who show an outstanding commitment to the Cambridge football program, as well as to their fellow classmates, family and community. The fund has provided well over \$100,000 of scholarship money to over 50 award winners to defray college expenses.

On Saturday morning, Feb. 10, it was not business as usual for the Cambridge Fire Department. Instead of fighting fire, they were fighting the cold while cutting through two feet of Lake Ripley’s ice. From the huge rectangular pond firefighters created, the large blocks of ice were then used by chain-saw sculptors to fashion their cold creations.

The polar village-surrounded by ice shanties and snowmobiles—came to rapid life as the Rack Pack set up their pink kiosk, selling hot snacks and beverages to those seeking inner warmth, as turkey bowlers began to strike and spare, and while kite flyers let their colorful wings soar on the wind’s up-draft into an azure sky on a sunny morn.

Children and dogs scampered and scurried across the frozen tundra and piled into snowbanks, laughing and barking (respectively) in the innocent frolic of the playful, totally engaged in a moment of fun. Adults huddled in convivial groups, generating the heat of humor as they paradoxically bellowed the wonderful craziness of taking a polar plunge to benefit the greater community.

And everyone was taking photos. Not dozens or hundreds. Thousands of photos. Selfies for sure, but the hot items were the costumes. Those just had to be memorialized as well as instantly shared digitally. As television stations and professional photographers colonized their spots for shooting the event, smart-phoners hurled their digitized missiles into the web’s ether for the world to immediately see manifested



The Flying Knights earned their name.

Photo by *Steve Gasper*

upon their LCD screens. Call it instant visual gratification.

Jackson Jones from the Morning Show of radio station WWQM-FM Q-106 was one of the three judges to evaluate the spectrum of costumes the plungers donned to spice the event up. From Lumberjacks to Pac Men and everything in between, each group honed not just their sartorial regalia but their dramatic entrance, perhaps with a forgivable bit of role-playing under script.

Though the event was delayed about 20 minutes, once the jumpers began, the parade of costumed plungers was unstoppable. Cameras tried to capture the frenzy of the fervid jumpers as they confronted the frigid waters, first in thought and facial expression, then in flesh and involuntary reaction.

Expressions and reactions: that’s what really made the day so memorable. Watching faces ignite in cold-shock, expressing the unfeigned reactions of jumpers grabbed by gravity and pulled down into the icy watery domain. Well, frankly, it left every onlooker with their own reaction: uncontrollable laughter.

Hilarity is always wrung from extremes. Here the extremes of hot skin to cold water. If you’ve never experienced it for yourself, seeing someone else take a polar plunge automatically puts one into an involuntary state of empathy, the body both shivering from imagined cold and shuddering with overpowering laughter.

And it’s those highest of times that were brought up again and again during the continuing festivities at the Rockdale Bar & Grill from 3 p.m. until—for some—closing time. There, those who broached the limits of hypothermia as well as those who had cheered them on slowly thawed out after 3 p.m. with free food, raffles, prizes and awards for best costumes, as well as most monies raised for the scholarship fund.

About 7 o’clock music and dancing kicked in.

Kim and Dale were on hand at the bar, thanking friends, new plungers and old, for their kindness and support. Dustin Zuelsdorf is lovingly remembered by those acquainted with his affable nature and resolute sense of self.

Together, his family and close friends constitute a candescent core of legacy holders who promote a Celebration of Life larger than any single person for the good of the community.

Dozer has left a legacy of scholarship funds, shared laughter, and his continuing presence.



Before dipping, the Lumberjacks split open a tree trunk to reveal a concealed message.

Photo by *Steve Gasper*



One of several ice sculptures, this one is Dozer's jersey football number.

Photo by *Tristan McGough*



The Pac Men were all downloaded into Ripley's cold waters.

Photo by *Tristan McGough*

Gunderson joins Bank of Milton

Submitted by
Dan Honold
Bank of Milton President

Theresa Gunderson recently joined the Bank of Milton, 323 Parkview Drive, as a Customer Relationship Officer.

Gunderson has 28 years of banking experience in the Milton, Janesville area. She began working as a teller in 1990, then became a supervisor and officer. Before working at the Bank of Milton, she worked at two other financial institutions.

A long time Milton area resident, Gunderson said she looks

forward to working at a full service, locally owned, independent hometown bank in Milton where she knows “pretty much everyone.”

She has worked in the banking industry for nearly three decades, because as she said, “I love it. I love helping people.”

She went on to say, people and relationships are what make



GUNDERSON

the difference between one bank and another. “I believe I can help with that,” she said.

Bank of Milton president Dan Honold said, “We’re excited to have Theresa working here with her many years of banking experience and connections to help grow the bank.”

Theresa and her husband Dave have two children, Justin and Anna.

She is active in many community activities and serves on the Board of Directors for the Milton Area Chamber of Commerce.

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