

## **The University of Iowa Dance Marathon**

The University of Iowa Dance Marathon creates and sustains special projects to provide emotional and financial support for pediatric oncology and bone marrow transplant patients and their families treated at University of Iowa Children's Hospital.

[www.dancemarathon.org](http://www.dancemarathon.org)

### **Dance Marathon Contact:**

Sammie Marks

*Development Director*

Dance Marathon 20

(319) 936 – 2993

[Dm.development@gmail.com](mailto:Dm.development@gmail.com)

### **Professional Contact:**

Bill Nelson

*Director for Center for Student*

*Involvement & Leadership*

(319) 335- 3059

[William-nelson@uiowa.edu](mailto:William-nelson@uiowa.edu)

## **Our Mission**

Since 1994, undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Iowa have dedicated their time to making a difference through Dance Marathon. As the largest philanthropic student organization on our campus, we work year round to provide financial and emotional support for kids affected by pediatric cancer in our community. We are different from every other dance marathon program in the nation because we have the ability to volunteer in the pediatric oncology unit at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. All of the money we raise enables families in and out of the hospital to worry less about financial constraints. We provide vouchers for parking, a pharmacy co-pay program to cover up to \$1,000 in pharmacy costs, college scholarships, financial help for funeral expenses, scholarships to attend summer camps, among many other programs. Most importantly, we have a core group of individuals who get the special opportunity to visit with our kids up on the Pediatric Inpatient unit every week. The previously mentioned only encompasses a few of the financial amenities we provide, but there is so much more that we do that cannot be expressed into just an application. Our motto is *FOR THE KIDS*, which can be seen all over our website and the dance marathon apparel we all own and wear often.

## **Our Organization & Structure** by Sammie Marks – Development Director, Dance Marathon 20

The University of Iowa Dance Marathon consists of over 250 leaders on committees including development, sponsorship, business, family relations, hospital, operations, event, morale, public relations and marketing. Each of these committees includes committee members and chair positions that oversee a specific project within that group. A director on the executive council oversees each committee. There are three cabinets that exist in our organization: Event, Business & Family Relations. The event cabinet consists of event, morale, operations and public relations/marketing. Morale includes a subcommittee called the MCA committee, or morale captain assistant program. Business cabinet includes business, sponsorship and development. The duties of the business cabinet include all activities having to do with money and reaching out to businesses around Iowa City, Iowa and the nation for fundraising and sponsorship opportunities. The family relations cabinet consists of family relations and hospital. Again, we are the only dance marathon in the nation that is able to see directly where our money helps at the University of Iowa Children's Hospital by sending volunteers up to the unit.

The event cabinet is responsible for the marketing, recruitment, planning and execution for and of the Big Event in February but also various events that occur through out the year. The Morale captains and their amazing assistants work as one to recruit and retain dancers.

Together, 250 students lead a multi-million dollar organization and contribute over 40,000 hours of volunteer work a year. Due to our multitude of leaders, we are able to provide so much support for our families and give back to the community we live in.

## **Our Motivation** by Kayla Manilow – Development Committee Member, Dance Marathon 19

Upon arriving at the University of Iowa, many students look to get involved in the universities, "Pick One" campaign. Pick One is the university's way of getting students involved with student organizations around campus by encouraging the students to select one student organization to join. Many students first learn about this opportunity and Dance Marathon at their freshman orientation session through advertisements around campus, and through their peers. Dance Marathon is the largest philanthropic organization on campus, so it is not hard to come into contact with another student who participates in Dance Marathon. Some students have also benefited from the services Dance Marathon provides when they were growing up, which furthers their desire to get involved.

After one year of dancing at our 24-hour Big Event in February, a student can apply to be on the leadership team. The leadership team consists of around 250 students. This past year, the leadership team was asked numerous times throughout the year, "Why do you dance?" This question challenged many leadership members, as well as dancers to remind themselves of why they are apart of this organization. Popular responses included, "for more birthdays," "for more play dates," and "for more snow days." This question followed students throughout the year. In September, students were asked across campus and write down reasons why they choose to dance. This was soon turned into a video that was displayed on Facebook and at numerous Dance Marathon events.

