

BEHREND BEACON YEAR IN REVIEW

A look back at the stories that define the 2009-2010 academic year at Penn State Behrend

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THON

Rylee Dorer's fight for life

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managing editor
April 9, 2010

I am a survivor," giggles Rylee Dorer. Her voice has a peculiar tone, surely too mature for an 8-year-old. But Rylee is just that, a mature, curiously intellectual 8-year-old cancer survivor.

Two years ago, Rylee attended her brother Corbin's soccer game and snacked on Goldfish while coloring under a blanket. Suddenly, she felt her chest burn, and tears crawled down her cheeks. Amanda Dorer, Rylee's mother, had her sip some water, only to have Rylee cry desperately while her chest aches intensified.

"I began loading the kids [Rylee, Corbin and their little sister Dalaney] into the car, but Rylee was okay when we were ready to go," Amanda said.

Despite sleeping comfortably overnight, Rylee awoke the next morning with severely bloodshot eyes and abnormal breathing. The family pediatrician prescribed her amoxicillin, but a visit two days later and a chest X-ray exposed a mass the size of an egg pressing against Rylee's trachea.

Her life took a turn sharper than her chest pains.

On Oct. 17, 2007, at PSU Hershey Medical Center, doctors diagnosed Rylee with T-cell lymphoma, a white blood cell cancer. When the Dorer's told Rylee, her first question was,

"Am I going to die?," the hardest question they've ever tried to answer. Amanda says they never told her "yes" or "no," just that she could be cured.

"It was really scary," Rylee said, as she reflected on over two years of treatments. "The worst thing was when they put tubes down my nose into my belly. It was the tape I didn't like. The tape meant I had tubes and needles in me."

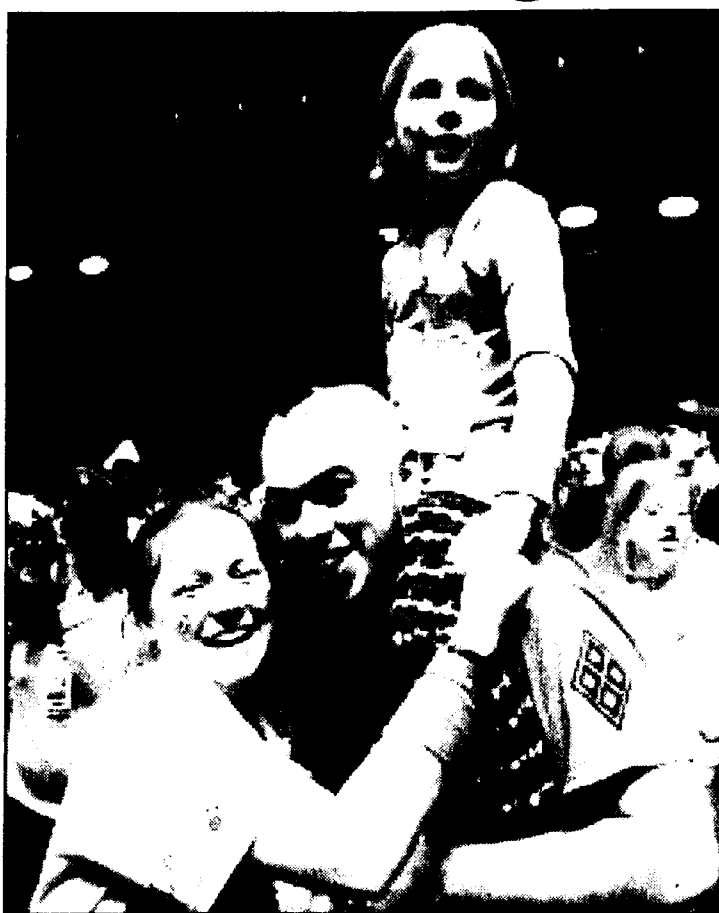
Around the same time that Rylee began treatments, Behrend THON members, led by then club president James Wolfe, applied to have a THON child. During Thanksgiving, Wolfe and Molly Thomas, who is currently Behrend THON's president, received letters congratulating them on their "first child."

"I was so excited," Wolfe said. "But I also thought, 'Holy crap, we have a responsibility to support Rylee as best as we can. I wondered if we could do it.'"

Wolfe contacted the Dorers and arranged to meet them at THON's annual Family Carnival, which benefits the Four Diamonds Fund. It was the beginning of a learning experience for two families soon to be one.

