

**IGNITING
HOPE
WITHIN**
THON 2017



PENN S



Joseph DiDomenico/Collegian

Total ignites excitement in community

By Andrew Kalmowitz and Kelly Powers
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

At a post-THON 2017 press conference, members of THON's executive committee, Executive Director Austin Sommerer and Public Relations Director Sam Sherlock, Four Diamonds Director Charles Millard and Four Diamonds Fund Director Suzanne Graney, answered questions about the weekend in general as well as the total money raised for the weekend — \$10,045,478.44.

"We're so excited to show our hard work through the culmination of our efforts THON weekend," Sherlock said.

According to Sommerer, the weekend went "very smoothly" and they did not have many "hiccups" or problems at all.

"[There] was nothing that delayed us or kept us from doing our job," Sommerer said.

It has now been two years since THON changed its canning policies, leading to limited canning weekends due to safety concerns.

"I think one of the greatest things we saw this weekend was

that nothing is going to stop us," Sommerer said.

"None of the feats or exterior factors that are coming onto our organization will stop us. We will continue to fundraise and support Four Diamonds in any way we can. We showed that just because canning was being phased out, it does not mean our efforts are dwindling or anything is going down."

Millard called the energy in the room "hard to describe." He said he was in a difficult position because it had been 45 years since the Four Diamonds fund was started, but they worked in the beginning with other clubs.

"To sit in my position as a co-founder of the fund, and seeing all of this growing around you, you just sort of sit back and relax and let them take care of it," Millard said. "It continuously builds."

He also described THON as an "inverted pyramid" since its inception. It keeps getting bigger almost every year.

"It's a thrill from my point of view to see this happen," Millard said.

2017's total still fell well short of the of the event's record total

of \$13,026,653.23 set in 2015. However, the amount of money raised did eclipse last year's total of \$9,770,332.32. Sommerer pointed to various organizations as the cause of the increase in the total.

"One of the big things we talked about was alternative funding," Sommerer said. "We're also growing in support all over the country. We're growing in awareness and we're growing in the number of people who know about THON, and our brand, and our mission. I think a conglomerate of all those things and the growing nature of the support is helping as well."

Steven Mezzacappa stood for 46 hours this THON weekend as an independent dancer, and he said THON 2017 was an amazing, definite success.

"The total this special," Mezzacappa (senior-architectural engineering) said. "10 million, that's special to see."

Mezzacappa said the biggest impact of THON, though, might have to be weekend itself and all the events throughout the year such as the relationships dancers like Mezzacappa build with the families and children.

"That's the most special part of

it, and the total is another thing to add to it," he said. "So much hard work has gone into by thousands of students, and I think there's a lot to be proud of."

Mezzacappa said dancing gave him a different perspective on THON.

"I was really able to see the magic that this environment really becomes for these families and for the kids," Mezzacappa said. "Anything we can do to let them grow up and live their dreams is something special."

Mezzacappa said he believes THON will continue to have an impact on lives in the future.

"Cancer is a disease we don't want to see in this world," he said. "There's so much potential in this world, and anything we can do to let kids grow up and live their dreams is something special."

Lauren Downey and Rachel Curry, who both graduated in 2016, attended THON this weekend, and although they didn't dance, they both said THON 2017 was an absolute success.

"We're alumni and the energy didn't feel any different to us," Downey said.

She said it was incredible to

come back as alumni and have THON be just as powerful to her as it has always been.

Curry added as well that getting to attend the Final Four was amazing, hitting her just as hard as it always has.

Jake Coalmer spent 46 hours alongside his partner Jacob Skubisz, both sent from Penn State Dubois, and Coalmer said it wasn't as challenging as he expected.

"I think if you do everything they tell you to do, do the stretches and stuff, it's not that bad," Coalmer (sophomore-mechanical engineering) said. "I ate when I was supposed to eat, did the stretches and I think it was a very successful weekend."

Skubisz (junior-business management and marketing) said he was very glad to see the THON total in the double digits, and his partner added that he couldn't possibly complain about \$10 million.

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DID YOU KNOW?
Proceeds generated from THON 2017 support...

TOP FUNDRAISERS

50,227
hours of nutritional therapy

66,970
days of out-patient treatment

13,394
lab experiments

6,697
days for a team to manage all patient needs

13,394
routine maintenance visits for treatment and therapy for a child

Top Greek Organization
Zeta Tau Alpha & Alpha Tau Omega
\$296,369.40

Top Special Interest Org.
Springfield
\$192,883.78

Top General Org.
Phi Gamma Nu
\$296,369.40

*Numbers courtesy of THON Media Relations Team



Antonella Crescimbeni/Collegian

Aislynn Mackenzie (junior-forensic science), a dancer for the forensic club, cries after receiving mail during mail call at the Penn State THON 2017 at the Bryce Jordan Center on Saturday, Feb. 18.



