

Students strive to expand Dance Marathon goals

By Matthew Matilsky / Contributing Writer | Posted: Monday, November 7, 2011 10:52 pm

With Dance Marathon still four months and 24 days away, preparation is in full force for the student-run philanthropy event which has raised more than \$2 million in the past 12 years for the Embrace Kids Foundation.

Andrea Poppiti, constituent liaison for recruitment for Dance Marathon, said she and the other directors are most concerned with improving their effort to help sick children.

“We want to become something that isn’t just sororities and fraternities but people all across Rutgers,” she said.

Dance Marathon is the largest student-run philanthropic event in New Jersey, Poppiti said, donating all money raised to the Embrace Kids Foundation.

“Basically what [the charity does] is take care of the non-medical needs of kids with cancer and blood disorders,” she said.

About 150 dancers have already registered, each with a minimum goal of raising \$350, said Julia Crimi, director of volunteer management for Dance Marathon.

“A lot of students raised money through canning at local intersections or set up fundraisers in front of Brower [Commons],” she said.

But Poppiti said the easy part is fundraising — the hard part is the actual dancing.

“If you’re a dancer, going to the marathon is really hard,” she said. “I respect them so much because they’re literally standing for 32 hours straight. It’s very tough.”

Poppiti said some Greek and other student organizations each have one patient that they work with specifically. The organizations visit their patient at the hospital, spending personal time with their sponsor.

John Reinhardt is the liaison for the “RU4Kids” program, which partners organizations and sick children throughout the school year.

“[The groups] do things like eat meals with their [patient’s] family and visit them in the hospital,” he said.

But there are not as many sick children this year for the “RU4Kids” program, said Reinhardt, a School of

Arts and Sciences sophomore.

“The hardest part this year is that there are so many organizations that applied,” he said. “I would love to keep that number growing, but we don’t have that many kids, which is good and bad.”

Reinhardt, who is in Chi Psi fraternity, said he remembered the day his fraternity spent with “RU4Kid” Jonathon Volpe.

“We spent a day together over the summer at a beach party,” he said. “We got to play in the pool, I tried to teach him how to dive, [and] we went into the ocean.”

Reinhardt said that Volpe became one of the brothers. He considers Volpe and his family part of his fraternity.

Delta Gamma sorority has two “RU4Kids” and plans on “adopting” another this year, said Vicky Muschinske, Delta Gamma representative for Dance Marathon.

“I work a lot with the kids [through ‘RU4Kids’],” said Muschinske, a School of Arts and Sciences junior. “We visit them in clinic, play games and do arts and crafts. We took [one of them] to the movies.”

Crimi, a School of Arts and Sciences senior, said one dancer raised \$7,000 last year.

Because both Crimi and Poppiti are on the board for the event, they are required to raise \$700.

“I would say we’re definitely on track, but we’re always trying to do better,” Poppiti said.

The website provides a direct link for people to donate online, she said, making fundraising a relatively simple aspect of Dance Marathon.

“Each person gets their own donor drive [webpage], and it allows you to tack up how much money you’ve raised,” she said.

Poppiti, a School of Arts Sciences sophomore, said last year Dance Marathon raised \$380,351.10 and every year, the amount has gone up.

“It’s the things you don’t think of firsthand when people are sick, things that are still really important, like birthday parties,” she said. “We even sent a girl to her prom once.”