

dance marathon alumni interest group annual newsletter

dance marathon 2012 - brighten every journey - february 17-19

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*Thank you to our dedicated
membership of
hard-working donors and
volunteers!*

from the president ftk, conor moran

THON 2012 marks a special year for us, the 40th anniversary of both Dance Marathon and the Four Diamonds Fund. It has been amazing to watch THON's growth every year on so many fronts, like participation, awareness, and funds raised to support The Four Diamonds Fund. DMAIG has been laying out and executing ambitious plans over the past few years too, and this year is no different.

In this newsletter you'll find updates on our many big projects, including:

- Our focus on expanding and growing regional events
- Boosting membership from its current status of over 8,000 to over 10,000
- Our rebranding effort across DMAIG to help establish an independent identity
- Support for miniTHONs and Four Diamonds events
- Fundraising to support new and existing events and the Rick Funk Scholarship
- Partnerships to give more member benefits, like hotel discounts THON weekend
- A permanent THON Museum on display during THON weekend
- A THON alumni mosaic

We have even more in store, so keep checking DMAIG.org and sign up for our email newsletter for updates throughout the year.

If you are planning to be in town on THON weekend, please stop by DMAIG's THON 40th anniversary event or any of the other free events we'll be hosting. You'll find specific details at DMAIG.org.

I look forward to seeing as many of you possible at THON 2012 or at the many regional events taking place across the country. -FTK Always- ♦

This year marks the 40th anniversary of THON and The Four Diamonds Fund! Join us as we honor the history and legacy of the largest student-run philanthropy in the world. We'll be in the Nittany Lion Inn Boardroom, February 18 from 5-7 pm.

The reception will feature guest speakers, light hors d'oeuvres, and awards honoring distinguished DMAIG alumni events across the country. We will also present our first-ever DMAIG THON Museum: An interactive look at the inspiring tales and efforts made by Four Diamond families and THON volunteers.

To find out more and RSVP, visit <http://dmaig.org/node/3524>.

Questions? Email Special Events Director Fran Roach at specialevents@dmaig.org.

inside this issue:

looking back	2	four a cure	5
roaring forward	2	a chance to dance	5
from the vice president	3	hope express	6
what can you ditch for dmaig?	3	forty for four diamonds	7
meet the overalls	4	special event starting kit	7

Beginning with this issue, we'll mail our print newsletters only to members who do not have a valid, working e-mail registered with DMAIG through our website. To receive the latest news about THON, DMAIG, and alumni events nationwide, please update your online contact information at dmaig.org.

looking back... -ftk, kirsten kelly, overall chairperson, thon 2011

We came together last February for THON Weekend 2011 and celebrated a year's worth of hard work and dedication For The Kids and For The Fight. I've always believed an essential piece of THON's magic comes from the number of people who are involved. To unite in one cause and give without asking, "What's in it for me?" is a rare thing. It is a type of family that can't be found anywhere but Penn State. As Penn State alumni, THON is not only a point of pride for us but also a wonderful opportunity to continue supporting The Four Diamonds families and the current students. As THON has grown over the years, so have the ways for alumni to stay engaged and give back. With the official fundraising window underway, now is a great time to donate online and credit your former organizations. Together, we will continue to make a difference in the life of child! ♦



...and roaring forward -ftk, elaine tanella, overall chairperson, thon 2012

Hello THON Alumni! I'm honored and privileged to serve THON as the Overall Chair this year. Entering my fifth year at Penn State, I am pursuing a degree in bioengineering, with minors in Italian and biology. I hail from Garden City, NY. My THON involvement began as an Atlas member for THON 2008. The next year, I wanted to become even more involved and was a communications committee member, also representing Atlas as a THON 2009 dancer. I then served as a communications captain for THON 2010 and Overall Communications Chair for THON 2011.