Caitlin Lee/Collegian

A dancer reacts as her hair is cut off to be donated during Penn State THON on Saturday, Feb. 18.



Antonella Crescimbeni/Collegian

The Bryce Jordan Center is lit up with cellphone flashes during one of the performances of the Kids Variety Show during Penn State THON 2017 on Saturday, Feb. 18.

DNCE THE NIGHT AWAY



Antonella Crescimbeni/Collegian

Dancers embrace dancer relations committee members as they walk through the human tunnel that leads to the Bryce Jordan Center on Friday, Feb. 17.



Erin O'Neill/Collegian

Members of Alpha Delta Pi lay down before standing during Penn State's THON in the Bryce Jordan Center on Friday, Feb. 17.



Tap Permyao/Collegian

Joe Jonas of DNCE performs at Bryce Jordan Center on Friday, Feb. 17.

FAMILY HOUR

Four Diamond families share stories of struggles with childhood cancer during THON 2017 Final Four

The Marcus Josey Family

Two years ago, Marcus Josey was a student-athlete in high school who excelled in all that he did.

On April 10, 2015, he received a letter from Harvard saying he was in the final stages of recruitment to play football.

"Receiving that letter meant everything to me," Josey said.

Later that day, he was in an assembly that talked about leukemia. He noticed he had a majority of the symptoms they talked about.

Later, he had blood work done, and his doctor confirmed his worst fears — he had leukemia.

He immediately began his treatment and will continue until August 2018.

Josey's treatment was not always easy. He got mouth sores so bad he had to be hospitalized because he couldn't eat. Multiple times he was not able to walk.

He created a bond with a little boy who was diagnosed with cancer just five days after him. Their relationship was so captivating

that the Philadelphia Eagles took notice and made a documentary about the two.

Despite his illness, Josey still has his sense of humor.

"I got to take the beautiful Miss New Jersey to my senior homecoming. Thanks, cancer," he said jokingly.

He said he has met many amazing and inspirational people on his journey through cancer and treatment.

He recounted the story of his friend, Hope, who passed away in December 2015.

He was too sick and in isolation to visit her when they were in the hospital together.

"Her mom came down to my room and handed me a bag of Christmas gifts that Hope had bought a few weeks prior," he said with glassy eyes.

His doctors have also inspired him to become a pediatric oncologist when he gets older.

"The most inspirational people, though, are you guys," he said, speaking to the crowd inside the Bryce Jordan Center.



Joe DiDomenico/Collegian

The Marcus Josey family speaks on stage during family hour at Penn State THON 2017 at the Bryce Jordan Center on Saturday, Feb. 19.

The Savion Atterberry Family

The Savion Atterberry family did not want to fill their time to speak with medical jargon or details of treatment.

They said Savion would not have wanted that, and they wanted to embody his spirit — a young role model.

"We came to let you know about our sweet boy Avion Atterberry," one member of Savion's family said, said. "He passed away at 10 years old."

Savion's mother, Anjanette Atterberry, took the microphone then, and began to speak about her son.

Atterberry said her son battled several forms of cancer at once, but what she wanted to focus on was his strength.

"At a young age he was a role model — always there for others even when not feeling well," Atterberry said. "Now we know what a miracle he was."

She said, although Savion is no longer fighting his battle, he still won.

"He taught us more than we could ever teach him," she said. "Savion is not here but he won. He won. Those monsters could not break him."

Atterberry said she wanted to thank Hershey Medical Center, Penn State, THON and everyone who aided in helping Savion in his fight.

"So sorry that Savy's life wasn't what we wanted for him," she said.

Through tears, Atterberry said that her son is now in his happy place, no longer in pain, and that her family will be all right.

"Heroes come and they go, but legends and legacies last forever," she said.

The Connor Rowan Family

The Rowans were the first THON family to take the Penn State THON's event stage during Family Hour to speak, and they shared their story.

Connor's mother, Mary-Anne Rowan, held a microphone tightly in her hand as she addressed the packed Bryce Jordan Center.

Rowan said when she was asked to speak at THON 2017 her reactions were two-fold. On one hand she was terrified, having never spoken to this many people at one time.

"But, my second thought was how many chances will I get to say thank you to this many people," Rowan said.

