

# The Daily Collegian

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# ‘IT’S REALLY EYE OPENING’

## How dancers prepare for 46 hours in the BJC

By Emma Naysmith  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Two weeks before THON weekend 2026, The Daily Collegian spoke with dancers about how they’re preparing. Here’s what they had to say

THON is the world’s largest student-run philanthropy that aims to provide emotional and financial support to Four Diamonds families who have been impacted by childhood cancer.

Dancer Relations Committee Outreach Coordinator Olivia Johnston said THON provides several resources for dancers to help prepare themselves for the long weekend.

Some of these resources include dancer wellness packets, a more thorough dancer wellness guide, a dancer survival guide and the opportunity to attend a virtual dancer panel where first-time participants can ask previous dancers questions.

“There isn’t a specific plan we recommend, like a step-by-step guide of how to perfectly prepare to stand for 46 hours,” Johnston, a fourth-year studying psychology, said. “In general, we suggest to hydrate, eat healthy, light workouts, nothing too strenuous on your body and definitely stretch.”

Johnston also mentioned dancers are encouraged to get ahead on sleep and build their immunity prior to the weekend. Additionally, she said another huge tip is to begin reducing caffeine intake and even entering a dry period to help further avoid any illnesses or withdrawals.

THON dancers are also supported by Dancer Relations Committee members (DRCM) who they’re encouraged to meet prior to the weekend. Johnston said these committee members are “well-rounded” in their education to help support dancers in



Two dancers stretch together during the 53rd THON in the Bryce Jordan Center on Friday, Feb. 21, 2025 in University Park, Pa.

Samantha Oropeza/Collegian

numerous instances.

“They have all the specific times that they need to know, special event times, floor event times, anything that will keep them entertained,” Johnston said. “They also are being educated on mental health tips and tricks and how to deal with ... the mental aspect of dealing for 46 hours.”

Second-generation THON dancer Maddie Langlois danced last year with Alpha Kappa Psi and said it was an amazing experience to have been a part of.

Langlois, a fourth-year studying marketing, said THON does a lot to provide dancers with resources and support. She remembers when struggling at one point, her DRCM stepped in and was “so helpful.”

“Even though that was one of the hardest weekends, it’s only a fraction of what some of these families are dealing with,” Langlois said. “It’s really eye opening and has really altered the path of my life and how I view things.”

Langlois said it was difficult to prepare for standing, but believes mental preparation can make a significant impact.

“Your feet are going to hurt and you’re going to be tired,” Langlois said. “But if your mind is still with it, then I think that really helps.”

Throughout the weekend, Langlois remembers thinking about her organization’s THON families through the Adopt-a-Family (AAF) program, and particularly one child who was going through a difficult time.

“If you can think of something

that’s why you’re THON-ing ... that can be really helpful to say it to yourself, and stick with that throughout the weekend,” Langlois said. “Because then you’re like, ‘This is why I’m here. This is why I’m doing this. This is super important to me.’”

Benjamin Guenther found out in November that he was chosen to dance by his brothers at Delta Sigma Pi, alongside two of his roommates.

Physically, Guenther, a fourth-year studying agricultural and biorenewable systems management, said he and his fellow dancing brothers have started eating clean, avoiding large crowds to prevent sickness and staying physically in shape. He even said that he and about 30 of his brothers ran the Philadelphia Half

Marathon together.

“We keep thinking of how hard our brothers are working, how hard they have worked, not only just for THON Weekend, but this whole entire year is a fundraising year in total, and then just helping our families, knowing that this isn’t a fight that they have to go through for a year,” Guenther said. “This is a fight they have to go through their whole entire life. We just have to stand for 46 hours.”

Guenther also said he is looking forward to DSP’s THON gala, where all of the dancers, THON chairs and AAF families have the opportunity to speak.

“Seeing how we’ve really been able to give into our families, lets you put down everything ... and really allow for yourself to become more prepared for THON Weekend,” Guenther said. “It really allows for our dancers to become extremely motivated for this weekend, and to see how hard every single brother has worked, and see how much our families really have appreciated that.”

Guenther said DSP THON enforces the idea that THON is a community, a home and a place for all — whether it be your first THON or your last.

“From an internal perspective on THON, it’s impossible to explain, but from an external perspective on THON, it’s impossible to understand,” Guenther said. “You could go around anywhere in the country, and you’re not going to find something like this.”

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Follow her on X @emnaysmith

# The Faulders ring the bell

By Emma Naysmith  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Parents of 10-year-old Keaghan Faulders, Bryan and Kaitland, describe their daughter as having a “spunky personality” and a “no-quit attitude.”

After receiving a diagnosis of T-cell Leukemia in 2022, Keaghan, just shy of age 7, was scheduled for immediate surgery and treatment.

“We just kind of took it in stride,” Bryan said. “We enjoyed the good days, which that first year was few, far and in between, but we enjoyed the good days. The days that were a struggle, or spike in fevers, she wasn’t feeling well, we stayed by her side.”

Soon after the initial diagnosis, Bryan said they were introduced to THON and the Four Diamonds, and a “weight was lifted off their shoulders.”

“In the back of your mind, you’re thinking in your head, ‘Well, one, let’s get her feeling better,’” Bryan said. “But two, how the heck are we going to pay for this? And how are we going to afford this down the road? And we’ll figure it out, but it’s going to be a long journey.”

THON is the world’s largest student-run philanthropy that aims to provide emotional and financial support to Four Diamonds families who have been impacted by childhood cancer.

In their third year as a THON family, the Faulders finally made it to THON Weekend after watching on TV years prior. Keaghan was “over the moon” to attend live, and can’t wait for THON 2026.

“When we felt isolated as a childhood cancer family at the beginning, and we weren’t sure who to connect with,” Kaitland said. “THON really pulled us in. They kind of wrapped us up in their energy, and you don’t really understand the energy until you go to THON.”

The Faulders family is paired

with the Penn State figure skating team through the THON “Adopt-a-Family” program. Kaitland said they have supported her family through all of their highs and lows.

