

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CXXVI, Number 102, 8 October 2002 — Dance Marathon Has Same Format, New Goals
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Dance Marathon Has Same Format, New Goals

BY TINA BORYSTHEN-TKACZ

Columbia Daily Spectator

■ At an information session yesterday evening, Dance Marathon organizers talked about morale, fundraising.

They don't care whether students do the macarena or the mashed potato. The committee members for the Columbia University Dance Marathon just hope that 150 enthusiastic students come out dancing to support their cause on Feb. 8 and 9.

CUDM held a registration and information session last night for its annual 28-hour dance marathon. For the past two years, the marathon has raised thousands of dollars for the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation.

Last year almost 100 students worked to raise \$80,000 for the worldwide organization, which helps fund pediatric HIV/AIDS research and which has just recently begun funding the research of other life-threatening childhood diseases. This year, the committee hopes to raise \$30,000 more than it did last year.

The foundation was established in honor of Elizabeth Glaser, who unknowingly received HIV-infected blood through a blood transfusion and passed HIV on to her two children through birth and breastfeed-

ing. Glaser and her daughter Arielle have since died from the virus.

Katie Romansky, CC '03 and CUDM's overall chair, expects this year's Marathon to be a bigger success than ever before due to its strong student committee.

Erika Rose, BC '04, who first danced for CUDM during her first year, now serves as the dancer relations chair. As the liaison between the dancers and the committee, she hopes to encourage students to participate by improving the dancers' experience.

"My goal is to make this as fun and as easy as possible," Rose said. "I am going to try to get as many people registered as possible, hopefully 150."

Romansky said she hopes the continuation of CUDM's emerging traditions will also help this year's Marathon be successful.

"Last year we had several HIV-positive kids, and we're going to have them again this year," Romansky said.

CUDM encourages the dancers with refreshments, entertainment, and morale boosting. Each dancer must provide his or her own morale captain; that person is responsible for ensuring that his or her dancer has a morale booster helping him or her at all times. Each morale booster works two shifts of seven hours each and participates in an hourly inspirational line dance.

Rose explained the importance of morale boosters at the Marathon by recounting how she became involved with CUDM.

“A friend and I found out about [CUDM] during our freshman year,” Rose said. “I showed up to morale and stayed for the whole 28 hours and danced because it was so fun.”

In order to register for the Marathon, students must pay a \$30 fee and promise to raise at least \$500 for the foundation. Most dancers are sponsored by campus groups, and each group may sponsor a limited number of dancers so it does not exhaust its funds. Independently sponsored dancers may also participate, but CUDM reminds them of the registration fee. Dancers are also often sponsored by local corporations.

CUDM also holds several group fundraisers throughout the year. For example, each dancer is required to

attend two "canning" trips, during which they ask tailgaters for donations at professional football games.

Kendra Webb, CC '05, is working to incorporate more volunteer work and education into CUDM as its education/volunteerism chair.

CUDM Vice Chair Sushil Cheema, CC '04, said, "Right now the volunteer events aren't required, but we may require them in the future. We really want the dancers to become comfortable with our cause."

Such events may include holding a holiday party for HIV-positive children, organizing awareness events for World AIDS Day on Dec. 1, and working with the Joey DiPaulo Foundation to cosponsor a camp for HIV-positive children.

Michelle LaRocco, BC '04, attended the Monday night meeting because she has always wanted to get involved in CUDM. She said, "It's a crazy bunch of people, and it's for a good cause, so I decided to register."