"It was really cool to finally meet the Behrend kids," said Shannon Dorer, Rylee's father. "We were curious about what THON was, so we tried to learn a lot about them."

Wolfe said the feelings were mutual and that it was amazing



Molly Thomas and James Wolfe give Rylee Dorer a boost.

how proactive the family was.

"When Kelly [Cardos], Erin [Keisel], and I met them at the carnival we were welcomed right away," Wolfe said. "We were surprised at how lively Rylee was. She ended up dancing on stage for us and just having fun. We made an immediate bond."

The first get-together may

have gotten THON and the Dorers familiar with each other, but the second visit gave Wolfe and Thomas a humbling, in-depth look at the Dorers lives at the Hershey Medical Center.

Adorned in medical gowns and masks, Wolfe said that they had a preconceived notion that they didn't want to seem too happy walking in but were met

by an upbeat family, including Rylee, despite her illness.

"I was excited to see them, again," Rylee said. "We already loved each other a lot, and I think they were really great for us."

"They [THON] were a big pick-me-up, because those first few months were the most intensive and the most difficult for all of us," Mr. Dorer said.

"Rylee was taking up to 12 pills a day which she could not swallow whole. She always had needles and tubes in her, but she sort of understood what she had to do to survive."

For over two years, the Dorers took Rylee to the clinic two to three times a week and watched as she braved through chemotherapy, occasionally leaving Corbin and Delaney with family and Rylee largely absent from school. Days upon end spent at the hospital were especially hard for Mrs. Dorer, who often tried to hide tears from Rylee.

"When she saw me cry, she just told me to come lay with her," Mrs. Dorer said. "She quickly gained maturity beyond her years while losing a little bit of her childhood."

"The beautiful thing about Rylee is that she is never different based on her health," Thomas said.

Thomas' relationship with Rylee pinnacled when Linh Nguyen, another THON member, and she had their hair cut for Rylee at THON 2009.

Thomas said they grew their hair out for almost two years to get a foot cut off for Rylee, who was brought to tears by the gesture. She then took both clumps of hair and sported them to her head.

Eight months later, in late Dec. 2009, the sweet news came from the Dorers; Rylee was taking her last chemotherapy pills and entering remission.

"A few of us that have access to her Carepage got the update and could not believe it," Thomas said.

"We set out on a mission and accomplished it," Nguyen said. "She is my little hero."

The last time the Dorers and Behrend met, which was at THON 2010, a simple miscommunication left Thomas and other Behrend THON members in tears.

"Amanda [Mrs. Dorer] texted me that it was Rylee's last walk across the stage," Thomas said.

"They didn't understand that once they are a Four Diamonds Family they are a family for life. They will be back at THON every year to celebrate our journey."

"It was thrilling to be in remission at THON," Rylee said. "I had so many people help me; my doctors, THON and my family. Without them I would not have made it."

As if conquering cancer was not enough, Rylee has set her heart on new ambitions. "I am going to be a rock star."

CAMPUS SAFETY

Thirteen students trapped in elevator for over an hour

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February 5, 2010

Thirteen Behrend students became trapped in the outdoor elevator on the way to Senat Hall after eating at Dobbins.

According to Ted Sopher, a second semester chemical engineering student, the elevator became stuck around 7 p.m.

"At first, we thought it was pretty funny. We weren't really sure what to do," said Sopher. "After five to 10 minutes, we realized it could be a while."

Vince Tarquino, a second semester student, said that he "wasn't too worried" about being stuck in the elevator. He said they were one person over the 12-person limit on the elevator and about 300 lbs. over the 2,100 limit. Tarquino said that he believed being over the weight limit caused the elevator to stop.

"It was a weird psychological thing, because we talked for a long time," Sopher said. "Eventually, people got really sick of it. It started to smell really bad in there. Vince just seemed really aggravated. He was really fed up and wanted to be down really fast."

"It was kind of surreal, we used the call box in the elevator eventually," Sopher said.

Behrend Police Officer McCaslin said that Police and Safety received the call about the trapped students around 7 p.m., at which point they called the elevator company to free the students.

Mike Murphy, a technician for the Otis Elevator Company, arrived at the scene shortly before 8 p.m. to fix the elevator.