Ice skating team member and THON Chair Emma Wassel said Keaghan and her family will always be an inspiration for the group, and is the strongest girl they know.

“We have a teammate this year, Lillie Nye, and she has gotten very involved in THON and with the Faulders the last couple of years,” Wassel, a fifth-year studying integrated arts, said. “She’s actually skating a tribute program to those we have lost. She will be competing with that program, which is a really cool thing for us to see.”

Throughout treatment, Keaghan demonstrated impressive strength in her ability to bounce back after tougher days, according to her father.

“That little spark there that she has just does not let cancer steal her joy,” Bryan said. “It’s just pure key. And wanting to help out where she could, when she could and giving back to the hospital. These kids are resilient ... if the kids were feeling okay, they had a smile on their face, not a care in the world, and just powerin’ through.”

In addition to treatment in the hospital, Keaghan spent her time running her own nail salon, playing Uno with nurses and even donated her hair to create a wig for another child fighting cancer.

“Her ability to connect with adults and nurses and volunteers and teachers that came into the hospital just like they’re just normal people and even other kids that were battling cancer,” Kaitland said. “It was quite amazing to see both her strength and her personality continue to show through no matter how she felt.”

Keaghan’s resilience was rewarded with remission in 2023 and a long-awaited bell ringing in

May 2025 to symbolize the end of her cancer treatment.

Keaghan’s father said it was one of the “proudest days of his life” and her mother said it symbolized survival and a thankfulness to ring the bell and celebrate its meaning after passing by it thousands of times throughout their treatment journey.

“For Keaghan and even for us, it was really more to end the fight that she never asked to face, it is just the strength that we saw behind her,” Kaitland said. “For us, it just symbolized that we survived. We’re so happy we got here. We’re so proud.”

Wassel said she was lucky enough to be personally invited by Keaghan to support her in ringing the bell at the Penn State Health Children’s Hospital. Additionally, she said the team looks forward to welcoming her onto the ice rink for her first time skating.

“Keaghan’s story is just so inspiring for us as a team,” Wassel said. “A lot of us kind of grew up in a solo sport, one where we didn’t really have teamwork and like that kind of level of camaraderie, and so the Faulders have such a strong team of friends and family that were and are still backing them throughout Keaghan’s battle, and they show us that there’s strength in leaning on those who love you.”

Kaitland said “stories like Keaghan’s gives people hope.” Hope to those standing THON Weekend, and hope to families facing similar challenges.

“THON is so powerful because it is very personal for the families of the cancer children, but I hope when they hear stories about a real child like Keaghan, we are a real family, and we’ve lived the long nights,” Kaitland said. “We’ve felt their fear, we’ve praised the victories.”

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# ‘No Hair, Don’t Care’

By Grace Levy  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

THON held its annual “No Hair, Don’t Care” fundraiser today in the HUB-Robeson Center (HUB) from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. At the event, students shave their heads just days before the 46-hour dance marathon as a show of support for children who may be dealing with hair loss.

To participate, students donated \$10, with \$5 being credited to an organization, committee or independent dancer couple of their choosing.

The yearly event tends to draw in a lot of students as excitement builds for the weekend ahead. This year, 150 students were expected to participate, according to Hair Donation Committee Captains Payton Buffone and Sidney Cohen.

“It’s so much fun,” Cohen, a graduate student studying special education, said. “Everyone is just happy to be here, getting excited for THON. We got a DJ going, we have a fun banner we painted, we have head bands. Many people just want to see their friends

shave their heads, so lots of energy just getting excited for THON as we take a stand in just a few days.”

While students could sign up for the event as it occurred, for many, the anticipation started much earlier in the year. Luke Bennethum, a donor and alumni relations captain, said he and his committee members decided to participate together in the fall.

“I was (feeling) a lot of anticipation leading up to it, but a lot of my co-captains were around, so I got to go with them around,” Bennethum, a third-year studying political science, said. “It’s always a good thing when you’re doing this for children with cancer.”

For Bennethum, the motivation to participate in THON is personal, as is the “No Hair, Don’t Care” message of support.

“My older brother is a childhood cancer survivor, so it’s kind of a way of giving back to families who helped us,” Bennethum said. “Even though he wasn’t a Four Diamonds kid, a lot of the community came around and lifted our family up, so I just want to be a part of that for other people.”

That mission is the focus of the event, which aims to show

solidarity for those with childhood cancer, while also raising money in the final days before THON weekend commences.

“This event is more something to get us excited for THON weekend — it’s always the weekend before THON,” Buffone, a third-year studying accounting, said. “THON’s mission always is to provide emotional and financial support, so this is really getting us to focus on the emotional side during the time we’re really trying to push our donor drives and obviously fundraise as much as we can.”

The Hair Donation Committee hosts two other donation events during the year, one at 100 days until THON and the other during THON weekend. During these events, donors who have at least 12 inches of untreated hair can donate their hair to Wigs for Kids, a THON partner organization that creates wigs for children suffering from hair loss free of charge.

Some participants, such as Solomon Miller, have donated their hair for wigs in the past and hope to do so

again in the future. At the event, Miller said he shaved off nearly 12 inches of hair after growing it out for years.

“I grew up around a lot of kids who didn’t have hair, not because of cancer, just a lot of kids who didn’t have hair,” Miller, a second-year studying biobehavioral health, said. “When I was in middle school, my mom gave me the idea of donating it just because it’s something I have that other people don’t, so why not share that? I can grow it back — I’m going to grow it back and donate it.”

Many students have participated in the event in the past, coming back to support their friends and peers, but also the larger mission of supporting children and families impacted by childhood cancer.

“THON has been a huge part of my time at Penn State,” Jeffrey Walsh, a fourth-year studying supply chain and information systems. “I feel really lucky to be able to volunteer for this organization and I wanted to stand with the other people in the organization that are participating in this, so I thought this would be a good way to show that.”

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Courtesy of THON

Keaghan Faulders stands in front of the bell she rang to announce she’s cancer free.

