

# MEDIA RELEASE

*October 19, 2020*

## **Keep The Spirit Alive 2021 Perth Polar Bear Special Plunge**

This coming New Year's Day will be the 28th annual Perth Polar Bear Plunge. The previous 27 plunges have raised over \$340,000 for local community organizations - what an accomplishment! Lanark County Community Justice (LCCJ) was selected as the recipient organization for the upcoming plunge, and was looking forward to holding one of the best plunges ever.

But this is not a year like any other year. A plunge will still happen, but it won't be a public plunge. Because of COVID-19 concerns, the organizers have decided to defer the public plunge for LCCJ until January 1, 2022. Despite LCCJ's increased need for fundraising dollars at this difficult time, there were just too many concerns about how to hold such an event safely and responsibly in these challenging times. The Perth Polar Bear Plunge is known for being one of the safest plunges in Canada, and we aim to keep it that way.

There will still be a small plunge happening on January 1, 2021, to keep the spirit of the plunge alive. The Executive Director of Lanark County Community Justice, Joellen McHard has bravely agreed to plunge (her first time), with her family. Also plunging will be Stan Munroe, on behalf of the Perth Polar Bear Plunge Committee, and Alfred Von Mirbach as event organizer. Joining from afar, in Kabul, Afghanistan will be Dave Lavery, doing a plunge there, as he is not able to make it back to Canada this year. Dave and Stan are the founders of this wonderful event, and have been plunging, in one way or another, almost every year since 1994.

People who want to make a donation this year can do so by going to: [www.commjustice.org](http://www.commjustice.org) and clicking on the "Plunge or Pledge" link. That will direct them to the Canada Helps profile page for Joellen and other plungers, where you can easily make an on-line donation, and get a tax receipt. That will help flow some much needed funds to LCCJ this year.

If you want to get on board early for the 2022 Plunge, you can do so by registering now as a plunger at the above website, following the links to the Canada Helps portal. It is a wonderful, refreshing (!) way to break in the New Year, and support a very worthwhile community organization.

Lanark County Community Justice uses restorative practices to bring together the offenders, victims as well as others affected by crime to come to an agreement on how to heal the harm done and rebuild relationships. Restorative Justice is an alternative to the traditional criminal justice system. It is a community response to crime, wrongdoing and healing. Since 2000, approximately 740 forums have been facilitated by LCCJ volunteers in Lanark County. The volunteer facilitators have provided an estimated 20,000 hours of direct service. Partial funds for these programs are provided by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and United Way East Ontario.

Currently, with a grant from the Perth and District Community Foundation and the County of Lanark, we provide a Restorative Families Program and Restorative Parenting Courses in an effort to build restorative practices into family relationships to foster communication and relationship building, particularly with teens who are experiencing, homelessness, addiction, mental health challenges and conflict with the law.

On an annual basis, LCCJ needs to fundraise about 35% of its revenue with individual donations, grants, and fundraising events such as the Perth Polar Bear Plunge. We count on the generosity of the community in making Perth and Lanark County a safer and stronger community in which to live, work and play. Please, if you can, pledge now, or plunge in 2022.

For more information, please contact:  
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*PS: More information will be coming in late November on timing, location and how the media can safely participate in the the Keep The Spirit Alive plunge.*