I am extremely excited to work with THON volunteers, organizations, families, alumni, donors, supporters, and the University to make THON 2012 the best yet. The Overall Committee has been hard at work this summer and fall, and we are looking forward to sharing the THON 2012 season with you. One area THON will be focusing on in the upcoming year is alumni giving and educating all THON supporters on the reality of cancer, and what The Four Diamonds Fund is doing to combat this terrible disease.

Though your involvement in THON is different as an alumnus than as a student, your support is crucial to THON's success. You play an integral role in the fight against pediatric cancer.

I encourage each of you to reach out to your past THON connections, whether it be your committee, organization, or dancing partner. THON depends on the collective harmony of so many different groups to be successful each year. You, our alumni, are some of THON's biggest supporters. We'd love to see you engage in our fundraising efforts and join us in the BJC.

Thank you for all you have done and continue to do For The Kids. As students, your passionate dedication helped shape a strong foundation for future generations of THON. As alumni, your gifts and dedication allow us to provide even greater emotional and financial support to the children, families, researchers, and staff of The Four Diamonds Fund. The fight's not over yet, but with your help we'll make the difference in the life of a child and find a cure for cancer. ♦



from the vice president -ftk, ashley ripka

It is hard to believe that THON 2012 will be my third THON as an alumna. That may not sound like a long time to everyone, but my first THON after graduation was, let's just say, an "adjustment." For the first time, getting on the floor meant waiting in never-ending lines, and learning the line dance meant trying not to trip over the BJC seats. But THON was still THON, and being part of it after graduation wasn't a bad thing, just something different.

With the perspective of an alumna, I really learned what DMAIG was all about and what it offered alumni who were adjusting to their new involvement with THON, just like I was. Joining the ranks of THON alumni meant moving to new areas and starting regional events that benefit THON. It meant coming back to campus THON weekend to reunite with friends outside the BJC, rather than on the floor, and then learning new ways to find and talk to old friends on the floor. And being a THON alumna meant still supporting The Four Diamonds Fund whenever possible, whether it's attending the 4D5K or mini-THONs around the state.

So with my third THON as an alumna nearing, I am glad to say that it's just as exciting as being a student, dancer, committee member, or captain. I hope you all will learn more about the opportunities for alumni during the year and over the weekend of THON 2012, and that you find your new niche in supporting THON! ♦

what can you ditch for dmaig? -ftk, melanie harris

Over the past 5 years, DMAIG-approved events have generated hundreds of thousands of dollars for THON. While the events are amazing and the total funds raised are always impressive, we are continually looking to expand and encourage more alumni nationwide to reconnect and raise money for the kids. To keep growing and supporting alumni programs, DMAIG needs to raise funds to operate the organization. DMAIG funds also help support annual alumni gatherings during THON weekend, and we assist alumni who are starting new events to benefit THON.

We believe one of the best ways we can help THON is to provide assistance, share best practices, and create grants that help alumni get new events off the ground and ensure they are successful and earn as much money for THON as possible. We can't do this without your help, so please consider what you can Ditch for DMAIG and help us to engage more alumni in THON.

Consider these costs:

Morning Grande Mocha Frappuccino - \$5

Lunch at the fast food joint by work - \$10

Friday night movie and popcorn even though there's a new DVD in your mailbox - \$20

Monthly gym membership you haven't used in weeks - \$35

Rainy day shoe shopping spree - \$50

To make a donation, please visit www.dmaig.org/donate. ♦



meet the thon 2011 overall committee

Elaine Tanella, Overall Chairperson

Bioengineering major from Garden City, NY

Favorite THON Moment: It's so hard to express the emotions you feel hearing families speak about their journey, and their fight against cancer. After "Angels Among Us" played, the mother of our THON family came up to each dancer, hugged us tight and said, "Thank You." Two simple words meant so much, but we should have been thanking them. They taught us so much about the courage to push forward, though the future can be scary; honesty with the truth of their difficulties and journey; wisdom with all they learned to get through each day; and the strength to carry on. I'll never forget that feeling, and how grateful that they let us not just into their life, but their family.

