

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR

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Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CXXXVI, Number 11, 31 January 2012 — Students raise record-breaking contributions to fight AIDS at Dance Marathon [ARTICLE+ILLUSTRATION]

Students raise record-breaking contributions to fight AIDS at Dance Marathon

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Columbia Daily Spectator

What is a compelling reason to sacrifice an entire night of precious sleep on a weekend? Ask the 175 students who filled the Lerner Party Space Saturday night, danced in the Congo line, belted out popular songs, and raised \$75,000 to fight pediatric AIDS at the 12th annual Columbia University Dance Marathon.

This fundraising effort was a 33 percent increase from last year's \$48,000 raised.

The medication that the Dance Marathon funds prevents mother-to-child HIV transmission and is only \$19 per child, so this year's proceeds funded almost 4,000 children.

Some of the student groups that have performed at the Marathon in past years, such as Orchestis, were so hooked by the event that they now participate as dancers. Aguilar also said that changing the length from 28 hours to 18 hours for last year's marathon was extremely positive. "Everyone is as energized as they can be for those 18," Aguilar said. "Everyone is really present and having fun together."

The event attracted many special performances and appearances this year, such as actor Connor Paolo of "Gossip Girl," who came to express his support.

This year's Dance Marathon also featured musical guests, such as LCD Soundsystem's Gavin Russom, who performed from 1 a.m. to 3 a.m., as well as a few bands from Columbia such as Capital and Lucky Chops.

“It was really cool how they featured so many young bands and Columbia students, like DJ Spicy Special, and gave them a chance to play,” said Eleanor Bray, BC ’14, who danced in this and last year’s marathon. “The variety of live music was unique and different from last year.”

To keep the dancers moving and motivated for all 18 hours, the Dance Marathon had Nutella paninis, homemade grilled cheese, free prizes, and games and activities. Stressbusters made an appearance during the event to give dancers a chance to rest their tired feet and relieve their sore muscles.

To entice students to come to support friends and dance for a while, student groups hosted many themed hours, such as Hillel’s always-popular Bar Mitzvah Hour filled with classic bar mitzvah games and dances.

To realize their goals, the committee strove to engage more students. “To start that push we worked more to directly make ourselves more visible on campus to recruit dancers,” co-chair Scott Limbacher, CC ’12 said. Dance Marathon hosted events like study breaks in dorms, especially first-year dorms, to get more students involved.

Goodman was enticed by the Dance Marathon booth at the NSOP Activities Fair when she was a first-year, and Limbacher also became involved in his first semester. They both wanted to give new first-years the same opportunity.

Adrianna Aguilar, BC ’13 and vice-chair of the event, said that increased participation is facilitated by the positive experiences of the student dancers. “You really build a lot of relationships,” she said. “You’re all dancing and go through many difficult moments. You have to inspire each other to keep going.”

“The focus is the celebration of the money being made and the celebration of life. Yes, it’s fun, but we’re doing really great as well,” marathon co-chair Hannah Goodman, BC/JTS ’12 said.

Aguilar emphasized that after such an exhausting event, students could finally sit down, relax, and “reflect on the fact that we’ve accomplished this large task for such a great organization that has affected people here and around the world.”

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DANCING QUEEN | Sevan Gatsby, BC '12, danced at the Dance Marathon last Saturday alongside other volunteers and "moralers" who raised a record amount of money this year.