BY JAIME WILLIAMS
Even though the temperature has been hovering around 20 degrees lately, swimmers will be descending on Orchard Beach this weekend.

BronxNet and BronxWorks will host the Bronx Polar Bear Plunge Against Homelessness on Valentine’s Day, Saturday, February 14.

The icy event is the 5th annual polar winter dip hosted by BronxNet, but the first time they’re partnering with BronxWorks to raise awareness and collect donations for homeless services.

Each year, cold-lovers from all over the city join the Bronx Polar Bears, cofounded by BronxNet executive director Michael Max Knobbe, to take a quick wade in the Long Island Sound.

This year’s bone-chilling swim will serve as a reminder that many people in the city suffer from prolonged exposure to cold while homeless.

“We’re keenly aware of those that need help,” said Knobbe.

Participants and onlookers are asked to bring new gloves, socks, hats or scarves to the event, which will be provided to the homeless through BronxWorks’ outreach programs.

“The BronxWorks Homeless Outreach team makes initial contact with homeless people, helps bring them into temporary housing situations and eventually assists in finding permanent housing. Monetary donations can also be made at Bronxworks.org.

While Knobbe hopes they’ll collect a significant amount of donations, he also hopes the event makes people more aware of the issue and BronxWork’s attempts to address it.

“The important thing is we’re raising the level of consciousness of it, and we’re hoping for a successful outcome in terms of support,” he said.

The event offers a great opportunity for Bronxites to come together and engage in an afternoon of fun.

“The Bronx Polar Bear Plunge is about celebration and warmth,” said Knobbe.

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“Whether you go in the water or show up to provide support, come out on Saturday to enjoy the winter landscape of Orchard Beach,” said Knobbe.

The event will kick off at Orchard Beach at 11 a.m. Transportation will be provided by the Bronx Tourism Council’s Bronx Trolley from the Pelham Bay subway station at 10:30 a.m.

There will be an after party at the Bronx Beer Hall in the Arthur Avenue Retail Market.