Charlotte Kohl, Communications

Political Science major from Basking Ridge, NJ

Favorite THON Moment: My favorite THON moment would have to be my first time being on the floor with my committee freshman year. Watching the kids and dancers interact on the floor pre-stand up made me feel like I was watching a miracle about to take place and showed me why THON is more than a weekend, but a year-long event, and will continue to be until we are able to dance in celebration.

Anuj Upadhyay, Donor and Alumni Relations

Chemical Engineering major from Mechanicsburg, PA

Favorite THON moment: Each year I learn more about what THON is and appreciate all of the work that everyone puts in to make it possible. But my favorite THON memory is my first one, as a junior in high school, not really knowing what to expect. I snuck onto the floor and didn't know anyone and just stood there and took it all in. I saw the dancers, committee members, kids, and everyone in the stands. I saw the worry-free faces of the kids and their families and now realize that I was seeing the power of THON, to serve as the escape that these kids need for a weekend.

Kinjal Mathur, Entertainment

Biology major from Hockessin, DE

Favorite THON Moment: We were able to have a laser show for pre-THON last year and it was a surprise to most people. Seeing the shock and excitement on the faces of the dancers, crowd, and families set the tone for the amazing weekend that was THON 2011.

Kaylee Tully, Family Relations

Supply Chain and Information Systems major from Robbinsville, NJ

Favorite THON moment: Listening to Mr. Rupp speak during THON 2011's Family Hour about his daughter, Felicia, who passed away due to cancer. The Rupp's were the first Four Diamonds Family I became extremely close with. Hearing him say, with such passion and heart, that we need to THON and we need to fight for cure was so inspiring. It reminds me everyday to never stop and never give up on this fight.

Vicki Marone, Finance

Mathematics & Energy, Business, and Finance major from Newton, MA

Favorite THON Moment: I was canning on a day trip in Elizabethtown and it had been snowing hard all day. At around 2 pm, we were pretty discouraged, tired, and freezing, when a man walked up to me through the snow with four hot chocolates. He said he was a Four Diamonds father and that he would never be able to thank us enough for everything we've done for his child and his family. We ended up talking for about half an hour, and afterward, I felt like I could have kept canning forever. It was an amazing feeling, and I always try to keep this in mind as proof that people truly do notice all the things volunteers do.

Tommy Scharnitz, Hospitality

Biology major from Northampton, PA

Favorite THON Moment: My first year in THON I was a Committee Member on Morale, and I was carrying my dancer's THON child around on my shoulders, having water gun fights with other THON children. A kids' talent show was beginning and everyone was tired, and seeing the kids on stage forgetting about their problems was an overwhelming experience. I began bawling because it was at this moment I truly understood what THON is: Not just the funds raised that measure our success, but also a celebration of life and one day a cure for these kids' cancers.

Jackie Swerdon, Merchandise

Supply Chain major from West Chester, PA

Favorite THON moment: Helping a hurting dancer outside and just talking to her. I simply stretched her out, kept her moving, and asked her "Why Do You THON?" Her mood instantly changed from defeat to triumph. She knew I believed in her and so she could believe in herself again. I got to see first-hand the strength of THON for the families and for the student body. THON is changing lives and uplifting people when they need that extra helping hand.

Genifer Goldsmith, Morale

Psychology major from South Brunswick, NJ

Favorite THON moment: My junior year as a moraler it was my goal to get all the dancers to continuously stretch. Eventually I got the name Stretch Queen. During the last four hours I heard Stretch Queen being called. I realized that one of the dancers had found me. He told me he was not doing well and I could tell he was not lying. I took him into Dancer Storage and led him in a stretch routine. I got him a banana to get his energy up, and as I peeled and handed it to him he turned to me and said that he would not have made it through the weekend if it were not for me. I almost broke down. It was one of the first times that I realized I could make a difference for the dancers, even one that was not "my dancer." Dancers stand for 46 hours to show the families that we are here with them; for 46 hours we will take on their pain and allow them a carefree weekend.

