



THONTM WEEKEND SPECTATOR GUIDE

donate.THON.org

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ABOUT THON



The Penn State Dance Marathon was first organized in 1973 by a group of students seeking an opportunity to give back to their community. This idea has since grown into the largest student-run philanthropy in the world: THON. Each year, more than 16,500 student volunteers participate in the year-long fundraising efforts to benefit our sole beneficiary, Four Diamonds at Penn State Children's Hospital.

In 1977, THON paired with Four Diamonds at Penn State Children's Hospital. Since pairing, we have raised over \$180 million to ensure that over 4,000 families never see a medical bill or have to worry about the financial burden that comes with cancer. Beyond finances, THON pairs student volunteers with Four Diamonds Families, forming lifelong relationships and avenues for emotional support. In addition, a significant portion of the funds raised help to drive research that will someday find a cure.

- **1973:** Students developed *Dance Marathon* to support local charities
- **1977:** Four Diamonds became THON's sole beneficiary
- **1979:** THON Weekend moved from the HUB to the White Building to accommodate the growing number of dancers and volunteers in the building
- **1983:** THON raised six figures for the first time totaling \$131,182
- **1987:** The name 'THON' was officially adopted
- **1992:** THON raised more than 1 million dollars for the first time
- **1995:** The Disney Short Film, "*The Four Diamonds*", was released based on [Christopher Millard's story](#). Shortly before he lost his three-year battle with cancer, Christopher wrote a story in 1969 about a great knight who sought out the four diamonds of courage, wisdom, honesty and strength, in order to be released from the grips of an evil sorceress.
- **1997:** The first Family Carnival was held, inviting Four Diamonds families to State College, PA
- **1998:** The first THON Livestream was produced, starting an important tradition that is a crucial element to this year's Virtual THON Weekend
- **1999:** THON Weekend moved from the BJC to Rec Hall
- **2002:** The first THON 5K was held
- **2007:** THON Weekend moved to the Bryce Jordan Center, its current home
- **2020:** THON raised \$11,696,942.38 with over 16,500 student volunteers

THON WEEKEND 2021

Each February our year-long efforts typically culminate in a 46-hour no-sitting no-sleeping dance marathon. Due to COVID-19, THON Weekend will be modified to ensure the safety of all participants.

There will be no spectators, dancers, or volunteers in the Bryce Jordan Center, but rather, supporters will be celebrating THON from their own homes around the world. Student volunteers have still been identified as *dancers* as their hard work deserves to be recognized. They will be participating remotely and are required to take breaks designated rest hours between midnight and 6 a.m.



Despite the challenges the past year has thrown at us, we are dedicated to continuing this decades-old tradition as safely as possible. COVID-19 has not stopped cancer or the spirit of the THON Community – one day we will dance in celebration.

For more information about THON, please visit our website at www.thon.org.

COVID-19 PROTOCOL

It is expected that all spectators continue to follow COVID-19 regulations regardless of where you are watching from. For more information regarding COVID-19 guidelines, refer to the links below:

- [State College Borough Ordinance](#)
- [Penn State COVID-19 Compact](#)
- [Pennsylvania COVID-19 Guidelines](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Protection COVID-19 Information](#)

If you suspect an individual Penn State student or organization is not following COVID-19 guidelines, please contact your local police's non-emergency hotline and notify Penn State University Student Conduct through their referral form [here](#).

Notify Director@thon.org of any major concerns.

TIMELINE & FAQs

Friday

5:15PM

THON Weekend Livestream Begins!

5:55PM	THON 2021 Executive Committee Introductions
6:00PM	Dancers Stand
7:30PM	Kids Mail Call
8:30PM	Celebrity Guest Performer
10:55PM	Lenina Crowne Performance
12:00AM	End of Friday

As dancers are required to rest between the hours of 12-6 AM, there will not be any major events overnight. Tune back in the morning!