# THON's 17 student-run committees

By Emma Naysmith  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Over 16,500 students volunteer their time to help plan, support and execute Penn State's annual THON weekend.

Here's a look into the 17 committees that help make THON happen.

## Communications

The Comm Committee is credited as the primary facilitator in the relationship between THON volunteers and the Penn State community. Its mission is to educate and guide students, faculty and staff in the fight toward a cure for pediatric cancer.

They can be found in green shirts this weekend.

## Entertainment

The Entertainment Committee is responsible for creating and executing the video and audio elements to THON's entertainment at all THON events throughout the year.

Found in black shirts, this group is also credited for planning event performances throughout the year and THON Weekend.

## Special Events

Those on the Special Events committee plan and host events such as the THON 5K, 100 Days

'Til THON and Family Carnival leading up to THON weekend.

The committee's shirt color is maroon.

## Rules & Regulations

### Event Safety

Known for their red shirts, Rules and Regulations committee members are trained to ensure safety within the Bryce Jordan Center for Four Diamonds children and families, volunteers and spectators.

They're also responsible for facilitating floor access and pass check in throughout the weekend.

## Rules & Regulations

### Fundraising Safety

Members of this red-bearing committee collaborate to foster fundraising growth and transparency while sharing any applicable guidelines and ensuring safe fundraising practices.

## Dancer Relations

Found repping yellow throughout the weekend, Dancer Relations Committee members provide designated and individualized support to dancers.

Additionally, these volunteers are trained in emergency medical services and dancer safety practices to help ensure dancers' physical and emotional wellbeing.

## Family Relations

The Family Relations Committee focuses on providing year-round assistance and support to Four Diamonds families and helping to make their weekend a positive experience.

They're also responsible for the Adopt-A-Family and planning family speakers and events. They wear light blue shirts.

## Hospitality

Found in pink shirts, Hospitality Committee members collaborate with donors to obtain and serve food and beverage donations at THON events and during the weekend.

## OPPerations

Wearing dark blue, the "first in and last out" of the weekend, OPPerations Committee members are dedicated volunteers who are responsible for maintaining a clean and safe environment in the BJC.

Some of their many tasks before and after the weekend include event maintenance like floor and bathroom cleaning, efforts toward recycling and more.

## Supply Logistics

Donning light green, the Supply Logistics Committee works to receive and organize all in-kind donations and details regarding the THON Raffle.

## Donor & Alumni Relations Alumni Engagement

The Alumni Engagement Committee educates university alumni and community about fundraising awareness campaigns and opportunities. It also works to uphold these relationships to THON.

They will be in blue throughout the weekend.

## Donor & Alumni Relations Development

The Development Committee of Donor and Alumni Relations works to create and build relationships through sharing THON education to donors.

They help facilitate business, foundation and corporate donations and tours during the weekend.

Members will be wearing blue shirts.

## Finance

Seen in green shirts, the Finance Committee dedicates monetary donations to THON's mission and finalizes the weekend total.

## Merchandise

Dressed in light pink, the Merchandise Committee is in charge of maintaining the THON Store located in the HUB.

## Public Relations Digital Content

The Public Relations Digital Content Committee spreads THON's message from local, state and national levels with digital content creation and promotion.

Committee members can be found in purple.

## Public Relations Media Management

The Media Management PR Committee helps build and maintain relationships with the media and sharing of the organization's and Four Diamonds stories.

Members of these committees will also wear purple and assist in facilitating family and dancer interviews by the press.

## Technology

The Technology Committee provides software solutions and technical support so THON is able to further its mission and fundraising effort at its large-scale.

TECH committee members will be wearing lime green.

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# A first-timers guide to THON lingo

By Neel Ved  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

As the Penn State community approaches THON, there are many key terms to know, whether you're dancing, attending in-person or watching online. Here are some of the most commonly used terms.

## FTK (For The Kids)

"For The Kids," or FTK, is a slogan that's used for the annual panhellenic dance marathon. The slogan has been used since at least 1991.

In January of 2020, Penn State trademarked it.

## Four Diamonds

Since 1972, Four Diamonds has covered 100% of all cancer-related medical expenses not covered by insurance for eligible children, with support from the community.

The organization has been the sole beneficiary of THON since 1977. Families involved in THON are often referred to as "Four Diamonds Families."

## Independent Dancer

### Couples (IDCs)

Independent dancer couples, also known as IDCs, dance in THON Weekend with no affiliation to any organization.

The dancers are chosen

through a weighted lottery, with chances determined by how much money the dancers raised during the year.

## Line Dance

The line dance is a new dance created every year based on current events that make it interesting and fun for the crowd.

The line dance is performed sporadically throughout the weekend and those in the stands and on the floor join in for the dance.

## National Act

The national act is one of the most anticipated moments of THON Weekend, involving an

hour-long performance from a nationally known artist or band. The act remains a secret until the minute they take the stage.

## Final Four

Final Four is the last four hours of THON weekend, where the BJC takes time to hear from Four Diamonds families and reflect on THON's purpose.

## Family Hour

Family Hour is an hour within the Final Four that talks about the families and children affected by childhood cancer.

## Pep Rally

This is one of the most popular events during THON weekend. It features multiple performances by Penn State Athletic Teams and appearances from special guests.

There is also an arena-wide Penn State "White Out," an honor to the annual Penn State football tradition.

## Graveyard Shift

The graveyard shift occurs on Saturday and Sunday during THON from 2 a.m. to 5 a.m.

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Images showing correct (blue blanket) and incorrect (black blanket) usage.