Will Martin, Operations

Communication Science and Disorders major from Indiana, PA

Favorite THON Moment: Every year, my favorite memory is during the set up of THON. We arrive at the BJC around 5:30 am when the building is so quiet and peaceful. As we begin to take over, you feel a sense of excitement building in the air. Knowing that this arena will be home to a magical land that will bring a smile to the face of every Four Diamonds family is a very special thing. There is nothing like it.

Kirsten Quisenberry, Public Relations

Graphic Design major from Wexford, PA

Favorite THON moment: I have many favorite THON moments, but the one that comes to

mind is spinning around on stage last year with a child. Three years old and all she wanted to do was dance and spin on stage. Her giggle was infectious and it just reminded me to appreciate the little moments as much as the jaw dropping ones.

Mairead Hanna, Rules and Regulations

French and Francophone Studies, HD&FS major from Media, PA

Favorite THON moment: One of my favorites is visiting Hershey Medical Center around Halloween 2010. I spent the day with kids who were undergoing treatment making black cat crafts and beaded necklaces. It was the first time I truly appreciated that these children are just that: children. They may have a port or be waiting for a spinal tap, but they just want to play foosball and give you a temporary tattoo. It was a remarkable day that really shed light on just what THON and the Four Diamonds Fund have been able to provide for these families.

Becky Mayes, Special Events

Sociology major from Hershey, PA

Favorite THON Moment: Last year's THON 5K was the first time the race started at the BJC, meaning THON officially started and ended there. After the runners lined up at the starting line, they all raised their diamonds to the sky, reminding us why we fight year-round: For The Kids.

Pat Howley, Supply Logistics; Hotel, Restaurant, & Institutional Management major from Cranberry Twp, PA

Favorite THON moment: A tie between being on the floor with HOS captains during the final hours of THON 2011 and seeing THON trend worldwide during the @abolishcancer/Khloe Kardashian campaign of 2010.

Andrew Ogburn, Technology

Information Sciences and Technology major from Hickory, PA

Favorite THON moment: Seeing the BJC transform from the empty shell it is at 5 am Friday to the home it becomes barely 12 hours later is the best feeling! Recognizing the work that goes into the weekend and what the kids, families, dancers, and volunteers get out of it is remarkable. ♦



four for a cure -ftk, suzanne graney

In January 2012 The Four Diamonds Fund kicks off a yearlong celebration commemorating the Fund's 40th anniversary. In 1972, Charles and Irma Millard had the strength and vision to start a fund to help families facing a childhood cancer diagnosis. Just hours after losing their young son Christopher to cancer, they established the Fund to provide financial assistance to families facing the same battle they had waged with Chris. Because of generous individuals and community organizations and the significant contributions from THON, Four Diamonds has grown even more than they dreamed it would. Because of ongoing support from THON, mini-THONs, DMAIG, and individual community donors, the Fund has:

- Expand its initial focus of financial assistance to include support for a team of social workers, child life specialists, a nutritionist, clinical psychologist, and a music therapist dedicated to helping children and their families at Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital.
- Establish a Stem Cell Transplant Clinic where pediatric oncology patients can receive their stem cell or bone marrow transplants and specialized care close to home.
- Establish the Pediatric Cancer Experimental Therapeutics Research program and recruit a reputed researcher whose membership in a special research consortium made Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital eligible to participate in Phase I and Phase II

Clinical Trials.

- Contribute \$10 million towards the construction of the new, freestanding Children's Hospital with an integrated outpatient services clinic for pediatric oncology patients.

We'll keep you updated on dates for any special 40th anniversary events. Highlights include an episode of "Blue and White in Medicine," set to air in January 2012 with a focus on care provided to Four Diamonds patients. We've set up a regional and national media pitch calendar and will let you know when to be on the lookout for coverage about our Four Diamonds patients, families, survivors, caregivers, and programs. We'll also see the fall premier of a WPSU documentary about THON, and we'll also see the much anticipated opening of the new freestanding Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital.

