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MAYOR RAHM EMANUEL PARTICIPATES IN POLAR PLUNGE BENEFITING THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Comedian Jimmy Fallon, NFL Star Israel Idonije, Chicago Public Library Commissioner Brian Bannon and Park District Superintendent Mike Kelly Join Following Success of Rahm's Readers Challenge

Today Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Tonight Show host Jimmy Fallon, NFL star Israel Idonije, Chicago Public Library Commissioner Brian Bannon and Chicago Park District Superintendent Mike Kelly participated in the 14th Annual Chicago Polar Plunge, which benefits the Special Olympics. During the first annual citywide Summer of Learning, Mayor Emanuel challenged children participating in the "Rahm's Readers" program that if they read a total of 2 million books, the Mayor, Idonije, and Commissioner Bannon would jump into Lake Michigan.

"I'm proud to have taken the plunge into Lake Michigan today, both to highlight the tremendous accomplishments of Chicago's children who read over 2 million books last summer and to benefit the Special Olympics, which serves thousands of Chicago athletes every year," said Mayor Emanuel. "The Polar Plunge is a uniquely Chicago event, reminding us each year of the incredible strength and resilience of all the residents of the City of Chicago."

The Rahm's Readers program is a key part of the citywide Summer of Learning, which keeps students learning and engaged during the summer months when school is not in session. This past summer, Chicago was the first city to pilot a citywide digital badge system across hundreds of organizations and learning opportunities to visually represent and reward students' achievements. The Summer of Learning has more than 100 local and national organizations offering opportunities to earn badges, with more than 1,000 badge-earning possibilities— across Chicago's communities and connected to the world online.

The Special Olympics has programs in 170 countries with over 4 million athletes participating. Chicago's Special Olympics chapter is one of the largest in the state of Illinois with over 5,000 athletes. The city of Chicago has long lasting ties with the Special Olympics as the Games began in Chicago at Soldier Field back in 1968. Chicago Special Olympics operates in the Chicago Park District and Chicago Public Schools from funds raised by the Special Children's Charities.

Last year, more than 2,800 people participated in the annual Polar Plunge benefitting the Special Olympics. The Games began in Chicago at Soldier Field back in 1968 and serves thousands of Chicago athletes. Chicago Special Olympics operates in the Chicago Park District and Chicago Public Schools from funds raised by the Special Children's Charities.

Photo 1 Caption: Mayor Rahm Emanuel participates in the Polar Plunge

Photo 2 Caption: Jimmy Fallon, Israel Idonije, Chicago Brian Bannon and Mike Kelly participate in the Polar Plunge

Photo Credit: Brooke Collins // City of Chicago

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