Standing next to her husband, Michael, and her sons, Rowan told Connor's story.

In December 2014, Connor was just over 3 years old when he came into his house doubled-over from pain in his stomach, Rowan said.

She said the family never thought for a second that it could have been cancer.

After two visits to the emergency room, doctors told the family they discovered a mass in the toddler's liver.

"In that moment — panic, shock, heartbreak — I can't even explain it," Rowan said. "If you've ever silently screamed, that's what I did. I didn't want to scare him."

After getting transferred to Hershey Medical Center, Connor's life really kicked into gear. The doctors there told Rowan that her son had a form of liver cancer.

"They said he needed this seven-hour surgery," Rowan said. "This all happened in 24 hours."

That evening while preparing for the major surgery, Connor whispered to his mother that when he grew up he wanted to be Spider-Man.

Rowan said all she was thinking was, "Please grow up."

Rowan said that by the following January the family felt they could relax and have a little hope.

Connor went through four rounds of chemotherapy to combat his cancer, and in March 2015 he finished his final treatment.

The Rowan family did not face Connor's treatment alone.

Introduced to Four Diamonds by a social worker as well as nurses around the hospital, and Connor's family was first paired with the Clown Nose Club.

The Connor Rowan family attended THON in 2016, their first dance marathon.

"The positive memories our boys make with you, begin to overtake the negative ones," Rowan said.

"We think you are one of the best things to happen to us."

The family is now paired with the Ad Pi Omega, a community service fraternity.

Connor's mother thanked all of THON and its volunteers from the THON stage, and she announced happily that, "as of today Connor is 22 months in remission."



Antonella Crescimbeni/Collegian



Linsy Fagan/Collegian

You've got mail

By Jack R. Hirsh
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Just because dancers have to stay inside the BJC for the entirety of the 46 hours of THON doesn't mean they are completely cut off from the outside world.

Friends, relatives and even the dancer's THON families and organizations sent packages and notes to the dancers in the days leading up to the dancer marathon to be delivered at different points throughout the 46 hours.

The first mail call came on Saturday morning. Joe Pamponi received a package including games and coloring books to keep him occupied for the remaining hours from his THON family, the Tafels.

"It makes me wanna cry a lot," Pamponi (senior - bio renewable systems), who is dancing for Sigma Kappa, said. "I love them so much. I just know that they are thinking of me and I'm thinking of them. It helps me get through the weekend."

Joe Clabaugh and Carlos Pimentel got packages from their organization, Mont Alto.

"To get a letter from them, that means a lot to us," Clabaugh (junior - physical therapist assistant) said. "[It helps us get through the 46 hours] because it feels like there's someone looking out for us even though it kind of feels

like we are down here by ourselves, but we got everybody else around us and they are helping us make it through. It gives us a huge boost."

Pimentel (sophomore - supply chain management) said the letter he got was signed by the captains of Mont Alto. He also received a note from the Penn State Alumni Association as well as a stress ball.

"It's incredible," Pimentel said. "You're here, and you can see your org members from [the floor], but you can't touch them, you can't feel them. So that when you get the mail you know can tell that even though they aren't down here with us, they're here in spirit."

On hand to help pass out mail was now-retired and beloved University Park mailman Mike Herr, better known as "Mike the Mailman."

"People always ask me how I'm doing [in retirement], and I always say 'I've never had a bad day,'" Herr said. "What these kids do here is unbelievable. I love what the kids do here. These guys are the heart and soul of Penn State. They make it happen and they have sacrificed all year long for this. It's not just a 46-hour event, its year round. I love being apart of mail call."