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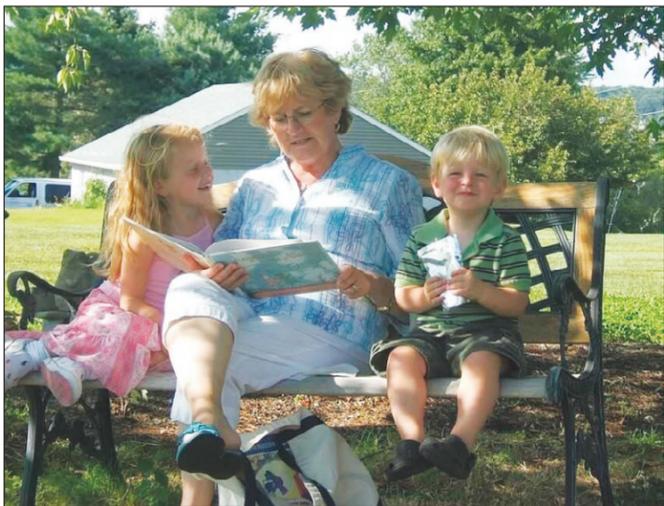
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## The day cancer won — and why I refuse to let it win again

March 3, 2022 was one of the worst days of my life; it was the day cancer won.

I will never forget the way my principal looked at me as I walked into the bathroom during my third period on that awful Thursday. It was a few minutes later that she rushed in to find me barely able to stand, and uncontrollably sobbing.

My best friend, my role model, my MomMom was gone forever. I was nine when MomMom was diagnosed with metastatic breast



Courtesy of Sarah Grosch  
Sarah Grosch, her MomMom Fran Szewczak and her brother Daniel Grosch (left to right) sit in the backyard of her home in Franconia Township, Pa.

### GUEST COLUMN

This column was written by Sarah Grosch. Grosch, a fourth-year studying journalism, will be dancing at THON 2026 for an honors society. Her number is 59B.

cancer. During the seven years she fought the battle, I watched her go through rounds of chemo treatment, lose her hair and try everything to keep her going.

While she looked entirely different, the woman who I knew and loved, was still on the inside.

As time went on, I learned to care for her — cleaning her vomit, helping her sit and walk when she had leg pain, and visiting her while she laid to rest became second nature to me.

After a few years, I became increasingly aware that my time with her would eventually come to an end. She would go in and out of the hospital, for weeks at a time.

It never got easier to deal with. My family scrambled, taking shifts staying with her during the day, and staying overnight. When she was put on hospice I spent every waking moment in her house laying in bed with her, holding her hands and telling her about my days, despite her being in a nonverbal state.

Losing someone you saw every single day is life altering to say the least.

It was an adjustment that no amount of time could have prepared me for. But when I suffered this loss

during my senior year of high school, I felt comfort in the fact that I was soon to be going to a school which had significant efforts to help find a cure.

My passion for cancer research was sparked long before I walked on Penn State's campus, but it has only increased since participating in THON.

Each year, since I was a freshman, I have pushed myself to attend as many fundraising events and to raise as much money as possible.

Dancing in THON has been a goal of mine since I was a freshman. While it is painful, I think about the insufferable pain felt physically by cancer patients each day, and the mental toll it takes on the families supporting them.

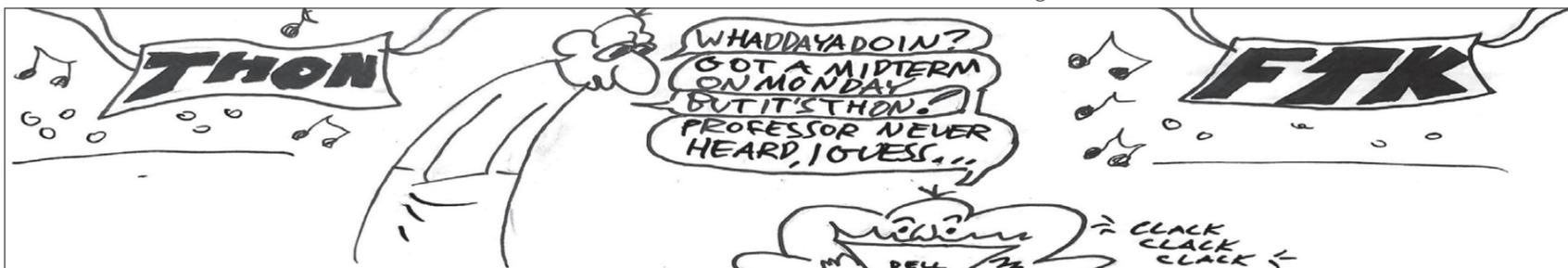
I was blessed with a happy and healthy childhood. My MomMom did not have to rush me around to appointments everyday, rather we played in the pool outside. She did not have to give me medicine at certain times a day, rather we enjoyed our "eeyore blue star wars toast" and "orange creamsicle smoothies."

Children with cancer do not have that luxury. I am dancing in THON so every child can play in their yard and so families can eat dinner at the table together, rather than running around from appointment to appointment.

I am dancing in THON so medical bills are not a stresser and to see the smiles of cancer survivors in years to come.



Courtesy of Sarah Grosch  
Sarah Grosch (left) stands on the floor with a dancer support pass visiting Desi Cope (right) at THON 2025.

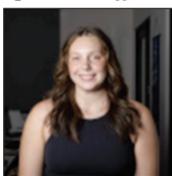


Cartoon by Nate Campbell

MY VIEW | Emma Lessick

## Greek life runs on THON

**Editor's Note:** The opinions expressed in this column are the columnist's own and do not represent The Daily Collegian or its board of editors. While Emma works on our photo and opinion staff, she is not



Lessick impartially.

involved in THON coverage, which our newsroom approaches independently and

When people think of Greek life, philanthropy often isn't the first thing that comes to mind. But at Penn State, thousands of students spend an entire year fundraising, organizing and then showing up every February to represent something bigger than themselves.

Penn State THON is more than just 46 hours in the Bryce Jordan Center for many individuals. It's a reflection of many Greek organizations' commitment to giving back to the community and turning letters on a sweatshirt into powerful action for families who need it most.

