

THON: Dancing with all their hearts

Not your normal hand jive

By DAN ZACHER
Staff writer

You might as well forget all your preconceptions of ballroom dancing and Hand Jive Contests from *Grease*, this year's THON is like nothing you could ever believe.

For the second year THON, which is short for "Dance Marathon," was held in Rec Hall at University Park. It lasted from 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 22 to 7 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 24.

Spotlights filled the skies of State College in an attempt to pull spectators in to cheer on dancers from each Penn State Campus and a number of University Park's Clubs and Greek Clubs. There were 700 dancers in all.

On the floor there were more than the dancers. There were also security, reporters, and the families of the dancers; all of which created a maze of people in the small gymnasium floor. To add to the bedlam of the floor were the moralers. Moralers are people assigned by THON to each of the dancers. They keep the dancers motivated to keep moving. They do this by

talking to them and giving them gifts. They also deliver dancer mail, little signs and letters of motivation, from the campus to their dancer.

There are a lot of prejudices that can arise from hearing the phrase: "48-Hour Dance Marathon."

First off... no they do not dance for 48 hours. There are periods where the dancers are allowed to stop off and talk to the crowd, eat and drink for and assortment of fruits, juices, and caffeine-free drinks and, yes, they can even make use of the lavatories. The only real catch to that is as the THON website says it is a "48-hour no-sitting, no-sleeping fundraising event."

The Dancers do a lot to pass the time including throwing footballs or mouse pads (which act as Frisbees in this case), bouncing Giant balls, play dodge ball, or shooting each other, and the crowd, with water guns.

One of the first things done was teaching of this year's "Line Dance." Following the choreographer on the stage, everyone in the building made movements to key words like Barry Bonds or DVDs. They repeated the routine to learn it from



Photo by Andrew Lowry

Everyone comes together with a common goal on the THON dance floor.

8 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Friday and did the entire line dance by themselves at the top of every hour throughout the weekend.

With every Dance Marathon there is music. This year's THON housed a wide assortment of recorded music including at one point both "The Chicken Dance" and M.C. Hammer's "Can't Touch This" back-to-back.

There were also live bands like four-time THON performer Velveeta who performed covers of Bon Jovi's "You Give Love A Bad Name," Kiss's "I Want to Rock and Roll All Night," Dexy's Midnight Runners' "Come On Eileen" and many more.

One of the highlights of the show was the traditional telling of the Four

Diamonds Story. Here about 20 children go up on stage and tell a little section of the story. There are also staff member helping them on stage.

THON may be over this year, but the spirit still lives on. Delco's chapter of THON is always looking for people to help them with fundraising and canning throughout the year. You don't have to be a Danny Zuko and make your way to the dance floor to help out this worthy cause.

Be sure to look out for THON when it starts up again next fall. Remember, it is for the kids.

For more information checkout the THON website at <http://www.thon.org> or stop by the Lion's Den and inquire about THON in the SGA office.

Meet our dancers



Photo by Andrew Lowry
Haley (left) and Mike (right) danced their hearts out for kids with cancer.

Hundreds of people across the Penn State Community came together for THON this year. The one thing that most of them had in common wasn't their campus affiliation, or their reasons for joining THON; they were students just like you or I. Delco's Dancing Duo was no different.

The shorter of the two dancers was Haley Schorza. Schorza, 19, a sophomore business major, joined THON as a freshman at Orientation. Before coming to Penn State she saw Delco students canning for kids with cancer and decided, at that time, to join this noble cause. When she is not canning for THON or trying to pull in new members, Schorza can be seen shopping or hanging out with friends. She could also be playing pool in the Lion's Den or skiing atop some high mountain.

Recently Schorza has even more justification for her THON activities. She has had a lot of people die

around her from cancer including her grandfather from bone cancer, and her best friend's mom from breast cancer.

The second half of the Dancing Duo was Mike Bowers. Bowers, 21, a junior business major, heard about THON from word of mouth when he came into school as a freshman in 1999. When he heard about the organization he decided to join. He has been a part of THON since he came to Penn State three years ago, and has loved every minute of it. Bowers also enjoys SCUBA Diving, lifting girls for a ballet company, hanging out with friends in the Lion's Den, or working at The Restaurant and The Bar in West Chester.

