

Dance Marathon at the UF: "A Decade of Dancing, A Lifetime of Loving"

Dance Marathon at the University of Florida celebrated its 10th year of miracles on March 27th -28th. The event filled the Stephen C. O'Connell Center with 600 dancers from UF as well as hundreds of volunteers and community members. Dance Marathon has grown to become an event that truly makes miracles happen by benefiting Children's Miracle Network at Shands Children's Hospital. The 32 hour standing only event has exploded from its small beginning in 1995 with 80 dancers raising just over \$12,000. The 2003 event raised over \$247,000 bringing the total donation from the past nine years to just over \$1 million for the kids at Shands. The 2004 event announced a total of \$250,012.48 and donations are still being received. Nearly 30 Children's Miracle Network Champion Families attended the event to share their success stories and motivate the dancers to complete the 32 hour challenge.

Dancers, and visitors alike, were entertained by local dance groups and bands from UF and the Gainesville community such as Caribsa, Same Difference, the University Gospel Choir, and Next Generation. Dancers, families and volunteers were well fed by many of Gainesville's most popular restaurants including McAllister's Deli, Domino's Pizza, Olive Garden, and Cold Stone Creamery. Although Dance Marathon is well rooted in tradition this year has also been a year of firsts. The 2004 Overall Team organized the inaugural Dance Marathon sponsored 5K Miracle Run in February. In recognition of its many years on campus, DM at UF established the first DM at UF alumni group. The goal of the alumni group is to recognize past participants of this incredible event and the amazing contribution that they have been a part of. Dance Marathon continues to make the future brighter for the children treated at Shands Children's Hospital at UF by dancing "For All the Right Reasons".

3rd Annual FAU Dance Marathon Raises \$7,000

Fifty students from Florida Atlantic University (FAU) in Boca Raton danced the night away to support Children's Miracle Network at Shands Children's Hospital at the University of Florida. Throughout the FAU Dance Marathon, students stayed on their feet for 16 hours, participated in various activities and listened to the inspirational stories of eight Children's Miracle Network success families. At the end of the event, Monica Jara, overall chairperson, announced the grand total of \$7,000 that was raised through the student's efforts.

Eric Kristensen, a disk jockey with The Buzz 103.1 FM, welcomed the dancers, family members, FAU students and visitors to the event. FAU Dance Marathon was kicked off with students dancing and listening to the Ebenezer Band. Throughout the 16 hours, students played games with the Children's Miracle Network kids who attended, watched Gary Goodman do magic tricks, participated with arts and crafts, played pool, and watched the Reflections martial arts group perform. Ric Blackwell, WPEC News 12 morning personality, joined the students for the closing ceremonies to thank them for their participation and dedication to Children's Miracle Network.

Florida State University Dance Marathon Celebrates a Banner Year!

Anthropologist Margaret Mead once said "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

In the case of Florida State University Dance Marathon those citizens happen to be students and are celebrating a successful event raising over \$155,000!

In its ninth year, FSU Dance Marathon added many new events prior to the actual 32-hour dance held on February 22 & 23, 2004. Several events in the fall included a 5k run at the Rez, a student recreation facility, and meetings with the families. New this year was a co-ed flag football tournament, a second 5k run followed by a family picnic, and Miracle Family Day. The biggest change, however, was moving the venue from the campus gymnasium to the Leon County Civic Center that provided the needed required space to host the 1,200 participants, volunteers, and guests during the two-day event.

Half of the proceeds go to the Florida State University College of Medicine, allowing the university community to see the importance of getting involved in such a worthwhile cause.

Michelle Young of Tallahassee, whose son was sent to Shands Children's Hospital for life-threatening cancer, stated, "Our family has been involved with Dance Marathon since the beginning and it is the highlight of our child's year. Thanks to Dance Marathon and the Children's Miracle Network, our son Caleb is now 14 years old and has been cancer free for 12 years. The work that goes into Dance Marathon is incomprehensible and I have never met a better group of students than the dancers and organizers of this event."

Like Mohammed Ali once said: "Service to others is the rent we pay for our room here on earth." These students have definitely paid up this year, and hopefully the philanthropic experience will continue on for their lifetimes.

*** Check Out Our Website! www.Shandskids.org ***