THON is the world's largest student-run philanthropy that aims to provide emotional and financial support to Four Diamonds families who have been impacted by childhood cancer. With 35 Interfraternity Council (IFC) fraternities and 21 Panhellenic Council (PHC) sororities, THON demonstrates the power of collective action. Greek organizations collaborate and celebrate with the broader Penn State community, setting

aside differences in pursuit of a shared mission. In doing so, Greek life reveals a network of students committed to making a meaningful and lasting impact.

It represents the promise to give back; students redefine what leadership looks like as 6,800 members stand in representation of those who cannot.

The Adopt-A-Family program allows Four Diamonds families to be paired with student organizations year after year. These efforts

aren't fueled by competition, but by connection. Connection to the families who have been affected by childhood cancer. Members learn names, faces and stories long before they even step onto the floor as a dancer, or in the stands to represent their organization.

As part of a Greek organization myself, I can say that spreading awareness, participating in community service and raising money for childhood cancer research is a central part of what it means to be in Greek life.

After standing for hours on end, a child's smile or a parent's quiet thank you during the weekend makes the exhaustion feel completely worth it.

To know that in some way, I'm here to support those children and families, to put a smile on their face and to transport them into a world where everyone has a shared purpose. During THON, kindness above all else is given without expectation for anything in return.

Of course, the fundraising matters and the sheer amount of money Penn State is able to provide is life-changing in many ways, but the emotional support that Greek Life provides is remarkable.

Sorority recruitment concluded just a few weeks ago and a common question I was asked was "What is THON like, and what is your favorite part?" Truthfully, I think I got pretty good at answering this question, so, let me have another go at it.

THON isn't something I can put into simple words. It's a feeling and connection each one of us is able to build with the families we support.

Our THON families hold a special place in my heart and we follow them throughout their lives.

For example, I know that Charlie Karchner, who actually danced in THON in 2019, will be attending this upcoming weekend. He has a girlfriend,

Tonilynn.

I know that McKenna Speed turned 14 this past October and she plays several musical instruments. My sorority sisters and I even got to see a picture of her attending high school homecoming this past fall.

Gavin Howe and his dad are huge Seattle Seahawks fans.

And then there's the Samuel Grimm family; parents Ashley and Brian. Samuel was born on December 31, 2018, and died on March 11, 2019.

Our THON angel baby.

There are truly no words for a loss such as this, but what I've learned through THON is that even in the deepest grief, there's love that endures and a community that refuses to forget.

THON lives in the names we remember, the stories shared and the families we carry with us long after the weekend ends. It's why we dance, why we show up exhausted and delusional, yet hopeful and why this cause becomes a bigger part of who we are.

Greek life shows up for the community, and will continue to show up for THON.

THON isn't just an event or a fundraiser. It's a promise to stand beside the families in joy and in heartbreak, today and always. For The Kids.

Emma Lessick is a general photographer and columnist for The Daily Collegian. She is a third-year studying Labor and Human Resources. Email her at [erl5412@psu.edu](mailto:erl5412@psu.edu)

**“What I've learned through THON is that even in the deepest grief, there's love that endures and a community that refuses to forget.”**

Emma Lessick

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# What to know before THON weekend

By Emma Cherubini  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State's THON weekend brings many people to campus each year. From rules and general information to what to bring, here's everything you need to know for a fun and successful weekend.

## Entrance

At THON, there will be one main entrance line and two gates for entrance access. At the Bryce Jordan Center (BJC) ticketing office, the General Spectator line at Will Call will be present, where you receive your free wristband in line.

From there, you will be guided to enter either Gate A or Gate B. Gate A is located on the right side of the line and Gate B is located on the left side.

Entry through these gates will only be allowed with a wristband obtained through the spectator line.

## Where to park

General visitor parking will be available at the Stadium West, Jordan East and Porter North lots throughout THON Weekend. Signs in these lots say parking is prohibited from 2-4 a.m., a parking constraint that will be lifted during THON Weekend.

Due to the weekend's men's hockey games, Stadium West will be closed to THON traffic from Friday at noon through Saturday



The 2025 THON executive board poses for a photo during the 53rd THON in the Bryce Jordan Center

Megan Miller/The Daily Collegian

at 8 p.m.

The small Jordan East lot across from the All-Sports Museum will be reserved for ADA parking.

The Orange L lots, east and south of the BJC, and a small section in the middle of the main Jordan East lot will be reserved for THON family parking.

## How long it is

THON is recognized as the longest student-run event at Penn State each year. This event runs for 46 hours straight.

The weekend begins Friday at

6:00 p.m. and ends Sunday at 4:00 p.m.

## What you can't bring

As THON is hosted in the BJC, the rules on what you cannot bring align with the BJC's clear bag policy and their regular rules of entrance and attendance.

Prohibited bags include non-clear bags, purses larger than the size of a clutch, backpacks, diaper bags, coolers, briefcases, luggage, drawstring bags and cinch bags.

Outside beverages and food are prohibited. Inflatable objects,

cameras with a detachable lens, weapons, liquids, large flag poles and large sports equipment like basketballs, footballs and baseballs are also not allowed.

Training dogs and emotional support animals are not allowed, nor are transportation items such as skateboards, hoverboards.

Visitors are not allowed to bring items like glitter, silly string, alcohol, narcotics, vape devices, lighters and tobacco products.

Bringing any of these items to the BJC can result in denied entry, and items will be confiscated and disposed of.

## What you can bring

There are plenty of safe items you can bring in order to watch THON in the BJC.

Bags following clear bag rules should be wallets and clutches at most 6.5"x 4.5", clear tote bags at most 12"x 12"x 6" and plastic zip top bags 11"x 11"x 0" or smaller.

Other items such as phones, empty reusable water bottles, disposable cameras and digital cameras without a removable lens are all allowed inside the BJC.

## What you should bring

THON is a lengthy event, so some items are essential to have the full experience.

Personal hygiene items such as a toothbrush and toothpaste, deodorant and other small items will help you stay fresh while attending and a good pair of shoes can ensure your feet don't hurt.

A non-monetary ID will allow you to access your floor pass. Disposable, digital, or phone cameras will allow you to capture any moments.