When the students were freed at 8:21 p.m., after nearly an hour and a half in the elevator, they were briefly interviewed by Officer McCaslin. According to the students,

After recording their information, McCaslin questioned the students briefly, making sure that no one was injured. He also asked if the students had done anything that would have caused it to stop. The students denied jumping in the elevator, claiming that it had slowed down on its own before coming to a complete stop.

"It stopped because it's a piece of junk," said Adam Tamilia, a second semester mechanical engineering student.

Tamilia went on to say that he did not recall anyone jumping in the elevator.

"It wasn't scary at all," said Brian Gwyn, a freshman. "It was funny at first."

Gwyn said "We bounced, and then the elevator bounced."



Thirteen students were trapped in Behrend's outside elevator leaving them stranded for over an hour.

STUDENT ENTERTAINMENT

Goo Goo Dolls rock a sold-out crowd at Junker Center

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April 23, 2010

The Goo Goo Dolls Concert, held April 17, in the Junker Center attracted a sold-out crowd, ranging from those who traveled from a far to the student body of Penn State Behrend.

On the morning of the concert the temperature was at a low of only 37 degrees, but that wasn't stopping three young women.

Traveling a total of 6.5 hours, between the two, to see their favorite band.

Stacy and Abby Shrater, from Cleveland, Ohio and Kari Andros, from Detroit, Mich. were the first three girls to arrive at the doors outside of the Junker Center. Arriving at 9:30 that morning, making it show number 17 for Keri.

"We were stoked when we heard the Goo Goo Dolls were coming. We haven't seen them in three years. Coming today is such a great thing," said Stacy. Another avid fan, Caroline Vanna, from Cleveland, OH

lined up just behind the Shraters around 3 in the afternoon, but she has been to a few more concerts.

"In the last four years, probably, I've gone to 14 concerts," said Vanna, mentioning that distance hasn't been an obstacle to see them play. "The furthest I've traveled to a concert is Las Vegas. I'm probably the oldest fan here," said Vanna in a joking tone.

In order for a concert to be this successful it requires a large amount of planning and devoted volunteers to get this going.

The concert committee chairs, those in green 'director shirts' at the concert, began meeting last semester, with the first task being: Find an act. The lengthy process begins with an initial survey to get a general idea of what students want. The committee looks to see what genre, ticket price range, etc the students are looking for.

Once the first survey is completely done a discussion is had with the middle agent through concert ideas, then they are able to narrow down their search to several performers



The Goo Goo Dolls performed for hundreds of Behrend fans.

from various genres. Another survey is then sent out with specific artists, all viable, to the students.

The final decision was between either rapper/actor Ludacris or the Goo Goo Dolls. Based on the results of that survey, The Goo Goo Doll's had a

majority response and the committee went with them. A decision sophomore, Political Science major, Jason Kirklín thought was a success.

"I think the concert was absolutely amazing, the Goo Goo Dolls really performed better than I expected," said Kirklín.

"A much better choice than Ludacris."

Opening for the Goo Goo Doll's was The Rocket Summer, who at the concert was giving advice. His advice for the aspiring artists out there, saying that any kind of expression vocalizes an impact.

"Pray for creativity, and it will come: like in the Field of Dreams," said Stephen Bryce Avary. "Build it and they will come."

When chairmen of the concert committee Stephen Burger was asked how do they even get such a big name to come to a commonwealth campus, such as Behrend made it sound simple.

"We have a middle agent through concert ideas who we communicate with and he intern contacts band managers and representatives," said Burger. "We are able to get prices and tentative dates."

While arranging the concert the concert committee faced one main problem with a production request, one that the Junker Center simply couldn't accommodate.

"One of the biggest difficulties was negotiating the Goo

Dolls' production request. Originally, they wanted to have a quite elaborate light show," said Burger. "A. it was quite expensive and B. it was a little too much for the Junker Center to accommodate."

In order to run the concert smoothly, besides directors, the concert committee comprised of approximately 20 students, who met Friday night, assembled the stage and reconvened at 8 in the morning the day of the concert. Returning left ahead of them was to complete assembling the stage, lights, and sound.

"When it's all said done, we had around 100 volunteers that were needed in order to properly run the show," said Burger.

After the concert, sophomore biology major Emily Harrington, had only one complaint but enjoyed her experience.

"As a short person it was really hard to see, but it sounded great enough to blow my ear drums out. Since I'm from New York it's nice to hear a band from my area."

Despite the difficulties faced the hard work of those involved with the concert turned a successful evening.