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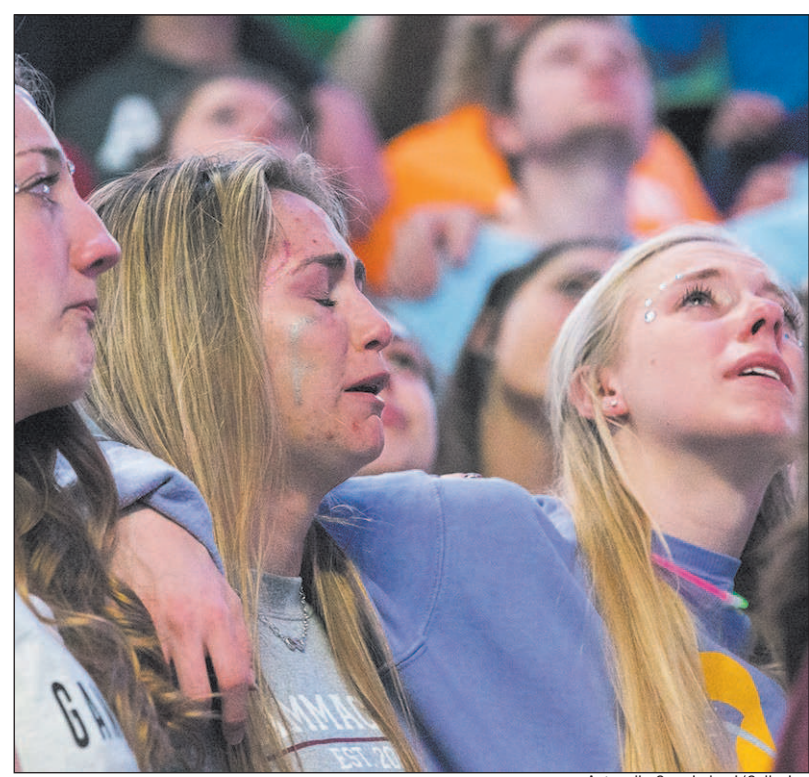


Camille Stefani/Collegian



Connor Kane/Collegian

Owen Forsyth, 14 months, of Seattle walks across the floor after OPP mopped, as the crowd cheers. Owen is the son of Kelsey Forsyth, whose sister, Erin Palm, is dancing for AZD. Kelsey's brother is a Four Diamonds child, Kelsey has been coming to THON for approximately 13 years.



Antonella Crescimbeni/Collegian

Tears are shed during the Celebration of Life video during the final four of Penn State THON 2017 at the Bryce Jordan Center on Saturday, Feb. 19.

THE STEP HEARD 'ROUND THE BJC



Caitlin Lee/Collegian

Brianna Coykendall, 9, reacts after blowing bubbles during Penn State THON at the Bryce Jordan Center on Saturday, Feb. 18. Brianna's brother Tommy Coykendall, 16, is Power Lifting's THON child.



Linsey Fagan/Collegian

The Nittany Lion bends over backwards while using his tail as a pretend guitar while on stage at the Bryce Jordan Center on Sunday, Feb. 19.



Linsey Fagan/Collegian

Dancer Relations Committee members massage Apollo dancer Tom Kawchak (junior-computer engineering) at the Bryce Jordan Center on Sunday, Feb. 19.



Caitlin Lee/Collegian

Whiplash Dance Team performs during Penn State THON at the Bryce Jordan Center on Sunday, Feb. 19.



Caitlin Lee/Collegian

Landon Knepp, dressed as Chewbacca, engages in a lightsaber battle at the fashion during Penn State THON on Saturday, Feb. 18.

PUT SOME PEP IN YOUR STEP



Antonella Crescimbeni/Collegian

GRADING THE PERFORMANCES

Men's gymnastics

SOULJA BOY? What is this, middle school?! Idk, but we love it. And the corkscrew flip to top it—OK, now they're just showing off. I mean, breakdancing? Crunches while suspended from another team member's shoulders? A bunch more stuff that we literally cannot even describe? A deserved standing ovation from the crowd (no pun intended). They're gonna be hard to beat. FINAL GRADE: A+

Field hockey

Everybody has those days, everybody makes mistakes. This one wasn't though. Some fairly simple choreography, but it worked. Well executed. Could have had a little more pizzazz for our taste, but hey, you can't win them all. FINAL GRADE: B

Women's basketball

The Lady Lions came out of the gates with a hip-hop remixed version of "Hakuna Matata" and moved into "Strut Like You Mean It" from The Cheetah Girls. Then they "got in formation" to the tune of Beyonce, before closing it out with Beauty and the Beast. Overall, a well-rounded performance. FINAL GRADE: B+

Women's golf

Another Cheetah Girls focused performance, including a cast of six team members actually dressed like cheetahs. Major props for that. A decent performance, but nothing too special. FINAL GRADE: B-

Men's soccer

The perennial favorites drew on Justin Bieber and Gwen Stefani's "Hollaback Girl" to win over the crowd, not to mention their jean cut-offs. They were also the first of the night to use The Chainsmokers' "Closer," so major points for that. The crowd loved it. FINAL GRADE: A



Linsey Fagan/Collegian



Antonella Crescimbeni/Collegian



Antonella Crescimbeni/Collegian



Kevin Kelley/Collegian



Joseph DiDomenico/Collegian

Megan Eslinger (Four Diamonds child of six years) rides horses with the Penn State Equestrian club during the THON explorers outing at Kocher Farms on Saturday, Feb. 18.

