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Northwestern University Dance Marathon Raises \$1,019,130 for The Children's Heart
Foundation

Record numbers of students raise a record amount of funds to save lives, one heart at a time

After thirty long hours of dancing and more than ten months of preparation and fundraising, Northwestern University students raised \$1,019,130 in cash and in-kind donations to benefit The Children's Heart Foundation (CHF) and the Evanston Community Foundation in the 37th year of Northwestern University Dance Marathon (NUDM). This is the first time in NUDM's history that the event netted more than one million dollars.

"The research that will be funded thanks to NUDM will impact children and their families for generations to come," explained Bill Foley, Executive Director of The Children's Heart Foundation. "We look forward to the day that we can answer the question of 'Why did this happen to my child?' 'How can my child's heart defect be treated?' and more importantly, 'How can congenital heart defects be prevented?'"

Throughout the year, more than 300 committee members helped organize events to raise awareness and build connections between the student community and the beneficiaries. Events included a Top Chef competition, a Battle of the Bands, the first ever MiniDM at Oak Park River Forest High School, weekly trivia, and a Family Feud competition. While the annual Dance Marathon took place, Norris University Center also hosted other NUDM events such as a kids fair, spa, silent auction, and a cappella concert at which many Evanston residents, non-dancing students, alumni and faculty, and other guests showed their support. Beyond the student center, NUDM supporters participated in coinciding events such as a 5k/10k run around the lake fill, Evanston Eats percentage meals at participating neighborhood restaurants, and celebratory alumni "AlumNite" parties across the country.

This year, the Illinois House of Representatives and the Illinois Senate passed resolutions to recognize the Northwestern University Dance Marathon weekend (March 4 to 6) for its mission of uniting Northwestern University and nearby communities through education and philanthropic fundraising throughout the course of the school year.

The year culminated with the 30-hour Dance Marathon. More than 900 student dancers filled the tent on the East Lawn of Norris University Center while several hundred spectators visited to see the entirely student-produced event. The record-breaking number of dancers grooved through the weekend with incredible levels of energy and dedication.

"The endless energy from the dance floor every hour this past weekend was truly inspirational and I hope that every single participant appreciates what a significant impact the funds they have worked so tirelessly to raise will have." said Executive co-chair Catrina Miksis, a McCormick senior. "This Dance Marathon was a huge success not just for its historic final total, but also for the lives that have been changed thanks to everyone's hard work" added Executive co-chair Julie

Sher, a Communication senior. “The funds raised are going to lead to medical advancements that improve and save children's lives, as well as contribute to restoring peace of mind to families facing incredible challenges.”

Due to worsening weather conditions early Saturday morning and again on Saturday afternoon, dancers were given extended break time while NUDM organizers took precautionary measures to ensure the continued safety of attendees. While the dancers were never in danger due to the ability of the tent to withstand winds at that level, event organizers wanted to take every possible precaution given the severity of the winds.

The first extended break occurred between blocks 3 and 4 at 4:00am, and the second occurred between blocks 6 and 7, at 1:00pm. Once organizers consulted with professionals and reaffirmed that the tent was still a secure venue for NUDM, dancers rushed back to the dance floor with renewed enthusiasm. The severe winds calmed down, and the remainder of the event proceeded with no further delays.

“While it is unfortunate we had to delay the start of two blocks while evaluating the effects of the weather on circumstances within the tent, the dancers did an incredible job of rallying together and staying enthusiastic throughout the entirety of the event,” Sher commented. “Their patience and continued excitement are a testament to the true spirit of Northwestern students. Dance Marathon and all those involved are incredibly resilient and were rewarded with the well-deserved celebrations of block ten.”

Following the second extended break, dancers were greeted by Northwestern University President Morton Shapiro, Head Football Coach Pat Fitzgerald and the Northwestern University Football Team. The surprise quickly heightened the energy in the tent, and the support from President Shapiro and Coach Fitzgerald served as a reminder to the dancers of their impact on the beneficiaries and on the University itself.

Dance Marathon is a unifying event for Northwestern University, bringing together students that usually are spread throughout campus across diverse groups, from fraternities and sororities, to dorms, to religious groups and athletic teams.

“Over the past year, we've been thrilled to have had the opportunity to include a variety of campus groups and teams into our efforts. The basketball team came during the 30 hours to hand out a snack, as did IFC and PHA. Both the men's basketball and football teams joined us on stage, and a student band performed in our annual Battle of the Bands performance,” explained Miksis. “Over 1,500 students came together to sing, dance, cheer, sweat and make an enormous difference for two incredibly deserving organizations.”

At the end of the thirty-hour dance-a-thon, the Dance Marathon Executive Board presented The Children's Heart Foundation with a check for \$632,689.20. The check was accepted by CHF founder Betsy Peterson, Executive Director Bill Foley, National Board President Megan Van Pelt, National Board Secretary Chris Griesmeyer, and Development Coordinator Tina Larson. The board also presented the Evanston Community Foundation with a check for \$70,298.80, which was accepted by ECF President and CEO Sara Schastok and Community Volunteer Chairwoman Judy Kemp.

“The Children's Heart Foundation is incredibly grateful to the Northwestern University community, NUDM Executive Committee and most importantly, the over 900 dancers that participated in DM this past weekend. While 30 hours dancing is a very long time, the result of

the collective efforts will no doubt transform CHF,” said Foley.

Throughout the weekend, CHF Heart Ambassador families took to the stage to share their experiences and show off their dance moves. “As we saw on the dance floor this weekend, the kids and families touched by CHF are some of the most inspiring and energetic people you’ll ever meet, and they are truly grateful to everyone at DM for the relationships formed, awareness raised, and funds donated,” said Sher, commenting on the depth of the partnership between NUDM and CHF.

“We could never have imagined that we would reach such heights, and we want to sincerely thank everyone who has supported DM this year, in every capacity. \$1,019,130 is a lot of money, and while the final total is an enormous achievement, we hope that we have been able to bring more than just a donation to these unbelievable organizations,” said Miksis. “We hope that we’ve taught the campus about the urgency surrounding funding for research of congenital heart defects, we hope we’ve given people a glimpse into what it means to have a family member affected by one and by doing so, we hope we’ve given the campus the chance to come together for a few hours to make a positive impact on the world.”

About NU Dance Marathon

Now in its 37th year, Northwestern University’s Dance Marathon is one of the world’s largest student-run philanthropies, having raised more than \$12 million dollars since its founding in 1975.

For more information about NUDM’s beneficiaries, please visit The Children’s Heart Foundation website at www.childrensheartfoundation.org and the Evanston Community Foundation website at www.evanstonforever.org. Additionally, for more information about this year’s partnerships as well as Northwestern University Dance Marathon itself, please visit www.nudm.org.

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