

THON : Dancing for a Good Cause

Bobby Casiano

The Penn State Pan-Hellenic Dance Marathon (THON) is a year-round fundraising event benefitting The Four Diamonds Fund, Conquering Childhood Cancer, at the Penn State Children's Hospital in Hershey, PA. The students who participate in the fundraiser do not sit or sleep during the forty-eight hour dance marathon held every February at University Park. This year's THON weekend will involve 700 students and many supporters who come together in the fight for a cure for pediatric cancer. This inspirational environment motivates students to fundraise throughout the year.

Other Penn State students stand by on the sidelines to support their fellow THON members on the dance floor. The dancers lead what is called a "line dance." First, they gather as a group and teach the dance steps to the supporting students. This is followed by going through a specific theme song agreed upon before the event. This song is played every hour and used for the line dance.

Over the past thirty years, the students of THON have

raised over \$30 million and have helped thousands of children and families fight pediatric cancer. In 2005, Penn State campuses raised over \$4.1 million. The students at the Commonwealth Campuses hold fundraisers such as canning, which includes setting up a table in front of a local department store. They also sell THON bracelets and food in order to raise money.

A MINI-THON is held to prepare the dancers from all campuses except University Park. Students go through the same process of not sitting or standing for forty-eight hours and they keep the tradition of doing a line dance once every hour. The Mont Alto THON team held a MINI-THON on the weekend of November 18-19, 2005. Team members include Chair Amber Krenzer, Mini-THON Captain Lydia Brindel, Lara Sowers, Christina Green, Laura Beck, Beth Herbert, advisors Linda Worley and Julie Demoss. Mont Alto THON dancer Beth Herbert explains that MINI-THON is "designed to prepare the dancers for the THON at University Park." Herbert states that they have "raised \$2,500

and are working to surpass last year's \$7,000." This money is provided by the Student Government Association, supporting Clubs, and the campus as a whole. For the past six years, Mont Alto has sponsored Krystian Bell, a fifteen-year-old cancer patient.

Mont Alto THON dancers Brindel and Herbert are "thankful for the support through the cards of encouragement from the students here at Mont Alto." Brindel says, "twelve hours are not enough, and I look forward to forty-eight hours" Brindel and Herbert are the dancers going to University Park accompanied by a Morale Team which consists of the remaining members. For more information on supporting THON, contact advisors Linda Worley or Julie Demoss.

According to the American Cancer Society, in 2005 there have been an estimated 1.5 million new cases of cancer in the United States. Nearly six hundred thousand people died of cancer in 2005. 9,510 new cases are expected to be diagnosed in children birth-14 years of age in 2005. The American Cancer Society also states that for all childhood cancers combined, "five-year relative survival rates have improved markedly over the past 30 years" from less than 50% before the 1970's, to more than 70% in the late 1990's.



Back to Front: (Left to right)-Anwar Sabreen, Deon James, Dakkar Abudl-Hadi, Samantha Henry, Mayra Calle, Ashlee Paris, Crystal Jean, Bobby Casiano, Brenda Wallace, Antonia "Texas" Houston, Jabbar Azeez, Melanie Prempeh, Erica Panico, Renisha Singh, Maritza Henriquez, Mike Brown, and Mahasa Taylor

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table but all in all it's good, it's something to do other than walking to Wiestling in the snow. The game room is a source of entertainment and makes me want to live here now."

Another resident of the Penn Gates, Ratandeep "Andy" Pahwa says, "I think the game room could be put to better use, like having free pool on the weekends, but overall it's good!"

At this time, the game room has not been open 24/7, mainly due to increasing damages in the residence halls. Kelly Pannill, Resident Coordinator for Mont Alto Hall, says, "I absolutely agree with the time of the game room at the Gates. It's our experience in the past that some students abuse privileges but are unwilling to pay damages. So to ensure that damages don't occur, it should be open during the hours when

RA's are on duty so they can monitor it."

The Penn Gate game room's hours of operation are Sunday-Thursday 8pm-12pm and Friday to Saturday: 8pm to 1am. Penn Gate Complex Resident Coordinator/Interim Director of Residence Life, Farrah Irving-Wilkins states, "Once we get the air hockey table, we'll start implementing free pool night every other weekend." Irving-Wilkins agrees that, "For the time being, the hours for the game room are fixed. They may be adjusted in the future based on the use of the game room and/or if damages occur in the Penn Gate complex area."

For any questions or comments concerning the game room, contact the Resident Coordinator of the Penn Gate complex, Farrah Irving-Wilkins at fail@psu.edu.



THON members Beth Herbert and Lydia Brindel

Photograph by Kittley Kriza