Last year Bowers was slated to be a dancer as well, but a sudden illness forced him to have to drop the dance all together. He is very glad to be given the opportunity to dance this year.

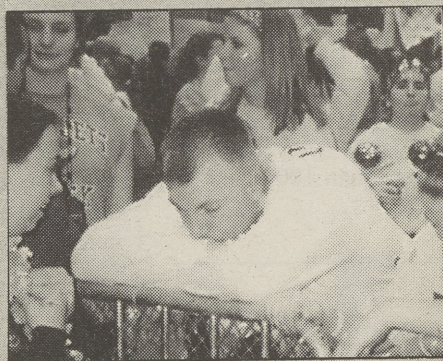


Photo by Andrew Lowry
Haley and Mike were required to stay on their feet for 48 hours. The occasional breaks were welcomed.

Thanks to all that contributed

THON would like to thank all of their many supporters. Here is a list of some of those who helped to make a difference this year:

Cathy Nguyen, Joe Reilly, Haley Schorza, Mike Bowers, Scott Anderman, AJ Santini, Andrea Ricciardi, Nelson

Jaimes, Anthony Zangara, Andrew Lowry, Keith Farrell, Pradeep Kulkarni, Alpo Patel, Rajesh Patel, Ravi Patel, KK Patel, Dave Park, Christine Ferroni, Sandy Sylvestri, Megan Barrett, Steve Dart, Sarah Gallatig, Eric Kessler, Renee Lutz, Daireen Garcia, Juan Perez, and Oliver Garcia.

Off the dance floor

By JENNIFER RUFO and
GERRY DUNGAN
Staff writers

Amidst the floods of people, the clapping hands, and dancing students great contributions were made to the student-run organization THON. THON is one of the biggest events of Centre County with all types of people there for all types of different reasons. When Fish, 24, from QWK Rock 97.1 was asked what kept him coming back for the third year in a row, he explained how his radio station feels that they were a big part of the beginning years of THON almost 30 years ago.

"We're THON's biggest contributors and supporters," Fish said.

Chris Mack, 22, from HOT 107.9 enjoyed his first year at THON working for the newly formed radio station. He is a senior at Penn State University Park and became involved with THON because of his roommate.

And then there is Beth Stieber, a 21-year-old Penn State U-Park senior who was waiting for her lost friends when interviewed. She is also a first-year participant in THON, however she has been a supporter throughout her years at Penn State.

This year at THON, she has three friends on the floor and they work for Frog Humor magazine.

When asked if this was what she expected THON to be, she simply exclaimed, "This is absolutely amazing."

Back on the dance floor, electricity was in the air. More than 700 THON supporters were bouncing around in an

almost chaotic fun-filled madness.

All the dancers at that point were up for 30-some hours. Most of those supporting from the stadium benches were depriving themselves of sleep right up there with them. This reporter is proud to announce that most THON supporters representing Delco were among the hundreds bouncing off walls.

Juan Perez, a Delco freshman, was up for 27 hours and was still busting a move and dancing along to the music while being interviewed. When asked why he came up to THON for the first time, Perez only looked around himself at the amazing sight and smiled the word, "Cool."

But there was one Delco THON supporter who was not up and "getting down" with the THON groove.

Joe Reilly, a Delco junior and a chairperson for Delco's THON, has been going to THON for three years now. When asked why he was up for more than 31 hours, Reilly responded,

"[I] feel awesome 'cause I'm doing it for kids with cancer."

But a couple of snapping motions in front of his unblinking eyes told another story. He was sitting there in a stupor. It was hard to understand why he commented that THON was the most memorable life experience. That is until the music for the "Line Dance" came on. It was like someone turned on a switch in Reilly, because he immediately got up and danced like there was no tomorrow.

"Every time they do this line dance, they are energized and I am able to go on," he said just before he collapsed back down onto the bench.

**Thanks to all who
helped THON
raise \$13,672.13**