Portable chargers can ensure all devices are charged.

Dancers are encouraged to bring a tennis ball to roll out sore or cramped feet and muscles.

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# Athletes dancing in THON

By Daniel Studer  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

This year, 11 Penn State student-athletes are exchanging their uniforms for their comfiest dancing clothes to participate in THON, the largest student-run philanthropy event.

Here's a look at those who are taking the extra step this year in the fight against childhood cancer at the Bryce Jordan Center.

## Jocelyn Nathan - women's volleyball



Herley Gong/The Daily Collegian

**Defensive specialist Jocelyn Nathan (11)** serves the ball during the Penn State women's volleyball game against Rutgers at Rec Hall.

Jocelyn Nathan, a defensive specialist, will stand for 46 hours this weekend in honor of her best friend, Reena Robinson. Robinson dealt with stage-four ovarian yolk sac cancer during her freshman year of high school. Robinson is now seven years cancer-free.

In her junior season, Nathan appeared in 32 matches, totaling 133 digs, for 1,317 digs per set as part of the back row. Behind the service line, the Wilmington, Delaware, native totaled four aces.

On her way to capturing women's volleyball's eighth National Championship in 2024, Nathan saw time in 22 matches, notching 69 digs, while playing a key role down the stretch in the lineup. She also received a spot on the Academic All-Big Ten Team.

## Ella Jennes - field hockey



Jonah Richmond/The Daily Collegian

**Forward and midfielder Ella Jennes (17)** looks to pass the ball during the Penn State field hockey game against Maryland.

After wrapping up her senior year by earning a spot on the NFCA's All-Mideast Region second team, midfielder Ella Jennes will be dancing for the kids at THON.

"Dancing in THON means standing for something bigger than myself," Jennes said in a statement released by the team. "Pushing past exhaustion to support families and honor the fighters."

A native of Aerdenhout, The Netherlands, Jennes capped her collegiate career with the best numbers she produced during her time at Penn State. Her seven goals tied for the most on the team, and her 14 points ranked second.

Jennes recorded her first career hat trick in an 8-0 victory over Lock Haven, scored the game-winning goal in double overtime against Delaware in the 2025 home opener and scored her final goal for the blue and white last season against Rutgers in the final game of the season.

## Mackenzie Gress - women's soccer

Women's soccer starting goalkeeper Mackenzie Gress will trade in her cleats for a pair of dancing shoes.

"As a THON dancer, I am standing for 46 hours straight as a promise to every child still fighting," Gress wrote on her donor page. "I stand as a symbol of strength when their strength is running low. I stand for the families who never get a break. I stand for my aunt. And I stand For The Kids."

Gress' contribution towards the fight against childhood cancer comes after her aunt died from cancer.

"While my aunt was undergoing cancer treatments, she was such a positive light and hope for the cancer community around her, and it inspired me to do the same for those affected by childhood cancer here at Penn State through THON," Gress said in a video.

The redshirt senior finished her 2025 season with a 10-8-3 record, her 10 wins being tied for fifth most in the Big Ten, a .706 save percentage, three shutouts and was named to the Big Ten All-Tournament team.

## Erik Bolang - men's swimming and diving

This year, Erik Bolang won't just do freestyle in the pool; he'll also be freestyling it on the dance floor at the Bryce Jordan Center.

The Pinckney, Michigan, native had a career-best year in 2024. Aside from being named to the Academic All-Big Ten list, Bolger set two collegiate bests at the Big Ten Championship that year in the 50 Freestyle and 100 Butterfly.

## Penn State Cheerleaders

Four Penn State Cheerleaders will be dancing at THON this year: Brady Berger, Hailey Harker, Casey Segin and Olivia Vocaire.

In an Instagram post, the three each shared their motivation for participating.

Berger is the mic-man for Penn State during athletic events, mainly known for opening the

presentation of games prior to the entrance of the respective sports teams.

"I THON so that kids can be kids and wake up happy and healthy. I also THON for my Mom," Berger said.

Harker, a senior, is on the all-girl team as a flyer.

"I want every child to be able to live their life to the fullest and make all of the amazing childhood memories. I THON for Junie and every family impacted by childhood cancer!" Harker wrote.

Segin is in her senior season with the all-girl team who carries back-spotting responsibilities.

"I THON because children deserve to be children, being able to play, laugh, dream, and grow up without worrying about their illness defining their childhood," Segin said. "I dance now in hopes that one day, others will be dancing in celebration of a cure!"

Vocaire is also a senior on the all-girl team. She represents the base position for the cheer squad.

"I THON so all little girls and boys can be kids, for more laughs, and for all the future cheerleaders. I THON for our families and for the hope one day we will dance in celebration of a cure!" Vocaire said.

## Penn State Lionettes

Nobody at Penn State knows dancing quite like the Lionettes dance team, who will have three members dancing in the Bryce Jordan Center. Alexa Lombardo, Chloe Nixon and Sydney Waldner will be dance on behalf of the Lionettes' THON families of Ashley Fazeka and Shiloh Crimmel.

"The Lionettes and I are dedicated to making sure that Ashley, Shiloh and their families can continue to experience all incredible (things) and life milestones that are in store for them," Lombardo wrote on her donor page before her third year being involved with THON.

Waldner brings additional experience and excitement to THON weekend, with this being her fourth year in THON.

"I can say with confidence that THON weekend is truly one of the best weekends of the whole year," Waldner said. "The magic of THON and all (that) we are able to give to the kids and families impacted by childhood cancer is nothing short of incredible and being a small part of something so much bigger than myself has been one of my greatest honors."

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Samantha Oropeza/The Daily Collegian

The total amount of money raised so far for THON 2026 is revealed during 100 Days 'Til THON in the HUB-Robeson Center.

THON raises \$2 million during two-week Dream Forward campaign



By Brennan Kramp  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State THON announced it raised \$2,077,353.59 throughout its annual Dream Forward campaign during the organization's 100 Days 'Til THON event Wednesday.

