

## **2023 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **What kind of weather can be expected?**

The 2020 Farmer's Almanac says expect typical March winter weather with snows in late February through early March. Snows typically mean we can expect temperatures from the upper 20s to mid 30s. A perfect temp for participants. We've never canceled our event due to weather.

### **How do I find out about lodging?**

To view area lodging, go to <http://olcott-newfane.com>

### **Can I wear a costume?**

Absolutely! We encourage it! Actually so much so that we're having a contest to celebrate it. Many swimmers and spectators wear costumes. Just remember, you still need to protect yourself when it's cold and you may be in crowded places at times. Also, please keep your costume respectful; there are families, children and neighbors.

### **Is there a place to change clothing?**

We have established a 'Women's changing area' in the rear of the registration site at the Lion's pavilion, but there is no restroom and you must take your belongings with you. Many folks simply change in their vehicle or even hold blankets around each other.

### **Are there restroom facilities?**

Portable sanitation units are located throughout the area. Depending on conditions, the Park's East Main St. restroom near the Lions Pavilion is sometimes open. Restrooms are available for customers at area businesses.

### **Can I get food at the Polar Bear Swim?**

Local restaurants and businesses in Olcott serve food, although some change and limit their menus on Polar Bear Day. Food is available on the street, which is provided by area Lions Clubs, not-for-profit organizations and volunteers.

(continued)

### **Is alcohol available?**

The Lions Club and event organizers do not serve alcohol. Alcohol can be purchased at local establishments licensed by the state. Many participants bring beverages with them for responsible personal consumption. The closest alcohol retail sales are in Newfane. There is zero tolerance for drinking and driving and underage consumption so drink responsibly! There will be sobriety checkpoints so make sure you have a designated driver if you are arriving in your own car. Lots of people get together as a group and utilize buses/vans/limos.

### **Is a ticket required to participate in the Swim?**

All swimmers must register on the day of the swim at the Lions pavilion. Swimmers are given a card with their swim time which allows the swimmer and one helper access to the beach.

### **How do I donate funds I have raised for the Swim?**

#### **& Can I use a credit/debit card?**

Swimmers are encouraged to use the fundraising tool you can find at [thepolarbearswim.org](http://thepolarbearswim.org). Click on Start Fundraising and follow the prompts to start to promote your participation in the swim and collect donations. You can also submit contributions using cash, check, credit and debit cards when you register for the swim at the Lions Pavilion. And you can use the Swim website, [olcottlions.org](http://olcottlions.org) (look for the 'Donate' button) ... but you must still register onsite the day of the swim - print and bring your email receipt with you if you register onsite.

### **Get Ready! Follow These Steps**

Set a fundraising goal -- many find \$100 or more is easy and reasonable to achieve!

There are 3 Ways to Raise Funds, Register and Participate ...

1. We will have the ability to register and raise funds for yourself and/or your team, starting November 15, 2019. You will be able to create your personal fundraising page in minutes. It's quick, easy and FREE. **[How do I donate funds I have raised for the Swim? Can I use a credit/debit card?](#)**

It's best to use this web page and take advantage of the incentives and start your fundraising campaign now. You can also submit contributions using cash, check, credit, and debit cards when you arrive and register for the swim at the Lions Pavilion. Those funds will be added to your online campaign totals. Remember, registering online will save you money and put you at the front of the line when you arrive to sign in and again when entering the water.

### **What kind of weather can be expected?**

Early March weather is typically cool with some bluster -- temps in the 30s or 40s, a noticeable wind off the lake and possible rain or snow. Over a 5-year cycle, we will have one year that is unusually mild and spring-like with sun and temps in the 60s, then one other year it could be miserable with a bracing wind, light snow or rain, but most years it is outdoor friendly if you are dressed properly.

### **How do I find out about lodging?**

To view area lodging, go to [olcott-newfane.com](http://olcott-newfane.com)

### **Can I wear a costume?**

Absolutely! Many swimmers and spectators wear costumes. Just remember, you still need to protect yourself when it's cold and you may be in crowded places at times. Also, please keep your costume respectful; there are families, children, and neighbors in attendance.

### **Is there a place to change clothing?**

We have established a 'Women's changing area' in the rear of the registration site at the Lion's pavilion, but there is no restroom and you must take your belongings with you. Many folks simply change in their vehicle or even hold blankets around each other.

### **Are there restroom facilities?**

The Krull Park restroom is on East Main St. near the Lions Pavilion. Portable sanitation units are located at Franklin and Main Streets and near the Main St gazebo. Restrooms are also available to patrons of local businesses.

### **Can I get food at the Polar Bear Swim?**

Local restaurants and businesses in Olcott serve food, although some change and limit their menus on Polar Bear Day. Food is available on the street, which is provided by area Lions Clubs, not-for-profit organizations, and volunteers.