Through advances in treatments and care delivery, we've been fortunate to see a significant increase in survival rates of our patients in the last 40 years, with a current success rate of 80% survival after five years. Despite this success, our work is not finished. We cannot—and will not—stop until we reach 100%.

We will continue to search for a cure. As past dancers and THON volunteers, and as current members and supporters of DMAIG, you have been and continue to be important partners with Four Diamonds in that pursuit. ♦

a chance to dance -ftk, jeff reyes

THON 2011 was a great success, not only for the undergrads fundraising For The Kids, but also for DMAIG's alumni dancer couples. We proudly supported four dancers who represented DMAIG and all Penn State alumni. With much dedication and passion, Rosalie Smith ('10), Krissy Heard ('10), Maddie Dunlap ('10), and Kait Reinert ('10) raised funds throughout the THON 2011 season and stood on their feet for the entire 46 hours. DMAIG applauds their accomplishments, along with the efforts of the other competing alumni dancer couples who raised funds for the Four Diamonds Fund.

But with the THON 2012 fundraising season now open, it could be your turn. Now is your chance to dance as alumni in THON 2012! This year DMAIG will once again be supporting two dancer couples (four dancers total) to participate in the largest student-run philanthropy in the world. These alumni dancers will have the opportunity to relive the undergraduate experience on the floor of the Bryce Jordan Center, as well as bring us closer to a cure to pediatric cancer. To receive this opportunity, alumni dancer couples must compete to raise the most funds for THON. The two couples with the highest totals will be chosen to dance, and the third highest fundraising couple will receive 46-hour floor passes. For more information on alumni dancing and/or to register, visit dmaig.org/involved/dance ...FTK!



Fundraising season runs through January 7, 2012. Any funds accrued before November 17, 2011 must be turned into the THON office by November 18, 2011. Fundraising must be completed and all donations must be turned into the THON office no later than January 8, 2012. The winning dancer couples, including 46-hour pass holders, will be announced in time for Dancer Registration.

the incredible journey: hope express -ftk, jessica smith

I was a little nervous, walking onto the 7th Floor of the Hershey Medical Center last February. I had no idea what the next 24 hours had in store. I didn't know how I would make the kids smile while they were stuck in hospital beds, or how I would handle the 10 miles I was about to run overnight, especially with no sleep and after being crammed in vehicles with a group of strangers. But seeing the kids with huge, unprompted smiles, sporting headbands, fun glasses, and thrilled to beat us in bingo, made every ounce of uneasiness disappear. My time on the 7th floor was the perfect reminder of why we fight, dance, and run.

It was time to run. I still didn't have a clue about what was in store over the next 24 hours, but it didn't seem to matter with those kids sending us off into the night. Outside the hospital, quite a crowd was waiting: news trucks, moralers, friends, and family. It was awesome!

As we got further into the middle-of-nowhere-PA, the pure darkness set upon us. It was startlingly quiet. We were just one focused runner at a time, pounding the pavement for a cure. The rest of the runners, packed into the trailing vehicles, exchanged words of encouragement and praise before and after each leg of the relay.



Finally, we hit Blue Mountain, and instantly we built a bond as a team. None of us really anticipated it. While one of our teammates absolutely destroyed Blue, we heard the story of another fellow teammate, a Four Diamonds Dad. As he brought us all to tears, we could hear the sadness and pain in his voice, and also feel the determination pumping through his blood. For him, this run was the best the best way he knew how to fight his son's battle against cancer.

Every mountain we faced was a relapse in his son's fight, and we had to overcome it. The anticipation of his last leg had set in. The moment was finally here, and it was so powerful that it still brings me to tears today. He took the backpack of letters and took off like there was no tomorrow. We were coming up Atherton in the vehicles, approaching Park Avenue, and his son was waiting, holding a sign for his dad.



