

Another year for the kids, for a cure and for hope: THON 2008

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Childhood cancer is the number one killer of children, more than asthma, cystic fibrosis, diabetes, and pediatric AIDS combined. In the United States about 10,400 children are diagnosed with cancer each year, according to the National Cancer Institute. This year alone about 1,545 children will die from cancer. The most common form of childhood cancers are leukemia and brain tumors.

Thanks to research, advances in treatment have been made, and today, up to 75 percent of children's cancer will be cured. But this process is through very aggressive treatments, which children have lower survival rates. Many treatments include several rounds of chemotherapy, tumor removal, radiation therapy, bone-marrow-transplantation and various clinical procedures. Yet, some forms of childhood cancers have proven so resistant to treatment, and continuous research needs to be done in order

to one day find a cure.

In 1972 Charles and Irma Millard established The Four Diamonds Fund after the death of their son, Christopher, who was

diagnosed with cancer at the age of 11. The Four Diamonds Fund is named after a story that Christopher Millard wrote shortly before he lost his

battle at the age of 14. In Chris' story, a knight must find the four diamonds of Courage, Wisdom, Honesty and Strength in order to be released from captivity by an evil sorceress.

The four diamonds are symbolic of the traits Chris believed were

necessary to overcome cancer

In 1977, The Four Diamonds Fund became the beneficiary of the Penn State IFC/Panhellenic Dance Marathon (THON™), the largest student-run philanthropy

in the nation, though not at that time. Couples would compete for 48 straight hours of dancing, no stopping. Eventually, THON loosened the rules to become what it is today. Though there is no longer the mandatory dancing part, there is still no sitting or sleeping for the dancer couples.

With an outpour of support, and an increase in student population, THON has moved from the Rec. Hall to the Bryce Jordan Center in order to accommodate the mass. In 2007, Penn State raised \$5.2 million dollars, and in 2008, raised \$6.6 million. Each year, THON has raised more and more in order to help those in need.

All funds donated to The Four Diamonds Fund help families of children with cancer. The fund not only helps with cancer research, but helps to offset unforeseen costs. Many times, health insurance does not pay for full coverage of treatments, or things that may disrupt the welfare of the child, such as car repairs, home payments and household utilities.

During the last four hours of THON, when your feet are swollen and painful, your eyes

are drooping shut, and you have almost lost hope, the families are there to help you. Family Hour, as it is called, is when all of the Four Diamonds families come to the dance floor and tell their stories. Children who have been cured because of THON's help, or who are currently undergoing treatment, tell their stories of how THON, and Penn State has saved their lives.

So why THON? THON for the kids, THON for a cure, THON for hope.

Assistant Editor Marin Alice, also THON Co-chair, contributed to this article.

Students interested in helping to fund-raise for THON 2009 should contact Sahar Safaee, SVS5033@PSU.EDU



MORE THAN BOOKS

weighing

YOU DOWN?

If so, you are not alone.

In fact, one out of four young adults will experience a depressive episode by age 24, and nearly half of all college students report feeling so depressed at some point in time that they have trouble functioning (www.mentalhealthscreening.org).

If you have been feeling sad, anxious or overwhelmed, please attend DEPRESSION SCREENING DAY on TUESDAY, 10/21/08, (11am-2pm) in the GALLERY LOUNGE (W-107 Olmsted).

Take care of yourself by taking a few moments to complete an anonymous mental health self-assessment. [If you are interested, but unable to attend, please drop by the Student Assistance Center, W-117 Olmsted (948-6025)]



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