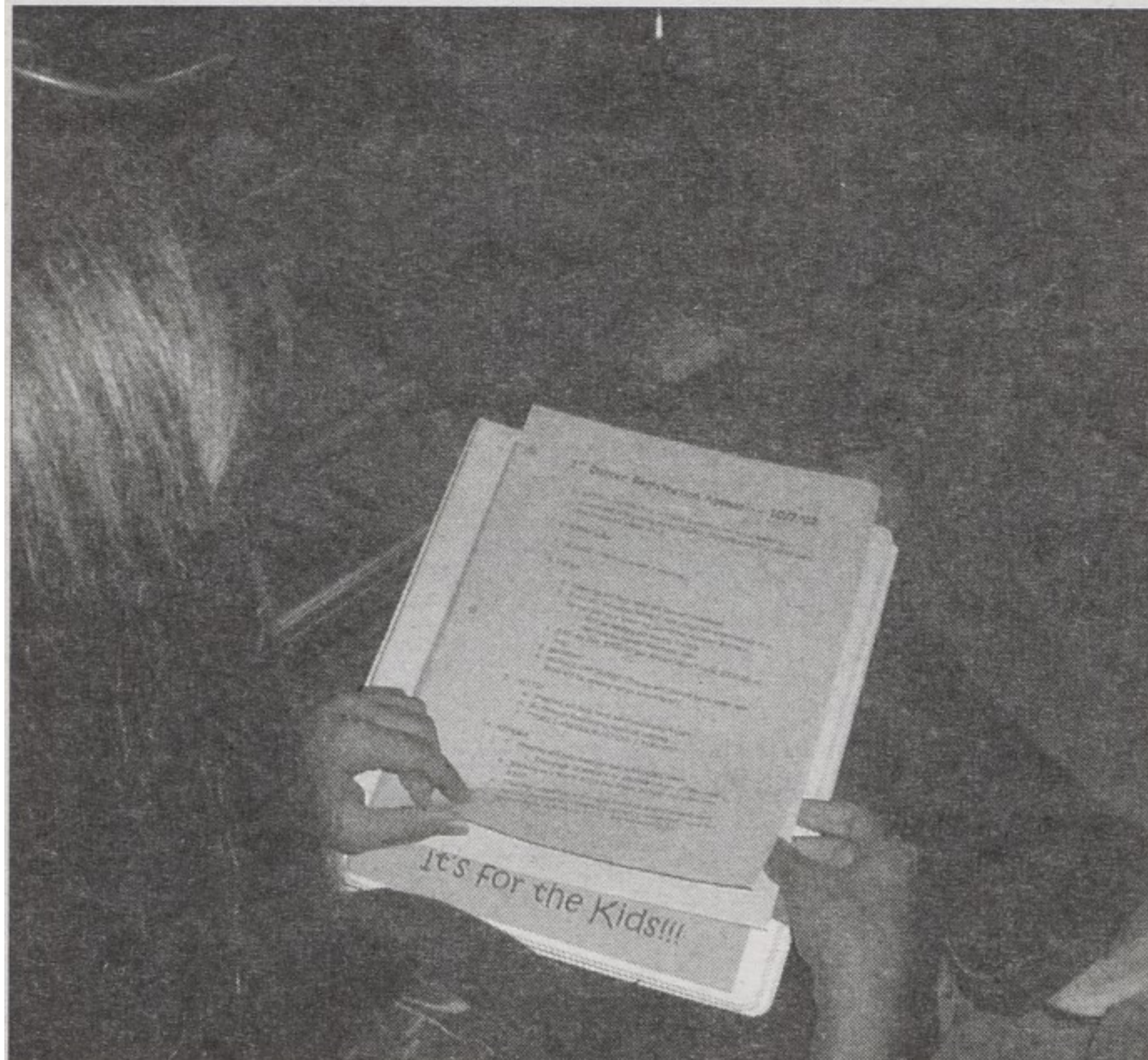
CUDM will conduct another registration session on Oct. 21, when the committee hopes to incorporate information about how sex and drug use affect HIV. It also plans to feature a celebrity spokesperson. A third registration session will be held on Nov. 18.

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—Erika Rose, BC '04

'We want the dancers to become comfortable with our cause.'

—Sushil Cheema, CC '04



MONICA BETANCOURT FOR THE SPECTATOR

Registration materials, as well as plans for AIDS patient participation, remind CUDM participants why they're dancing.