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Fundraising students dance the night away, twice

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DANCE

At the Columbia University Dance Marathon, “shake your money maker” took on new meaning.

Hundreds of students participated in the 10th annual CU Dance Marathon in Lerner Party Space on Saturday and Sunday. The 48-hour dance event raised approximately \$40,000 for the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation.

“The goal is to raise awareness about pediatric AIDS,” Hannah Goodman, BC/JTS’12, a University relations chair for the CU Dance Marathon board, said. “The foundation provides outreach to clinics, which give medication to prevent the transmission of AIDS from mom to child.”

Nigel Barker, famous for his role as a judge on the television show “America’s Next Top Model,” launched the marathon with a short talk about the Glaser Foundation. He presented a clip from his documentary “Generation Free,” which highlighted his role as an ambassador for the foundation and focused on the problem of pediatric AIDS in Tanzania.

“You are keeping HIV and AIDS on the radar,” Barker told participants. “When your knees are getting weak, think of all those kids.”

Barker’s celebrity endorsement of the event elicited enthusiasm among students both before and during the marathon, and many participants asked Barker to sign their shirts.

Barker recognized that his dual role as a judge on a popular television show and an ambassador for the foundation affords him a unique pulpit from which to speak about AIDS.

"All those kids that watch 'Top Model' ... they listen to me giving fashion advice and style tips," Barker said. "I could get their concentration for a moment and put it on a more serious topic."

When asked what his goal is for the upcoming year, Barker replied, "In 2010 my mission is to get the film ['Generation Free'] out there as much as possible and spread the word. This is the 20th anniversary of the foundation, and [I want] to do all I can as an ambassador and to continue telling the story."

After Barker's departure, the marathon gathered Columbia's many student dance and music organizations for a variety of performances. The Columbia University Marching Band trumpeted the dancers into the Lerner Party Space. CU Bhangra, Columbia's Punjabi folk dance team, also performed, and the Columbia University Swing Dance Club gave lessons that allowed participants to party like it was 1935.

Dancers repeatedly showed the original choreography of Shilpa Vasishta, BC '10, one of the Marathon's board members. Combining robotic movements with fist pumps and 'the slumdog,' a Bollywood style move, the dance synthesized bits of pop culture to produce a lively routine that mirrored the energy of the evening.

Some students also boogied to their own beats, putting a spin on everyday activities, such as going grocery shopping. "We're going to the grocery store," Zak Dychtwald, CC '12, said as he pushed an imaginary shopping cart and reached for items on an invisible shelf. "Just check it out, check it out."

"I'm a big fan of the pop-and-lock and the sprinkler," Diana Clarke, CC '13, said as she imitated a garden watering system.

Participants also honored the music of their childhoods with a Disney hour from 4-5 a.m. "Who doesn't love

Disney in the middle of the night?" Goodman said about the segment, her favorite part of the event.

Participant Michael Poage, CC '13, also identified the early-morning Disney hour as the most enjoyable part of the Marathon. "That's when you're just getting delirious enough for it to work," he said. "You can't really forget those songs. It's like riding a bike. As soon as 'A Whole New World' comes on, it's a dazzling place."

Board members divided the event into other themed hours, including a Greek Hour with a toga contest, a Bar Mitzvah Hour, and several dance-offs, during which Jin Ha, CC '12, a member of the steering committee, dislocated his shoulder while break dancing.

"He went to the hospital, but now he's here," Shanice Naidu, CC '10, said the next morning. "He won the dance-off so I guess that's all that matters. He's so into it, I guess. It was our first injury during our 10 years."

By the conclusion of the marathon, the focus was redirected to the Glaser Foundation with a talk by Jake Glaser, Elizabeth Glaser's son, and a circle dance to Jason Mraz's song "I'm Yours."

"The foundation is just so close to our hearts," Naidu said. The participants have raised over \$430,000 over the past 10 years for the organization, which works at 4,500 locations in 17 countries worldwide. As of June 30, 2009, the foundation had provided medical treatment to almost eight million women and will continue to do so with the help of the money raised at the Marathon.

"The Marathon is just really about celebrating life and helping these children live theirs," Goodman said.



JACK ZIETMAN / SPECTATOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER | Students participating in this year's CU Dance Marathon boogie for 48 consecutive hours to raise money for pediatric AIDS.



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DANCING QUEENS | Columbia dancers perform in Lerner Party Space.