

USF Dance Marathon



Despite its name, Dance Marathon is about much more than a dance. Dance Marathon is a movement of students across many colleges and universities who believe in the power of their local Children's Miracle Network hospital. Additionally, they believe in a college student's ability to make a difference and "stand for the kids who can't." Nationally, university-based Dance Marathons have raised over \$62 million. What's often more impressive, but not as easily quantified, are the relationships students have built with families connected to the local children's hospitals. Also not easily quantified is the impact such an experience has on each student involved. It shapes their view of themselves as global citizens and emphasizes the power of what they can do in the world with their skills and talents.

Dance Marathons are more than a one-day event in which students stand for 11 hours. The one-day event certainly provides a focal point for the year as a celebration that everyone desperately works toward – each student trying to raise as much money as possible for the kids. However, Dance Marathon is also a culture. It's a year-long team-building experience where college students find friends, make memories, grow as leaders, and work their tails off for a cause much larger than themselves. They learn to lead, and lead with passion. Students involved with the executive board and planning committees also get the fraternity-like experience of gaining a pseudo-family. It's not uncommon to hear stories about two students in the airport, both wearing a "DM" shirt or a bag that says "FTK" (for the kids), who immediately

connect over Dance Marathon. As one student once said, being a part of Dance Marathon pushes you to grow in ways you never imagined while working toward a cause you never knew you could care so much about.

Videos online only begin to scratch the surface of the fun and exciting culture within this life-changing organization. A simple Google search will return articles about the many successes Dance Marathons across the country have seen. However, nothing beats the experience of getting involved first-hand.

From August 28th to September 9th, your student has the opportunity to join a planning committee for Dance Marathon at USF. There will be an optional committee information meeting on August 28th at 7pm in room 2702 of the Marshall Student Center. Committees focus on a variety of activities including monthly fundraising events, monthly events with families at All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg, securing corporate donations and sponsorships from major businesses in the area, and much more. Students can also sign up to simply raise money and dance at the one-day event in March. Please visit www.usf.edu/dm to learn more about your student's opportunities to get involved.

With a goal of recruiting over 700 dancers, there's a role for everyone to fill. Additionally, with a goal of raising over \$20,000 and building strong relationships with over 15 families at All Children's Hospital, there's always a role for you and other community members to play in this movement.

Mark your calendars now for the final celebratory event on March 1st, 2014, from noon to 11pm in the Marshall Student Center. Your student will most likely be working right through the main event to fundraise as much as possible. Visitors are welcome at the main event as well, so feel free to stop by and encourage the dancers to stay strong through all 11 hours of the event.

In true Dance Marathon fashion, the closing ceremony will include a grand reveal of the total amount raised. To the students, it represents all the hard work and dedication they put in throughout the year. To the families of All Children's Hospital, it represents the love and hope the community has poured into them. And to student affairs professionals like me, that final number, no matter how big or small, represents the life change and growth of each student involved. Each year, in that closing ceremony moment, I get to see the world become just a little bit better of a place.

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