Saturday

6:00AM	Livestream Resumes
6:00AM	OK Otter Performance
9:30AM	Vision to None Performance
11:00AM	Dancer Pageant
12:15PM	Corner Brothers Performance
2:00PM	THON Idol with Southpaw
4:00PM	Kids/Teen Talent Show
6:00PM	Alumni Hour
6:45PM	THON Showcase Winners Performances
7:00PM	Pep Rally
8:30PM	Celebrity Guest Performer
11:00PM	My Hero Zero Performance
12:00AM	End of Saturday

As dancers are required to rest between the hours of 12-6 AM, there will not be any major events overnight. Tune back in the morning!

Sunday

6:00AM	Livestream Resumes
6:00AM	LowJack Performance
9:00AM	Battle of the Bands
10:15AM	Hair Donation
11:00AM	Kids Fashion Show
12:00PM	FINAL FOUR BEGINS
<i>(Including: Family Hour, Last 5 Line Dances, THON Weekend Recap Video, Go Go Gadget, and more!) At 4:00PM Dancers Sit and Total Reveal occur.</i>	

Use this [link](#) to find the answers to your Frequently Asked Questions

This link will be updated as additional questions come in.

FUNDRAISING GUIDE

When and where can I donate during THON weekend?

Visit donate.thon.org to give at any time!

- Please note, in order to credit a specific organization or committee, your donation must be made before 11:59 PM on Saturday, February 20.
- In order to have your gift included in the THON 2021 total reveal, your donation must be made before 11:59 AM on Sunday, February 21.

What are some tips to ask others to support THON?

Leading up to THON Weekend, it is best to email friends and family who you have not reached out to this year. If you have a DonorDrive page, check out [this](#) resource on using the email function. If you are having trouble deciding what to say, utilize [these](#) email templates

Continue to share your DonorDrive page link on Facebook! Facebook has proven to be the most successful social media when it comes to asking for donations.

Rule of 7: It takes seeing something 7 times for an individual to act on it

Donors respond to a sense of urgency. Utilize this in your messaging:

Only x hours left in THON Weekend 2021! Make your donation now!

Dancers have been dancing for x hours! Support them and help make a difference in the life of a child today

Ask for non-monetary support! Spreading awareness by reposting on social media or inviting others to watch the THON Weekend livestream helps us to share THON's mission even further to new audiences.

What are some creative ways to fundraise?

Twitch Fundraising

Integrate Twitch right into your participant page on DonorDrive! Check out [this](#) resource for help in setting up Twitch Livestream your THON Weekend activities on Twitch to gain attention and donations!

Dares

Creating a dare schedule with others to post on social media

i.e. create a bingo board full of dares and upload to Instagram or Facebook, link your DonorDrive and share videos of you completing the dares. Dares could include sharing silly photos, getting hit with a pie, cutting/coloring hair, etc.

How can non-students make online fundraising pages?

THON Nation is our online fundraising platform for non-volunteers. Past volunteers, families, and other supporters can create their own page to help fundraise on behalf of THON.

If you have not yet created your own fundraising page, please follow these instructions:

- I. Click [here](#) to get started
 - a. Click "register now" → "participant" → "join a team" → "search"
 - b. Enter the committee name that you are fundraising for:
 - c. Enter your personal information
 - d. Get ready to start fundraising! Be sure to check out additional fundraising and tips [here](#)!

SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLKIT

With THON Weekend being virtual, there are so many more opportunities to enhance your fundraising efforts through social media. The more you share THON's mission with your local communities and followers, the more we can support children and families impacted by childhood cancer through awareness and financial assistance.

In addition to posting photos, we encourage you to reshare our posts on social media. Remember to always use the hashtag #THONWeekend2021.

General THON Weekend Captions

There are __ hours left to support to #THONWeekend2021! THON is a student-run philanthropy dedicated to providing emotional and financial support to families and children impacted by childhood cancer. Head to www.THON.org/livestream to watch virtual THON Weekend or donate at [Insert DonorDrive Link] to make a difference in the life of a child today – For The Kids!