Everyone has a different story, or motivation, to be a part of Dance Marathon. Some have personal connections with pediatric cancer and some with adult oncology. Some have parents with diseases similar that want to join in on the fight for something they can so closely relate to. Some students have no connection to an illness at all and find it the least they can do to support kids with cancer as well as get involved in an organization they can make a personal difference in. Everything we do is FTK, For the Kids. It is our slogan and we stick to it.

### **Our Strategy & Activities** by Rebecca Mitsos – Event Director, Dance Marathon 20

The University of Iowa Dance Marathon strategy and activities for promoting philanthropic and awareness around our campus is based on twenty years of tradition but takes on a new face each and every year. From traditional things like hosting local restaurant community days to ideas that others bring to us such as a "Dancing With The Stars"-esque banquet, we love knowing what works and using that to run with ideas.

Community days are a huge success and a wonderful way to engage our community. Usually, restaurants will post on their Twitters, Facebooks, etc. to announce that if you enjoy some of their food on a certain day, 10% of the proceeds go back to Dance Marathon (DM). In fact, one local sushi restaurant instilled a weekly community day and promoted every Wednesday as their "Dance Marathon Night". Community nights are not only a wonderful way to raise money, but also an opportunity for the community, dancers and all who are involved to take a break from their studies and get to know each other while supporting our cause.

In the early weeks of April and September, DM hosts our Dancer Appreciation Week as well as our Lime Days (Recruitment) Week, respectively. Dancer Appreciation Week is designed to do as the title states: make dancers aware of how much we appreciate their participation-- and nothing more.

While we do hit recruitment hard and heavy, we understand how much it means to people, both dancers and sponsors, to be appreciated. We partner with restaurants for community days, but instead of raising money directly for Dance Marathon, it's intended to give back to the dancers; i.e., a triple punch on their card from a popular froyo joint on campus for wearing a Dance Marathon shirt when they come in to purchase the sweet treat. The second annual movie night will be hosted this year as well and freebies like chap stick and gum will be handed out to all who pass by on a popular walk way on campus; the movie a rather new tradition and the "flyering" as it is lovingly called, a rather old one. This year, we will also be partnering with the Hawkeye Ballroom Dancing Club to host a "Dancing with the Stars" gala to thank our sponsors, which will include some popular former athletes and hopefully some well-known hospital staff showing off their classical dance moves with 100% of the ticket sales going right back to Dance Marathon.

Lime Days is another tradition among Dance Marathon. It is usually kicked off with the FTK 5K and ends with Dance Marathon the Marathon, where hundreds of Dance Marathon leadership team members run 26.2 miles in the Chicago Marathon in honor of Dance Marathon.

Events of this week include more community days, a forum for all students on campus to learn about what Dance Marathon truly is and what it does and hopefully some surprise events that are still to be determined. The point of this week is to hopefully get our dancers from years past signed up but hook tons of new dancers as well.

A big Dance Marathon 20 initiative will be reaching out to groups we haven't reached out to before--different diversity groups, various academic groups, etc--in order to diversify and expand our membership and promote more awareness around our community, not just to the ears we've reached for years but hopefully to hook new ears and bring them back time and time again. DM leadership is ready and willing to provide attendance to other groups events, volunteers to their organized events and anything else we could do to help out their organization, hoping for their participation in our own event in return.

The entire leadership focuses a lot on recruitment and retention and events like these are amazing tactics, but there is no tactic like allowing dancers to interact with the families. It's a well-understood "rule" of DM that after one--just one--interaction with a kiddo and his or her family, it's nearly impossible not to be "bitten by the bug". Family events like big picnics and sledding days are hosted, allowing dancers and leadership team members to meet the people that truly benefit from their hard work all year long. Dance Marathon 20 is striving to provide these amazing experiences for more dancers than we ever have before, for it is well known that you truly don't know what it's like until you experience something that pulls on your heart strings--and by then, you're hooked for good.

