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By

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Taking the Plunge for a Good Cause

Over two dozen ONEOK Rockies Midstream employees participated in the Ice Warrior Plunge fundraiser at Lake Sakakawea in North Dakota.

A frigid February event in North Dakota sent ONEOK volunteers sprinting into a frozen lake, all to support cancer programs in the region.

Two dozen ONEOK employees participated in the 2026 Ice Warrior Plunge at Lake Sakakawea in New Town, North Dakota. This 10th annual event raised money for the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara (MHA) Nation Cancer Fund and the American Indian Cancer Foundation.

This is the ninth plunge taken by Joshua Ruffo, manager, ORM operations liaison, natural gas gathering and processing (NGGP), in Bismarck, North Dakota. “I jump every year to help raise money for many friends of mine on the MHA Nation who are battling and have battled cancer,” he said.

This year’s event drew more than 80 participants from throughout the community and raised about \$50,000, a testament to the community’s commitment. ONEOK’s team was the largest participating group.

In 2025, Ruffo suggested the plunge to the ONEOK North Region Community Investments Committee just weeks before the event. He believed ONEOK employees would rally behind the cause – and he was right. Eight employees took the leap that first year; a modest start, said Thea Roff, administrative specialist III, NGGP ORM, in Watford City, North Dakota. That’s especially remarkable considering the challenge of convincing anyone at all to jump into a frozen North Dakota lake.

This year, the team returned with a mission. “We were determined to come back in larger numbers,” Roff said. The group swelled to 28 plungers.

Also participating was Karen Lynch, administrative specialist III, NGGP ORM, in Killdeer, North Dakota, for whom the event hits close to home. Lynch has lost

several family members to cancer. “It is inspiring to see the strong community support from individuals and local companies,” she said. “Perhaps it’s partly that camaraderie that keeps people coming back. Plus, it’s a rare chance to connect with colleagues from across the company while doing something meaningful together.”

The money raised helps with research and eases the financial burden on cancer patients during treatment, which sometimes requires travel to another state, allowing their families to be with them in these difficult times.

The plunge itself is a shock to the system, but worth it when you look at the impact on families dealing with a cancer diagnosis.

“[The plunge] is worse than you imagined but so much fun at the same time,” Roff said. “If something as small as jumping into freezing water in the middle of winter can help raise that awareness, I’ll sign up every time.”