Even though THON Weekend may look different this year, our mission to support families and children impacted by childhood cancer stays the same. Cancer does not stop, so neither can we. Please consider donating at the link below to help THON increase our impact in providing emotional and financial support, spreading awareness, and ensuring funding for critical research for these families. [insert Donor Drive link]

During my time at Penn State, I had the opportunity to be involved in THON: the largest student-run philanthropy in the world. With the help of our community, we have ensured that no family impacted by childhood cancer ever has to see a bill at Penn State Children's Hospital. Please consider donating to this link to help us continue to help children as we fight to find a cure for childhood cancer: [insert Donor Drive link] #THONWeekend2021

#THONWeekend2021 is in full swing! Please click the link below to help us as we continue our fight of supporting the families and children impacted by childhood cancer—all for a cure. FTK® [insert Donor Drive link]

THON Weekend is happening now, and I need your support! During my time as a Penn State student, I was involved as _____ which allowed me to join 16,500 student volunteers in the fight against childhood cancer. Today, I am asking you to join me in this fight by donating to my fundraising page. By supporting THON, you are empowering a community of Penn State volunteers to take action in the fight, so that one day we may dance in celebration of a cure. Thank you for your support #THONWeekend2021® [insert Donor Drive link]

Growing up is a beautiful thing, let's fight for it. As a proud Penn State Alum, I have been grateful to have the opportunity to enhance the lives of children and families impacted by childhood cancer. You can join me in the fight against childhood cancer by donating to my fundraising page. Together, we can make a difference in the life of a child. Thank you for your support #THONWeekend2021® [insert Donor Drive link]

THON Weekend Captions by Hour

Friday 8-9am: Happy THON Weekend 2021! The Virtual THON Weekend Livestream will begin tonight at 5pm tonight! Please be sure to tune in at THON.org/livestream! To join us in the fight, click here to donate [insert DonorDrive link]

Friday 12pm: Share the graphic to be posted on THON's social to saturate Facebook: THON Weekend 2021 begins in just 6 hours! Help us make a difference in the lives of those fighting childhood cancer and donate today [insert DonorDrive link]. Join us on the THON Weekend livestream at THON.org/livestream

Friday 3pm: THON Weekend begins in just 3 hours! Tune into the livestream at www.THON.org/livestream. Please be sure to donate using the link in my bio by Saturday at 11:59PM!

Friday 6pm: THON Weekend 2021 is finally under way! Check out all of the events happening on the livestream at www.THON.org/livestream. To donate, click the link below! [insert DonorDrive link]

Saturday 9am: Consider doing a dare challenge with your organization members on Twitch! [Here](#) is a helpful guide on how to use Twitch.: Join us at [insert DonorDrive link] to watch as our organization members are dared to take a stand against childhood cancer! Donate now to see us complete a dare of your choosing!

Saturday 12pm: Only 12 hours left to donate to [organization name] for THON 2021! Please donate using the link below! [insert DonorDrive link]

Saturday 3-6pm: There are only X hours left to donate. Please check out the THON livestream on www.THON.org/livestream and use this link to donate! [insert DonorDrive link]

Saturday 7pm: Pep Rally 2021 is underway! During this event, every other donation is being matched up to \$100! Help us reach our goal of raising enough funds to support a year of research maintenance and donate today! [insert DonorDrive link]

Saturday 10pm: There are only two hours left to donate to my organization/committee, [organization/committee name], for THON Weekend 2021!! Donate here to help us take a stand against childhood cancer. [insert DonorDrive link]

Sunday 9am: There's still time to donate! Donations made before 12pm will count towards the THON Weekend 2021 total! Make your donation today at [insert DonorDrive link]!

Sunday 12pm: Family Hour is beginning at www.THON.org/livestream! Join us to hear about our families and learn why we do what we do! [insert personal story about your experience with a family]

Sunday evening: With your help, THON 2021 was able to raise X amount For the Kids®! Thank you for your endless support all year long. You have truly made a difference in the lives of those fighting childhood cancer! [tag those you are thankful for!]

Be sure to also email/call/text to thank your donors personally!

STRETCHES

Make sure to keep your body healthy as you stand FTK! We made a list of some stretches for you to follow! As you are standing, we suggest following these stretches every 30 minutes so that your body can remain loose and healthy. When in doubt, STRETCH IT OUT!

