

Eye on Campus

The many stories of THON

The contribution of Delco's dancers and donors

By JENNIFER RUFO

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Always Believing. That was the theme of THON this year, from Feb. 20 to Feb. 22.

Rec Hall in University Park was the place to be when THON, the largest student-run organization in the world, raised \$3,547,715.48 for kids with cancer.

Penn State Delaware County was well-represented with four dancers and a total of more than \$17,100 raised.

Pradeep Kulkarni, Kyle Potter, Ed Rich and Kathleen Iaci represented the pride of Penn State Delco and held their own on the dance floor. Student Life sent out the following message:

"Congratulations to our four Delaware County THON dancers. All four made it '48 hours, no standing, no sleeping, no kidding.' And an extra-special congratulations to the whole THON committee who raised (not including pledge books) \$17,100 for the Four Diamonds Fund which earned Penn

It goes far beyond the dancing

By GERRY DUNGAN
Special to the Lion's Eye

More than 700 student dancers boldly took to the floor and kept on their feet for the grueling 48 hour THON weekend. But during the entire weekend and the months leading up to THON, more than 1500 students, families and supporters labored vigorously in order to make THON the \$3.5 million champion for kids with cancer.

Why? They never gave up hope for the kids.

The proceeds gathered by the annual event go exclusively to the Four Diamonds Fund, which allowed this year's 702 dancers to sponsor more than 350 children with cancer.

It is the largest student-run philanthropy in the entire world, and for good reason: THON is that big of an event.

Sam Leu is a part of Campus Crusades, a religious organization and one of the 230 participating private organizations of THON. His group supported the weekend's event through an unconventional method: Prayer.

"We do a 48-hour prayer, which we pray every hour for all the dancers, and of course, it is for the kids with

State Delaware County a second-place showing among non-UP participants.

Congratulations you did Penn State Delaware County Proud!"

Highlights at the dance included performances by many different bands and entertainment in the form of games, singing, and, of course, the line dance every hour. This year the lyrics of the line dance touched on the films "Finding Nemo" and "Matrix" and popular songs from the Yin Yang Twins.

Rich, a senior IST major and the Delco co-chair of THON, said he was most tired Saturday night into Sunday morning.

"The place gets empty at night and you really look forward to the next day's events, like Mail Call," he said. "It helps keep the adrenaline flowing."

Morale leaders kept up the spirits of the dancers by offering food, games and prizes and jump rope. Their support helped everyone make it through the 48 hours. Banners lined the walls with supportive messages to dancers: "Keep on Dancing, Keep on Believing" and "The Floor is #1 in our Hearts."

The 42nd hour is known as Family

Hour, where the families of children with cancer encourage the dancers.

"It's inspirational," said Rich. "It's hard not to get emotional."

Penn State Delco students went to State College to show their support for THON. Jennifer O'Hara, a junior elementary education major, returned to THON this year for the fun and the kids.

"When I see so many Penn State students come together for a common cause that helps so many, it makes me feel proud to be a Penn Stater."

Bob Gault, a sophomore in American studies, said, "The ability of so many to come together for a great cause is truly touching and displays the compassion people can show when they come together for a common goal."

Prior to THON weekend, the Delco organizers held a successful Silent Auction and Faculty Luncheon. Highlights included haircuts and hairdos on staff members such as Gordon Crompton, Jonathon Leonhard and Dr. George Franz.

THON began in 1973 as a way for



Photo by Anteia Consorto

A couple of the children for whom THON weekend is held take part in the festivities. Dancers say the presence of the kids is inspiring.

the Interfraternity Council to rebuild its image. Then-President Bill Lear proposed a dance marathon to raise money for a worthwhile cause. More than \$2,000 was made the first year.

For more information, go to www.thon.org.

Heroes are everywhere: Dancers, kids, Moralers

By ED RICH
Special to the Lion's Eye

For the children battling cancer at the Penn State Children's Hospital, "carefree days" involve walking around the courtyard with an IV walking behind them. Their "carefree days" involve being sick and losing their hair. To them the world is not a perfect place where there are no worries, except for one magical weekend called THON.

At THON, the children get to be kids again. They get to leave the IVs behind and run around and play with the 700-plus college students who are there for them that weekend.

Even with the kids there, THON is a hard time for the dancers involved. The 48 hours on their feet is a grueling test of their strength, not to mention the strain it puts on a dancer's mind. In order to make it through THON, the dancers need support. The people who are there to support them are the unsung heroes of the Dance Marathon.

Ask any dancer and he will tell you that the kids who struggle with this disease every day are the heroes. They teach us so much about life because they are forced to grow up so quickly. Even with all their troubles, they find the time to run around, squirt the dancers with water guns and smile. For many families, THON is the first time

they have seen their kids smile since Christmas.

Ask any Four Diamond Family and they will tell you that the college students dancing are the real heroes. The college students who stand at intersections in the bitter cold of a Pennsylvania winter, and the other Northern states are the heroes. The thousands of people who donate money are the heroes.

Ask any dancer who was the biggest help to them as they danced, and a majority of them will say that the people who are by their side or in the stands cheering for them are the biggest help. The Moralers, the countless people who send them "Dancer Mail," the children, the family members who make the trip to State College to cheer them on are the biggest help.

For the thousands of Penn State students involved with THON, believing is seeing. They believe there is a cure in sight, that one day children will never have to suffer with cancer, that soon, 100 percent of all kids diagnosed with cancer will be cured. They do not need to see the medical reports on cancer to believe in a cure.

If you would like to get involved with THON please contact me (EIR102@psu.edu) or Kathleen Iaci (KAI104@psu.edu).

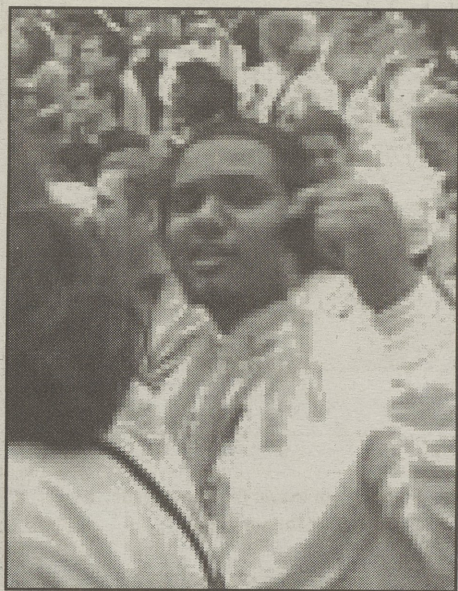


Photo by Anteia Consorto

Pradeep Kulkarni was one of the four dancers to represent Penn State Delco.

cancer." Leu said.

And sometimes prayers do help dreams come true. Ask Jeanette Schreiber, a University Park senior and a THON dancer for what she called, "a small theater group on campus." But more significantly, Jeanette was also a former patient of the Four Diamonds Fund.

Jeanette talked about how the money raised for the Four Diamonds Fund aided her with the payment of the treatments to help beat her childhood cancer.

"It cost \$3,000 for a little bottle of pills," Schreiber said. "(They) even paid for the gas that my parents had to use to drive to and from Hershey."