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People run to take their New Year's Day dip in the ocean off Asbury Park during the Sons of Ireland Polar Plunge on Tuesday. PHOTOS BY THOMAS P. COSTELLO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Hundreds take plunge into ice-cold Atlantic

Dan Radel Asbury Park Press
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

ASBURY PARK - About 600 Sons of Ireland polar plungers kicked off the New Year by taking part in a nearly 20-year tradition of jumping into the ice-cold Atlantic Ocean.

Unlike last year's plunge though, when air temperatures were in the single digits, the bikini and surf short-clad crowd were treated to a sunny, 60-degree day.

"It was so nice I went in four times. I feel like I've cheated the idea of the polar plunge," said Kate Burgess, 18, of Rumson, who's been taking part in the festivities since she was a child.

More online

Search "plunge" at **APP.com** for video and photo gallery from the Asbury Park event.

The air may have been warm, but the ocean water was still an icy 42 degrees when plungers lined up outside Convention Hall for the bagpipes and singing of the national anthem.

Another challenge they faced was the surf, which was built up by southwest winds and crashing near the beach. Asbury Park lifeguards in wetsuits went out into the surf be-

See POLAR PLUNGE, Page 2A





Swimmers celebrate after taking their New Year's Day dip in the ocean off Asbury Park.

THOMAS P. COSTELLO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Polar plunge

Continued from Page 1A

fore the start and kept participants to the shallow water.

"Last year the temperatures didn't break 10 degrees. This year we're concerned about the waves," said event organizer Kailey Savacool of Sea Bright.

The Sons of Ireland is a Monmouth County non-profit founded in 2002. The group initially formed to

raise money for 9/11 families. According to the group, it has raised more than \$750,000 for Monmouth County charities.

Savacool said this year's beneficiaries are Mary's Place by the Sea and You Cannot Be Replaced.

"It's a great way to start the New Year. You get a little crazy, you take a jump into the ocean and you give to some good causes," said Matthew Andras, 48 of Atlantic Highlands, who said he's been taking the plunge since 2011.

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