

Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CXXVI, Number 15, 11 February 2002 — Dance Marathon Raises AIDS Funds, Awareness
[ARTICLE+ILLUSTRATION]

Dance Marathon Raises AIDS Funds, Awareness

BY ZOE GALLAND

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■ The star-studded, endurance-demanding 28-hour event came to Roone Arledge Auditorium this weekend

About three hours into the Columbia University Dance Marathon, hundreds of dancers and “moralers,” watched celebrities express their support for the Dance Marathon and the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation on the wide-screen in the Roone Arledge Auditorium. After Sylvester Stallone finished offering his words of encouragement, he received moderate applause, as did Andy Garcia who followed him. But when Kenny G. came onscreen, he really lit the place up: the dancers erupted into enormous applause and shouting. Now they were inspired.

The second-ever CUDM took place this weekend, from 12 p.m. Saturday to 4 p.m. Sunday. At the end of the Marathon, \$144,445.67 had been raised for the Glaser Foundation, which was founded in 1988 to study and treat children with HIV. The foundation uses all but a six percent overhead cost to

advance pediatric AIDS research and awareness. Last year, CUDM raised \$103,747.00 for the Foundation.

The dancers were required to remain on their feet for 28 hours, and throughout the marathon they were surprisingly energetic. Amy Greenstein, CC '03, had been dancing for six hours when she was interviewed, but showed little sign of fatigue. "I feel fine," she said. "If I don't stand still too long, I'm okay."

The marathon was a celebrity-studded affair. Eric Nies of MTV's *The Grind* and *The Real World* and former Miss America Kate Shindle showed up at different points during the evening. *Party of Five's* Scott Wolf, who was present at last year's marathon, was unable to come due to a medical emergency. Other guests included a Michael Jackson impersonator, a drag queen, and the rapper Choobakka.

DJ Chip Duckett, as well as var-

ious deejays from the Roxy, spun tunes ranging from to “Shake, Senora” to “Lady Marmalade.”

Another celebrity who played a prominent part in the Marathon was Kim Webster, from NBC’s *The West Wing*. Webster’s 12-year-old brother, Ricky, is HIV positive, and both were present for the early part of the Marathon.

Ricky had been in Rooney Arledge for three hours when he spoke about the Marathon. “I feel good,” he said, “I like dancing.” Like many 12-year-olds, his answers were to the point. “It’s cool,” he summed up.

As the brief interview concluded, Ricky suddenly said, “Oh, I want to add something.” He paused. “Never give up.”

Dance Marathon Public Relations Manger Kate Thursby, CC’02, said this year’s Dance Marathon differed somewhat from last year’s, mainly because of two things: the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, and the fact that last year was the first Marathon.

“Things are running more smoothly this year,” Thursby said. But, “with [Sept. 11], it was difficult to secure large donations,” which are essential for Marathon funds. “Around early September we sent out contacts—but it was a bad time to look for funding. And a lot of celebrities were nervous about coming to New York.”

Dance Marathon Chair Will Hunter, CC ’02, stressed that “things settled down, and we put in a concerted effort [to raise funds].”

For Hunter, another difference between the two marathons is the participation from student groups on campus. "There was a lot of involvement from fraternities and sororities last year, but other student groups weren't as involved as they are this year," Hunter said. He added that there has been more administration involvement as well, and the dancers themselves represent the many schools and affiliations of Columbia University: Columbia College, Barnard, General Studies, the Business School, and Teachers College.

The Dance Marathon committee planned different themes for the marathon, and made sure there were plenty of activities and resources for the dancers.

"Moralers," the students supporting the dancers, were present to provide snacks and drinks, as well as dance themselves. There were two kinds of "moralers." Members of the Dance Marathon's Morale Subcommittee were dressed in bright orange and worked in shifts, dancing and passing out drinks and energy bars. The other moralers were friends of the dancers, and they wore blue shirts.

Time passed, but the dancers

were relatively unaware of its passing because no watches were allowed in Roone Arledge. "We didn't want the dancers to think, for example, 'oh, it's 8 p.m. ... I still have 22 hours left,'" said Thursby.

As the hour approached 7 p.m., hundreds of dancers and moralers practiced their moves and sang along to the music, but other activities were also taking place. A few dancers were tossing a football, some girls were throwing an enormous inflatable kickball around, and a game of four-square was taking place across the room. A few dancers looked tired, but there was a surprising amount of liveliness in the air.

"I feel fine," dancer Aviva Walls, BC '02, said. "Being here is physically meaningful, just knowing what you're dancing for."

Leticia Gonzalez, a first-year student at Teachers College, praised the marathon coordinators. "It's gone by really fast," she said, "and they've had a lot of things going on."

Twelve hours later, however, the vibe in Roone Arledge was a bit different. The dancers looked very worn down, but surprisingly, most were still dancing and participating in activities. Twenty hours of dancing had not stopped them.

Shelly Mittal, CC '03, commented on the organization. "From around 3:00 to 8:00 [a.m.]," she said, "there were some contests and other activities, but things kind of stopped. We wanted upbeat music." But her complaints ended there. "It's been great," she said.

‘Being here is meaningful, just knowing what you’re dancing for.’

—Letitia Gonzalez,
TC first-year student



MORIKA TSUJIMURA—ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR

Johanna Quinn and Forrest Lensing, both CC '03, groove in Saturday and Sunday's Dance Marathon.