

Sutter, Meyn prepare to dance the nights away 'for the kids'

by Justin Curry
news editor

Senior Jenn Sutter and junior Jon Meyn will be joining more than 650 students from across the commonwealth this weekend to save lives.

The 31st annual Penn State Dance Marathon, beginning today at 7 p.m., is a 48-hour dance marathon that raises money for children with cancer. All participants must stay awake and on their feet for all 48 hours.

Proceeds from the Dance Marathon, or THON, go to the Four Diamonds Fund, an organization that provides financial and emotional support for families of children with cancer.

Over the past 30 years, Penn State University has raised more than \$23 million for the fund, providing almost 90 percent of the organization's funding. Last year alone, students raised \$3.6 million.

Solicitation begins in late October every year and ends during THON weekend. Student organizations state-wide hold various fund-raisers, canning weekends and pledge booking weekends to raise money for the cause.

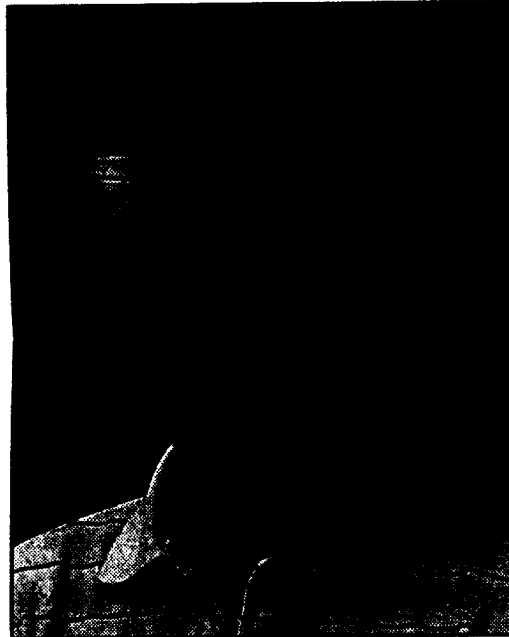
Throughout its history, THON has become the world's largest student-run philanthropy. It has become a tradition at Penn State, more than 1,000 students volunteering their time to help out throughout the weekend.

"I'm very excited to be dancing in THON," said Sutter, MKTG 08, "but I'm also very nervous. I hope my body holds up during the marathon."

"There are two words to describe my feelings



Jenn Sutter



Jon Meyn

about dancing in THON," said Meyn, COMBA 06, "Harlem shake."

Other colleges around the country have started catching the "Thon Fever," and have begun having Dance Marathons of their own. To date, Penn State's is by far the largest. The university closest to Penn State's total is Northwestern University, which in 1999 collected a little over \$200,000.

Sutter and Meyn were selected by the THON committee to represent Behrend, but last year, she was unable to attend due to conflicts with her cheerleading schedule.

mittee and all of those interested in dancing earned points for attending meetings, participating in fund-raisers, and various other activities.

At the last meeting of the semester, Sutter and Meyn were announced as the dancers.

"I was totally stunned," said Sutter, "but so honored that I was given the opportunity to dance."

This was Sutter's second time being selected by the committee to represent Behrend, but last year, she was unable to attend due to conflicts with her cheerleading schedule.

"I was heartbroken," said Sutter. "It was by far the hardest decision I had to make."

"I was extremely surprised," said Meyn. "Everyone else has done so much work this year and I'm just glad to be representing Behrend."

Not only does every campus send dancers to THON, but so do many of the organizations at University Park. The Interfraternity and Panhellenic Councils at University Park started this marathon in 1973, and up until recently, commonwealth campuses were not allowed to participate in THON.

Each dance team is allowed to create a list of people they wish to allow on the dancing floor at THON. This list can be comprised of friends and family, as well as professors and co-workers. This gives the dancers the ability to connect with a familiar face when they are surrounded by complete strangers and have been awake for a long time.

Each team is also allowed to select a name for themselves. Names in the past have included "Kiss Me, I'm Tired," "Feeling GR8 for 48," and "Legally Blonde." Sutter and Meyn have decided to name themselves the "Cherry Lifesavers" this year.

"We chose that name because when it comes down to it, we're THON virgins," said Meyn.

This is Sutter's second year being involved with THON, she was committee co-chair last year. Meyn's tenure with THON is a little longer. This is his third year with the organization, and his first two were served while being a brother of Alpha Tau Omega, a fraternity at University Park.

Other Dance Marathons

Just a glance at some other Universities Dance Marathons and the totals during their 1999 Dance Marathons. Information courtesy of the Council of Commonwealth Student Governments.

Texas A&M University
\$50,000
40 Hours

University of Michigan
\$35,000
30 Hours

University of Iowa
\$107,000
30 Hours

University of Georgia
\$55,000
40 Hours

University of Southern California
\$12,241
24 Hours

Penn State University
\$2,530,142
48 Hours

University of Florida
\$76,000
32 Hours

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PENN STATE IFC/PANHELLENIC
DANCE MARATHON 2004