### **Is alcohol available?**

The Lions Club and event organizers do not serve alcohol. Alcohol can be purchased at local establishments licensed by the state. Many participants bring beverages with them for responsible personal

consumption. Retail beverages can be purchased at the Eastside Market just north of the Rts 18 & 78 intersection. There is zero tolerance for drinking and driving and underage consumption. Police are present and some like Niagara County Sheriff Michael Filleciti participate in the swim.

### **Is a ticket required to participate in the Swim?**

All swimmers must check in on the day of the swim at the Lions pavilion. Again, it's quicker if you've registered and started a campaign online for an expedited check in.

Swimmers are given a card with their swim time which tells when the swimmer and one helper can access the beach to swim. The beach is off-limits to everyone else.

### **What about swimmers under 18 ... Is there an age requirement?**

Swimmers under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian or provide written permission from a parent or guardian.

Young participants must be able to walk to the beach and water on their own and must have the physical and emotional maturity to be in a crowded and congested environment with icy conditions and rough terrain.

Participants should not carry young children on the stairway or into the water due to potentially icy conditions, rough terrain, and crowded surroundings.

### **Where do I park? What is the cost?**

There is ample parking in or near the area and parking is not a problem if you arrive early. Those arriving later may need to walk a bit, but there is no fee for parking unless it is a privately owned lot.

### **Is there handicapped parking and access?**

Yes, with a valid handicap sticker, traffic personnel will direct you to the Krull Park terrace area along Ontario Street above the beach.

### **Is there a designated parking area for tailgate parties?**

Those arriving early get the best spots. Most tailgaters gather on the open streets adjacent to Krull Park and in the area around the village square/gazebo. Please keep in mind, you must set up in a public use area

that is safe, does not impede traffic and swim operations, and does not affect residential properties.

### **Where do buses and limos park?**

There are designated areas for full-size bus parking. See the parking map at [thepolarbearswim.org/maps](http://thepolarbearswim.org/maps)

Premium Bus and Limo Parking is available at the corner of West Main and Lockport Streets, across from the Lighthouse Grill -- a fee applies ([see green on map](#)).

Reserved Bus Parking - Groups arriving by bus can reserve a limited number of locations in the vicinity of Main and Ontario Streets and the village square, between Lockport Street and the Carousel -- there is no fee but a reservation must be made prior to March 4 ([see red on map](#)).

Unreserved Bus Parking is located off East Main Street at the corner of the park access road to Route 18 ([see blue on map](#)).

Drop-Off Bus Parking - Bus operators can also drop-off passengers in the village and park in the municipal lot at the east end of Ontario Street, and then return to pick-up up passengers upon departure (see gold on map).

Limos, Vans and Small Buses -- There is no designated area for limos and smaller transporters and no reservation is needed. Most drivers are able to find a spot in the village area and like to move around (except - if the limo is the size of a bus, then you will want to follow the options outlined for buses above).

### **When is the best time to arrive and leave?**

If you arrive by noon or so, there is plenty of time to get ready, register, look around, and visit with friends prior to the 1 pm start of the swim and its opening ceremonies. After the Swim, traffic and congestion are heavy for about 30 minutes, so most folks simply plan to 'chill' and visit for a while until things open up.

### **Where can I get cash (ATM)?**

There are ATMs at the [East Side Market](#), and [Covey's Cove](#)

### **Are there indoor places we can gather before and after the swim?**

There is no public indoor gathering facility, but many customers patronize and gather at area businesses.

### **How should I dress as a spectator, or as a swimmer?**

In layers for changing conditions. There is often a biting March wind off the lake that makes it noticeably colder than it is away from the lake – but then, hooray, because the sun can come out to warm things up!

Swimmers must have footwear and it is important to remove and change wet clothing quickly once you exit the water to avoid hypothermia.

### **I am not swimming but can I accompany someone who is swimming?**

Swimmers can have one helper accompany them to the beach; other friends or family can view and wait in the terrace or park above the beach

### **How can I get pictures of someone who is swimming?**

It is difficult; unless you are the swimmer's designated helper. Even for a helper on the beach, it can be hard because of the crowd. It works best if you take photos before they go to the beach. Spectators are not allowed on the stairway to the beach.

### **Where is the best place to watch the swim?**

The terrace area above the beach west of the stairway along Ontario Street is for spectators

### **Can I buy a swim T-Shirt?**

Non-swimmers can register for the swim, and make a donation of \$25. and receive a T-Shirt, just like the swimmers receive.

### **Who do I contact if I would like to help with the swim?**

Please email: [olcottlions@gmail.com](mailto:olcottlions@gmail.com)

### **What if I raise funds but I am unable to attend?**

Please go to [HERE](#) to make credit or debit card donations. You can contact [olcottlions@gmail.com](mailto:olcottlions@gmail.com) and we'll coordinate receiving your donation, or mail your contribution to:

Attn: Polar Bear Swim  
Olcott Lions Club  
Box 316  
Olcott, NY 14126  
(716) 216-5998

**Can I be a vendor at the event?**

Please see our vendor policy at [2023 Vendor Policy](#)

Download to print this [FAQ](#)