Shoulder Stretch

- Start by bringing your right arm across your chest
- Bend your left arm over your straightened right arm
- Your fingers should be pointing towards the ceiling
- Roll that right shoulder back to keep the chest open and to feel the stretch



Triceps Stretch

- Start by reaching both arms up towards the sky; they should be parallel to one another
- Bend one arm at the elbow, pressing down lightly on the elbow with your opposite arm
- Keep shoulders rolled away from your ears
- Hold for 10-15 seconds and repeat with the other arm!



Side Stretch

- Stand with feet shoulder width apart
- Keep a slight bend in the knees to maintain balance
- Hold for 10-15 seconds and repeat on left side!
- As you exhale, cross the midline of your body with your right arm overhead
- You should feel a deep stretch on the right side of your body
- Hold for 10-15 seconds and repeat on left side!



Chest Stretch - Shoulders Back

- Reach both arms behind you and lock your fingertips
- Hold for 10-15 seconds!
- Keep a soft bend in your arms as your fingers interlock
- As you exhale, press your palms outward and press your chest forward
- Hold for 10-15 seconds!



Chest Stretch - Wide

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart; keep a slight bend in the knees
- Bring both arms up to a field goal post position, keeping a 90-degree angle in the elbows
- As you exhale, push your hands towards the back of your head



Upper Back Stretch

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart
- Keep a slight bend in your knees
- Interlace your fingers and extend your arms right out in front of you
- Keep your arms parallel to the ground
- Round out your back as you exhale, facing your palms outward
- Hold for 10-15 seconds as needed!
- Your arms should look like an "O" out in front of you in this position.



SPECTATOR ACTIVITIES

In addition to the following activities, which can be played at any time, you can find the full outline of THON Weekend 2021's specific Theme Hours here. These include #TBT, Rock N' Roll, Carnival, Disney, and more!

At-Home Minute to Win It Games

Cotton Ball Scoop

You will need: 10 cotton balls, a spoon, a bowl and a fabric that can be used as a blindfold

How to play:

- ❖ Sprinkle cotton balls on a table around a centrally located bowl
- ❖ Give a player a spoon and blindfold them
- ❖ They have a minute to find all the cotton balls and put them in the bowl

Tallest Tower

You will need: Pennies, cereal pieces, or any object/food you can stack

How to play:

- ❖ Try to stack as many of your chosen objects in a minute, using only one hand (for more of a challenge, use your non-dominant hand!)
- ❖ The tallest tower wins!

Cookie Face

You will need: An Oreo or cookie per person playing!

How to play:

- ❖ Place a cookie on your forehead and shimmy it down to your mouth without using your hands. If it falls, they start over.
- ❖ Winner is the first one to get the cookie into their mouth!

Quiz Your Friends

Use [this](#) website to create a quiz that is personalized to you! Then quiz your friends to see who knows you the best!

Family Feud

Play [this](#) THON themed version of Family Feud!

Finish the Song Lyric

Play [this](#) 2020 version of Finish the Song Lyric!

Skribbl.io

Play [this](#) online version of Pictionary!

TikTok Dancing

Since we are dancing all across the world here are some fun dances we can learn! Take some time and learn a fun TikTok dance with your family or roommates! See who is the best dancer and who can learn them the fastest!

Post your amazing dance moves on TikTok and tag @PennstateTHON

[Click here](#) for how-to videos!

Here's some of our favorite dances:

- ❖ Renegade
- ❖ American Boy
- ❖ Say So
- ❖ "The Git Up"
- ❖ Hit Me Baby One More Time

Among Us

Among Us was one of the most popular games of 2020 and a great game to play with friends no matter where any of you are! Download the app on your phone!

How to play:

The basics of Among Us are pretty simple- you are playing either as a crewmate or imposter (which you learn right before each round). If you are a crewmate, your job is to complete tasks before the imposter eliminates all your other crew members. If all the tasks are complete before this or the imposter is caught, then the crewmembers win the round. If you are the imposter your job is to blend in and sneakily eliminate crewmates without getting caught. If an emergency meeting is called or a body is reported then a chat room will open, and everyone can discuss and vote on who they think the imposter is. If you eliminate enough crewmembers without getting caught, then you win! Create a room and send the code to your friends to play with others!