#### **Our Results** by Sara Stewart – Hospital Director, Dance Marathon 20

The University of Iowa Dance Marathon impacts many people's lives, more than most people involved will ever know. We reach out to hundreds of families in the community who in turn help us spread our mission throughout the state and beyond. For example, we recently received an email from a Dance Marathon family asking for donation item suggestions for a little girl's birthday party. This young child was inspired, after attending our Big Family Event, by the effect Dance Marathon had not only on the family she knows, but every Dance Marathon family she saw at the Big Family Event.

The influence Dance Marathon has on the 2,000+ students involved each year is similar in the sense that it is extremely contagious. The passion and dedication of FTK, "For The Kids", is visible in every aspect of Dance Marathon on the University of Iowa campus, from seeing lime green shirts every day to the volunteers in the University of Iowa Children's Hospital. This organization has given many students direction in life, and for many has led them to their career choice. The most common change I see is students changing their majors to become a Child Life Specialist. The Dance Marathon experience with the kiddos relates to this profession so much and gives students opportunities to find a career that fits with their passion in life.

The \$12,738,161.24 raised by students to fight pediatric cancer over the past 19 years is just a number – a very big number. Although this provides an enormous amount of financial support for our amazing families, it is just a small way of how we measure our success after each Dance Marathon year. The emotional support we provide for our families is substantial and immeasurable. Knowing we have and will continue to make a difference in thousands of lives, while bringing smiles to kids' faces who are fighting for their lives, is what keeps Dance Marathon students going.

#### **Our Budget** by Dan Morse- Business Director, Dance Marathon 19 (DM 20 Executive Director)

The Dance Marathon Fiscal Year 2014 Budget pays for a variety of events throughout the year that raise awareness for pediatric cancer and help raise funds for children with cancer

and their families treated at the University of Iowa Children's Hospital. The budget does not pay any salaries for university staff or for the student leadership.

Being selected for the Sillerman Award would allow us to pay for all of our Fall/Winter recruitment efforts, which we call Lime Days. During the Lime Days week, we host a variety of events that attempt to have a large number of college students register to participate in Dance Marathon. As soon as a student registers, we begin to educate the student in the importance of philanthropic work in the community and teach the student a wide variety of ways in which they can give of their time and resources to help improve the experience of children treated at the University of Iowa Children's Hospital. Having this Lime Days week paid for would allow us to allocate more money to finance special projects, which align with our mission statement.

#### **Sustainability Plan** by Lily Spencer – Operations Director, Dance Marathon 19

The University of Iowa Dance Marathon has implemented many programs to sustain our event, our organization, our donors, and our students. The experiences with our kiddos and families that students and donors have in our organization at events throughout the year, in the hospital, and at our annual 24-hour event keep many people involved. Seeing first hand what the money and hard work is going and hearing personal stories of how our involvement has helped saved people's lives are our best tools for sustaining student and community involvement. On the other hand, in sustaining our annual 24-hour event, we have implemented programs of compost and recycling, along with choosing sponsors that use compost-able materials. Our 19 years of developing this organization has helped us pinpoint what works in the area of sustainability and has helped us be successful in our efforts.

#### **Lessons Learned**

On February 6, 2014, 2,000+ people will fill the Iowa Memorial Union's main lounge clad in lime shirts and accessories for the twentieth big event. As one of the eleven individuals on the executive council, I can say that we all just feel incredibly lucky to have nineteen years of big events behind us. The foundation that we grow on every year enables us to learn lessons from the leaders before us and build upon big ideas we want to see in action.

And, we would be able to help that many more children and families. Families enter dance marathon more often than we'd like because there isn't yet a cure for cancer, and until there is they will still need us. It would allow us to maybe put on another event in the hospital or a dancer appreciation week prize to get students more involved on campus. We've learned that any group of people can make a difference, but not unless they all work together - and that includes members/businesses of the community, other students in other organizations, and outside organizations and sponsors. We've learned that the little things really do go a long way - parents are constantly raving about the parking vouchers and massages in the hospitals, wigs for the kids, tokens for the vending machines and so much more.

Thank you for taking the time to consider us for your GenerousU award. We feel privileged to be able to share Dance Marathon's mission and passion with another group of individuals that understands the profound impact philanthropy can have.