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Dancing for the Kids

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Dancing for the Kids

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Monday February 11, 2019

By Eric F. Spina

I didn't have to dance my way out of a makeshift "jail" in Kennedy Union ballroom during last year's *Flyerthon*. I just had to post bail (!), but being "locked up" gave me a chance to glimpse the love and compassion of University of Dayton students as they literally danced the night away.

For two decades now, our students have danced their way into the hearts of families as they raise money to help sick and injured children receive the care they need at Dayton Children's Hospital. It's part of a national movement of dance marathons on more than 400 college campuses benefitting the Children's Miracle Network — and it is all "For the Kids."

During this year's *Flyerthon* on Saturday, Feb. 16, nearly 300 students wearing colorful "One Generation Fighting for the Next" T-shirts will dance or stand for 13.1 straight hours as they attempt to waltz past last year's record \$55,000 in donations.

My money is on them, literally!

As the clock strikes 12:06 a.m. on Sunday, Feb. 17, UD Miracle president Molly Klunk, adviser Colleen Santella Oakes, and a team of dedicated students will reveal the grand total to a huge cheer, stand in a circle and, in an emotional ceremony, cut off their hospital wristbands.

“It gives sick children a glimpse of hope and is symbolic of the day when they can cut off their own wristbands,” explains Molly, who juggles student teaching special education at Beaver Creek High School with staging one of the biggest student-organized events of the year.

It’s a cause close to her heart because her own 7-year-old cousin in Cleveland unsuccessfully battled brain cancer when Molly was in sixth grade. That’s why she helps organize *Flyerthon* — and dances in solidarity with the families of sick and terminally ill children.

This is an effort that extends well beyond 13.1 hours over a weekend in February. UD Miracle volunteers spend the better part of a year fundraising and planning *Flyerthon* — an event chock-full of buoyant music, energetic dance performances, magic, games, storytelling from “Miracle Kids” and their families, laughter, and a few tears. Chants of “FTK!” (For The Kids!) will ring out throughout the day and night in the ballroom.

One “Miracle Kid,” 5-year-old Joy with Down Syndrome, “will steal the show,” Molly predicts. “Everyone adores her. She will cheer and smile and clap her way into our hearts.”

And UD students will dance their way into Joy’s heart and into the hearts of other Miracle Kids living with cancer, cystic fibrosis, asthma, and other illnesses.

“*Flyerthon* is upbeat, filled with energy, with everyone there for the cause,” Molly said. “It’s truly an amazing experience.”

I can attest to that. I’m so proud of these students for showcasing their dance moves — and their selflessness and philanthropic spirit. To find out more, [click here](#).

Deejay, cue the music: I gotta get dancing!