

Dance Marathon at FSU raises \$1,941,368.54 for Children's Miracle Network

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Dance Marathon at FSU raised over \$1.9 million for Shands Children's Hospital and the FSU College of Medicine. (Photo: Casey Chapter/FSView)

Dance Marathon at Florida State University raised \$1,941,368.54 for Children's Miracle Network, falling short of last year's \$2,210,165.21. DM at FSU announced the grand total at the Total Reveal Ceremony on March 8 after the weekend-long event.

The money is donated to Florida State University's College of Medicine, to benefit pediatric programs and Shands Children's Hospital. Fundraising starts before the dancers even step foot on "big red" — a red, 800 sq.ft dance floor at the Tucker Civic Center. Dancers have to raise at least \$250 before they can attend the marathon. Official fundraising starts at the beginning of the school year with events like the [FTKids on the Block party in September](#) and the [FTKolor](#) event.

Once dancers raise enough to attend the marathon, they are met with games and incentives that encourage them to raise even more money while they are there.

"For any donation you can throw your friend in jail and they have to raise \$25 to get out," said Brittany Ernst, an internal member as she pointed to a cage filled with dancers.

These dancers include FSU Fraternity and Sorority Life coordinator Aubrey Winn and three other FSU staff members working together to raise a sum of \$100 and leave the "jail."

"We decided to come and support our students that are involved in Dance Marathon because we know this means a lot to them," said Winn. "But it means even more to the children and their families."

The Thursby family has been directly impacted by DM at FSU. Ragan Thursby was diagnosed with Pitt Hopkins syndrome at six years old — a rare error on her 18th chromosome causing neurodevelopmental delays. When Thursby attended DM for the first time at four years old she was unable to walk and her mother was unsure if she would live past 10 years old. She is now 13 and can walk on her own. Her mother credits the funds raised by DM for the improvements to her daughter's health.

"One time they were testing her for seizures and they had her sit in a bed for 12 hours with electrodes all over her head and she couldn't move," said Thursby's mother. "All the stuff that they were able to bring in for her was bought with the funds that you guys [the dancers] raise."

The Thursbys' story resonated with first year dancer and Sigma Alpha Iota member Megan Gardner.

"I have a nephew who was born prematurely and he was on the line of either going to a children's hospital or recovering and being fine. Luckily he was able to overcome it," said Gardner. "So when I learned about Dance Marathon through Sigma Alpha Iota the choice to participate was really personal for me."

Gardner feels that there is a stigma against DM at FSU because of the heavy involvement from Greek organizations.

"When it comes to fundraising associated with Greek life people wonder if we actually care or if it is for show," said Gardner. "But if you look at the amount of money raised and the pain you endure standing for 20 hours at a time there is no way you can be a part of this and not truly care about it."

Internal member and four-time dancer Jonathan Delva goes the extra mile to show his support to the kids.

"I met one of the network kids Lauren Pryce at my first marathon and I got really close to her and her family," said Deva. "I'm able to help them on my own and also see the impact fundraising has on them, being in contact with her and her sister has shown me firsthand how much this means to the families."