The over two week long campaign beat its 2024 amount of \$1,926,461.87 and its 2025 goal of \$1,250,000.

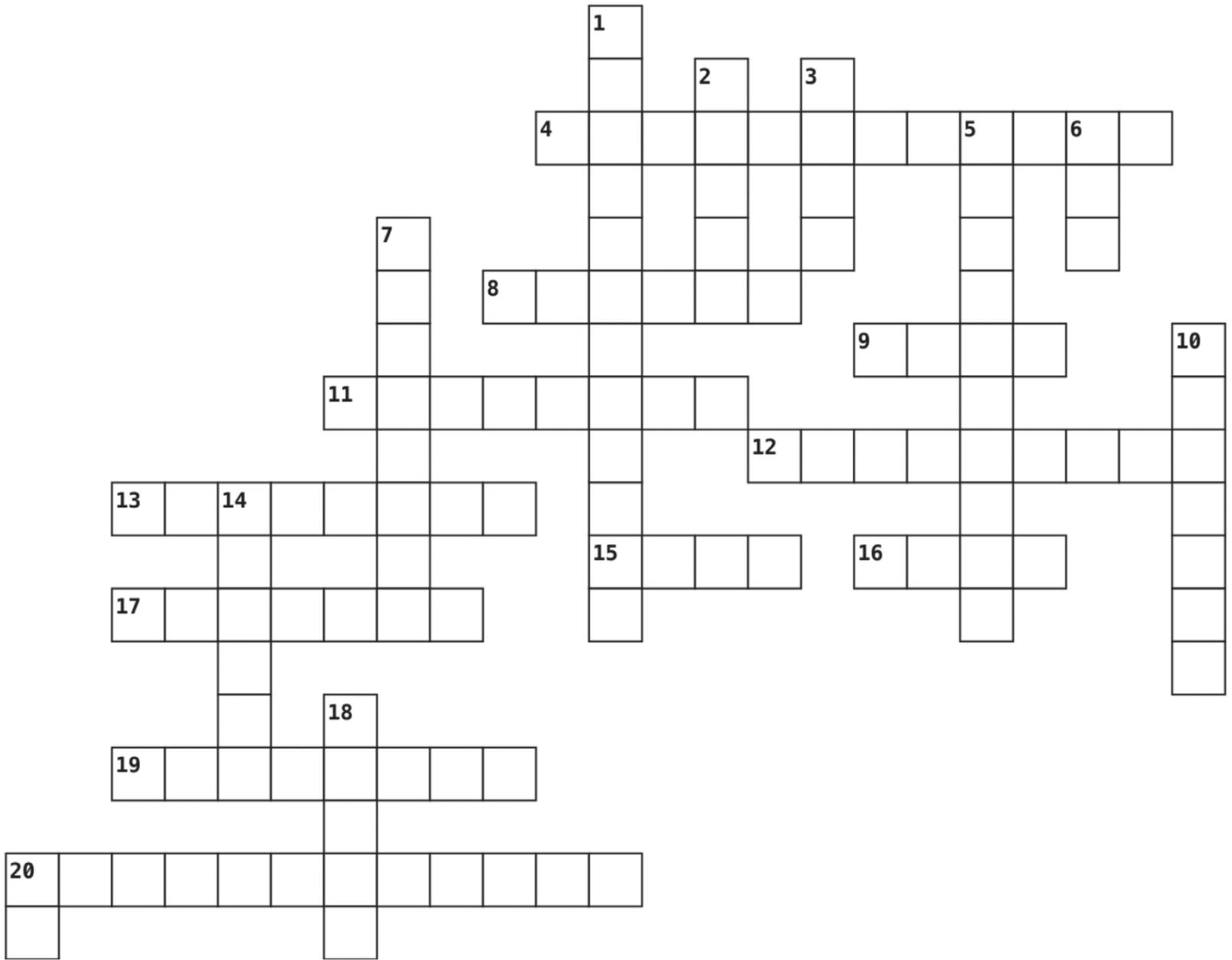
Throughout its 16 days, the campaign held events

such as Phone-a-THON, merchandise sales, a trivia night and fundraisers, according to THON's website.

THON is the world's largest student-run philanthropy that aims to provide emotional and financial support to Four Diamonds families who have been impacted by childhood cancer. In 2025, THON raised a record-breaking \$17.7 million For The Kids.

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# THON GAMES



**Across**

- 4. Official Penn State fight song (3 words)
- 8. THON participant who stands for 46 hours
- 9. First president of Penn State
- 11. THON Endurance fundraiser
- 12. Where you can find The Daily Collegian
- 13. Student leaders in each THON committee
- 15. One of Penn State's original school colors
- 16. Dance done each hour of THON
- 17. Mount \_\_\_\_\_, popular hiking trail near Penn State
- 19. Best spot on campus for a sweet treat
- 20. Sole THON beneficiary (2 words)

**Down**

- 1. Charitable giving that drives THON
- 2. Building where THON was hosted before the BJC
- 3. THON Theme: \_\_\_\_\_ Leads Forward
- 5. Pre-game tradition around Beaver Stadium
- 6. Penn State football conference number
- 7. How THON supports pediatric cancer research
- 10. Popular move done by the Nittany Lion Mascot
- 14. Penn State library known for stacks
- 18. Penn State Business School
- 20. Amount of hours in the final stretch of THON

Scan for crossword answers



H Y X I G A B T H O N B Y L H  
 A F C O E X N V F L Z V F X Q  
 U Y A P G C C Z G N H C I D A  
 U S F S E I A S Q X G O N U V  
 F V T O H P C P K P K V A Z F  
 T A R G U I R O T J Y E L T U  
 K L M L F R O A M A U P F V N  
 T S A Y X X D N L M I L O H D  
 L R I J Y B H I S L I N U O R  
 U D L Z Y Q J Z A H Y T R A A  
 U O C B W T E W Z M O I T V I  
 P N A J D A N C E R O W N E S  
 P O L C E U X B O B C N K L E  
 C R L O J H P X W W K G D I G  
 R B Q V Y G R X V E M T K S H

Find the newsie

There are 8 hidden newsies in the paper.