HEAR OUR LITTLE LIONS ROAR!



Antonella Crescimbeni/Collegian

Trey Fry, 5, of Carlisle Pa., runs through an obstacle during the THON Explorers program held at the Lasch Building on Saturday, Feb. 18. Trey is Club soccer's four diamonds child. Trey's older brother Chase, 9, gave him a life-saving bone marrow donation.



Camille Stefani/Collegian

Saquon Barkley (26) gets a run for his money from Chase Fry (9), of Carlisle, Pa. during Athlete Hour in the Indoor Tennis Facility on Saturday, Feb. 18.



Camille Stefani/Collegian

Ella Hertzler, of Millerstown, Pa., sister of a Four Diamonds child, performs a routine with the Nittany Lion during Athlete Hour in the Indoor Tennis Center on Saturday, Feb. 18.



Antonella Crescimbeni/Collegian

Marcus Allen (2) laughs as A'Niah Butler, 6, of Chambersburg Pa., runs through a tackle dummy during the THON Explorers program held at Lasch Building.



IGNITE! ELECTRIFY!



Antonella Crescimbeni/Collegian

Dancer Relations Captains perform the line dance during Penn State THON 2017 at the Bryce Jordan Center on Saturday, Feb. 19.

THON 2017 LINE DANCE LYRICS

Intro

Nittany Lions, bring the heat, for 46 we're on our feet
Stand tall, stretch it out, time to show what THON's about
FTK! Let's get loud! Crank that volume in the crowd
Round the world, we unite, all together in the fight

Verse No. 1 - Penn State

Blue and white forever true, Penn State grows. Woah! That's new!
East begins its renovation. Canyon: new location
Dear Mike, we miss you most, favorite mailman leaves the post
'All In' movement takes the lead. Lion's Pantry seeks to feed
Target, is the spot. LionPATH, can we not?
Storm the field, scream and shout, Ohio State gets whited out
Wrestling: champs again, Nittany Lions win Big Ten!
Smell the roses, bags are packed, Penn State football! Guess who's
back?

Chorus

Ignite! Electrify! Come on raise your diamonds high
One purpose, For The Kids! Hours dancing: 46!
Shake the stands, rock the floor. Hear our little lions roar!
Look around, take it in. This fight, we will win!



Sami Myers/Collegian

Verse No. 2 - Current Events

Aleppo seeks light in the dark. Orlando's Pulse beats in our heart
England - "Peace out, EU!" Hop on flights to Cuba too
Orcas will be swimming free. Space X in the galaxy
Election puts Trump on top. Obama's out - mic drop
Final 5, strong and bold. Phelps, Ledecky made of gold
Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee: Muhammad's legacy
Mr. Palmer hits last drive. Peyton Manning says goodbye
Good year, to be a Cub, curse is lifted, fly the dub
Pens hoist the Stanley Cup. Leicester City turns it up
Cleveland wins the ring, a kid from Akron still the king

Chorus

Ignite! Electrify! Come on raise your diamonds high
One purpose, For The Kids! Hours dancing: 46!
Shake the stands, rock the floor. Hear our little lions roar!
Look around, take it in. This fight, we will win!



Sami Myers/Collegian

Verse No. 3 - Entertainment

SnapChat makes us dogs and deer. Stranger Things happened here
Rain drop, drop top.. where's the closest PokéStop?
Gilmore Girls continue story, splash around with Finding Dory
Leo lives his Oscar dream. HARAMBE, make a meme
"Closer" playing on repeat. Running man on that beat.
Is it Broadway? Is it school? "Hamilton" makes history cool
Leia's force will remain. Prince sings in the purple rain
Welcome back to life Jon Snow. Sorry if you didn't know!
Why is everything so lit?! What was this year's biggest hit?!

Chorus

Ignite! Electrify! Come on raise your diamonds high
One purpose, For The Kids! Hours dancing: 46!
Shake the stands, rock the floor. Hear our little lions roar!
Look around, take it in. This fight, we will win!

Verse No. 4 - THON

BJC, now's our chance. Show the families why we dance
Past and present volunteers, with Four Diamonds 40 years
Penn State students show they care, one mission we all share
Diamonds guide the way, we will celebrate one day
Rise up, strength defines you, wisdom: support behind you
Courage: to face unknown. Honesty: leads you home
Fireflies in the night, today we spark tomorrow's light
Boundaries broken, futures bright, hope within, we ignite.



KC Black/Collegian