The moment he saw the vehicles coming up the street his face lit up like I have never seen a kid's face light up before. His entire body came to attention, and he sprinted toward the Nittany Lion Inn to let the group know that we were coming. Then he sprinted back to check and see how far we were. Then sprinted back to the Inn, all while waving his sign, jumping and cheering.

As my teammate came around the corner, his son erupted in cheers. They ran the last few yards together, and as his father reached the Inn, the entire family was there to greet him with hugs as the emotions of the moment overcame him. I've never been so proud to call someone my teammate.

The team of runners that day had become family. As we all came together to defeat the mountains over those 24 hours for the kids and their families, we all got a gift we had been searching for since our last THON senior year: the gift of purpose. And it meant that much more to share something so special with such an incredible team of people. ❖

Headed to PSU for THON weekend? Live in Central PA?

Look for us along the route! Cheer us on as we kickoff the run at Hershey Medical Center February 16, or stop by our special events at Cornerstone Coffeehouse in Camp Hill and Gingerbread Man in Mechanicsburg. And if you are headed to THON, participate in the Human Tunnel outside of the BJC as the Hope Express team arrives!

Check out thehopeexpress.org to donate and for details as we get closer to the event.

Contact Jessica at hopeexpressrelations@dmaig.org for more ways to help!

forty for four diamonds -ftk, jeff reyes

This year marks the 40th anniversary of THON and the Four Diamonds Fund! Be sure to join us as we honor the history and legacy of the largest student-run philanthropy in the world. The event will be held at the Nittany Lion Inn on Saturday February 18 from 5 to 7 pm in the Board Room.

The reception will feature guest speakers, we'll serve light hors d'oeuvres, and we'll present awards to honor distinguished DMAIG alumni events across the country. We will also feature our first ever DMAIG THON Museum: an interactive look at the inspiring tales and efforts made by Four Diamond families as well as THON volunteers. Be on the lookout for more information in our newsletter on how you can contribute to the Museum and make your own mark in THON history!

Join the DMAIG executive board as we celebrate four decades of courage, wisdom, honesty, and strength. Make sure you subscribe to our newsletter and check the website often for your chance to RSVP! ♦



special event starting guide -ftk, maribeth wicoff

Especially when THON fundraising season kicks off, we realize how much we miss our alma mater and all the memories: Creamery ice cream, HUB lunch, dinner at the Corner Room, and of course THON activities. As alumni, we have the chance to create our own THON fundraisers! For alumni who want to start an event but don't know where to start, consider these simple steps to get going and get the support you need

1. Contact your Regional Events Coordinator, Maribeth Wicoff: mwicoff@gmail.com.
2. Reach out to your local chapter to get support and volunteers.
3. Decide on the type of event you'll organize
(like a Bowling Night, Book Club, Sport Tournament, or Team Night Out).
4. Form a committee to help recruit volunteers, spread the word, and set up the event.
5. Contact the venue and create a promotional plan and day-of-event schedule
5. Work with your local chapter and DMAIG volunteers to market your event
6. Bring together alumni for an incredibly successful event
7. Publicize your total amount proudly, and donate to THON!

To volunteer with or learn more about DMAIG Black-Tie Events, contact the event charipeople:

1/27: Diamonds Over Georgia – Atlanta – Jennifer Evanuike – jcevanuik@yahoo.com

1/28: Blue White Ball – Pittsburgh – Kristen Murcko and Kristen Sichler – THONpittsburgh@gmail.com

2/4: Hope Gala – New York City – Sean Shapiro – nychopegala@gmail.com

2/25: Liberty Ball – Philadelphia – Kiera Boyle – kieraboyle14@gmail.com

3/26: Knight of Diamonds – Washington, DC – Deanna Bucciarelli – knightofdiamondsdc@gmail.com



DMAIG
Box 924
State College, PA 16804

NAME LASTNAME
ADDRESS 1
ADDRESS 2
CITY, STATE ZIP