Can you find them all?

The first person to send us a photo of all of them via Instagram DMs wins a \$25 gift card of their choice.



- |               |              |            |     |
|---------------|--------------|------------|-----|
| Four Diamonds | Fashion Show | Fundraise  | BJC |
| Mail Call     | Pep Rally    | Final Four | FTK |
| Committee     | Captain      | Dancer     |     |

**PLAY NOW**

# THON headliner predictions

By Katie Herron  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

than the Bryce Jordan Center? Hits like “Sunday Best” and “Come With Me” express the warm fuzzy feelings entering the community’s hearts over the 46 hour weekend.

### Djo

How does his hit song, “End of Beginning,” go again? “And when I’m back in the BJC, I feel it.” Maybe that’s not right, but even so, Joe Keery, known for his role as Steve Harrington in “Stranger Things” would definitely turn the stadium upside down.

Keery is also no stranger to performing for a good cause, donating proceeds of ticket sales for his “Another Bite Tour” to the Ally Coalition, a cause supporting LGBTQ+ youth.

### Audrey Hobert

This rising star, known for being close friends with fellow pop icon Gracie Abrams, released her debut album “Who’s the Clown” in 2025. Her songs “Sue Me” and “Bowling Alley” quickly launched her into the spotlight, gaining considerable traction on social media platforms like TikTok.

Her songs are hard not to dance along to, although many dancers may wish they were in their bedrooms singing along with a hairbrush.

### Bruno Mars

Definitely a long shot, but with the release of his new album “The Romantic” at the end of February, it would be a great chance to show off what he’s got. The first song released from the album, “I Just Might,” is a peppy pick-me-up ready to rejuvenate



Megan Miller/Collegian

Joe King, lead singer of The Fray, performs at the 53rd THON in the Bryce Jordan Center on Friday, Feb. 21, 2025 in University Park, Pa.

the BJC.

With his tour not starting for another few months, Mars has just enough time to pause the press tour and finesse a performance for THON.

### Colbie Caillat

The prediction I am most confident in is Colbie Caillat, a two-time Grammy Award winning singer-songwriter, known for her early 2000s hits “Bubbly” and “Realize.”

Her most successful single, “Bubbly” perfectly encapsulates the feeling of being at THON: “I’ve been awake for a while now, you’ve got me feeling like a child now.”

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# Line dance lyrics predictions

By Nadya Solometo  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

It’s that time of year again where chicken baskets become fuel, sitting isn’t an option and the Bryce Jordan Center is boomin’. As THON Weekend 2026 approaches, so does the reveal of this year’s Line Dance lyrics.

THON is the world’s largest student-run philanthropy that aims to provide emotional and financial support to Four Diamonds families who have been impacted by childhood cancer.

Written and performed by the THON’s Dancer Relations captains, the Line Dance is performed every hour to help maintain the spirits of the dancers and those in the stands. The lyrics often encapsulate campus, local and national news.

Here are my predictions for some of this year’s lyrics.

### Penn State News

This past year, Penn State had a lot of memorable moments — for better or worse.

Back in October, the university faced the one-two punch of Drew Allar suffering a season-ending injury, and the subsequent firing of James Franklin. While not the cheeriest moments of the school year, they could be shouted out in the song.

Moving on to happier sports moments, this January the

university hosted outdoor hockey games in Beaver Stadium for both the men’s and women’s teams. Men’s wrestling recently clinched their Big Ten regular season championship.

Movin’ On 2025 featured artists like the All-American Rejects, Claire Rosinkranz, Baby Tate and Pusha T. The Student Programming Association (SPA) had notable performances and speakers as well, like Flo Rida and Caleb Hearon, and artists Riley Green and Jason Aldean performed in the BJC.

Beaver Stadium is still under construction, and buildings around campus like Pollock Halls and Sackett Building are as well.

### National and International News

With a lot of negative news this year, it’s hard to imagine there’d be a heavy focus on this section in the line dance. However, there are a few lighthearted moments that could be worth a mention.

This year saw the usage of Artificial Intelligence skyrocket, making it a topic that could potentially get a shoutout or two. Large language models such as ChatGPT, Claude and Microsoft Copilot could all be featured in the lyrics.

The Winter Olympics in Milan and Cortina d’Ampezzo are currently going on right now, with the U.S. currently with 24 total med-

als. Athletes like Lindsey Vonn, Mikaela Shiffrin and the “Blade Angels” — consisting of Figure Skaters Amber Glenn, Alysa Liu and Isabeau Levito — are all prominent this year in headlines.

### Pop Culture

Within the past few months alone, so many moments have a chance of being featured. Taylor Swift released an album and documentary series this year, “Wicked: For Good” released and Harry Styles is officially releasing new music.

“Sinners,” the 2025 American horror film made Oscars history by receiving 16 nominations at the upcoming awards, the most ever awarded to a single film. Bad Bunny earned the Grammy Award for “Album of the Year,” which marked the first time the award was given to an exclusively Spanish-language project, for his album “Debi Tirar Más Fotos.”

Online there was the resurgence of 2016 trends and music, people trying to see if they’re a part of “Group 7” and the use of the phrase “wabi-sabi.” Any of these could be easily integrated into quick and fun lyrics.

Whatever moments are included in this year’s lyrics, they’ll be sure to make the dancers last all 46 hours.

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Megan Miller/Collegian

The dancer relations captains perform the line dance during the 53rd THON in the Bryce Jordan Center on Sunday, Feb. 23, 2024 in University Park, Pa.

SCAN FOR A BREAK DOWN OF THIS YEAR’S LYRICS



# THON Dancers Shoutouts



You’re doing amazing Caroline! I’m so very proud of you — Love Kahlie

You got this DK!

Nice job Weinstein! Keep going you got this

From all the TDC directors, congrats Ella for dancing in THON!

Keep up the good work Hannah Santos! So proud of you!

