

# FSU dance marathon raises over \$700K

Special to the Democrat

Dance Marathon at Florida State University set a new standard for fundraising over the weekend.

The annual 40-hour fundraiser for the Children's Miracle Network and Shands Hospital in Gainesville picked up more than \$700,000 this year, which makes it the largest Dance Marathon in the country.

The grand total of \$701,493 eclipsed last year's \$584,023 and has participants hopeful for the future.

"When they announced the total on stage at the very

end — when I felt like my knees were about to give in — I almost cried," said Melanie Serrapica, a 21-year-old FSU student. "I started jumping and screaming with my friends."

She added, "It's an indescribable feeling — to know we're the No. 1 Dance Marathon in the country. All that money goes to kids who 100 percent need it."

This year's event had more than 2,000 participants with 1,800 dancers, who worked in 20-hour shifts.

Dancers could pay for the opportunity to sit down,

but otherwise they had to remain on their feet for the entire 20 hours.

Dance Marathon has raised more than \$3.3 million since its inception 18 years ago.

A portion of the funds from the event also go to the FSU College of Medicine's Pediatric Outreach Programs.

"Throughout the hours, dancers were entertained by various local bands, participated in themed hour activities, and got to meet and hear stories from local Shands Ambassador families who have experienced

the benefits of the funds raised for the hospital through events like Dance Marathon," said Dara Cohen, Dance Marathon Public Relations Chair.

Serrapica said one of the highlights of the event was listening to the stories of children helped by Dance Marathon funds.

"Every time I started to get tired, the families would share their stories about how Dance Marathon has helped and that gives you energy," she said. "You just get so pumped and you realize you can do this for them."