THON Bingo:

Make your own custom THON Bingo Board with unique and fun activities to do and challenges to complete throughout the 46 hours of THON Weekend!

Family Stories:

Throughout THON Weekend if you need some inspiration or want to get to know more Four Diamonds Families, take time to read their stories on our website [here](#).

[For more games and engagement activities, check out our Theme Hours Guide here!](#)

THON WEEKEND RECIPES

Game Day Chicken Baskets

Recipe makes 8 servings

Ingredients for homemade chicken tenders:

- 6 boneless chicken breast halves
- Cut into ½ inch strips
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 ½ teaspoons garlic powder
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup seasoned breadcrumbs
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 quart of peanut or canola oil for frying

Additional Items (optional, but helpful):

- Kitchen thermometer for frying oil temperature



Steps:

1. Mix together egg, buttermilk, garlic powder, and any additional spices of your choice (paprika, pepper). Dip chicken strips in mixture (for best results let the chicken marinate in the mixture for a couple hours).
2. Mix flour, breadcrumbs, salt, and baking powder. Coat each strip in the coating mix.
3. Heat oil in large skillet and place chicken in the oil carefully
4. Fry until golden brown
5. Always check to make sure the chicken is thoroughly cooked by cutting the chicken in half after frying. Food fries quickly!

Ingredients for French Fries:

- 2/3 cup of white sugar
- 4 cups of warm water
- 4 large russet potatoes
- Peeled and sliced into small strips
- 6 cups of vegetable oil (for frying)
- Salt to taste
- Additional spices as wanted (Onion salt, paprika, garlic powder, etc.)

Steps:

1. Dissolve sugar in warm water. Soak the sliced potatoes in the mixture for 10-15 minutes.
2. Heat oil in deep pot (do not fill more than half full of oil) to about 375 °C. Place slices potatoes carefully in oil for 4-6 minutes. Drain fries on paper towels and season as wanted.

THON Hospitality Cooking Show

Tune into the livestream on Saturday, February 20 at 10:20 for a late-night snack tutorial for Cinnamon Crescent Rolls. You will need: crescent rolls, ¼ cup butter, ¼ cup brown sugar, 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon, ½ cup powdered sugar, 2 tablespoons of milk, and ½ teaspoon of vanilla for this recipe.

FOUR DIAMONDS FAMILIES

Who Are They?

Four Diamonds, THON's sole beneficiary, supports families affected by childhood cancer at Penn State Children's Hospital by covering medical bills and providing specialty care such as social work, music therapy, clinical nutrition, and more. Families supported by Four Diamonds also can be a part of the THON Community by opting to be paired with an organization or other volunteers!

What is Adopt-A-Family?

The Adopt-A-Family (AAF) Program connects passionate Penn State students with Four Diamonds Families so that they can support families and their loved ones to conquer childhood cancer, while empowering them to do anything that they set their mind to. Organizations range from Greek organizations and club sports, to special interest organizations and commonwealth campuses.

What is the Perpetual Pennant Project?

The Perpetual Pennants Project (PPP) is a physical embodiment of all the angels of THON. A pennant is created for each angel with their birthday, anniversary and sometimes a quote shared by the family. Each pennant is strung together to create one unified banner. The PPP is shared with the THON Community at different events throughout the year. It is also shared in a more intimate setting, in smaller groups where the discussion is focused on remembering our angels and honoring their lives. These Four Diamonds children may have lost their fight, but we will never forget their stories in our pursuit for a cure and until the day we can dance in celebration.

Thank you for all you do to support our THON families! Visit www.thon.org/for-the-families to learn more or reach out to family.relations@thon.org with any questions



THE RYDER GETCHIS FAMILY

Our road to THON started with a simple headache. On Tuesday, January 10th, 2017, Ryder woke up with a headache, went off to school and the rest of the week was playing and feeling great. Friday the 13th was a different story. Ryder woke up with a severe headache and violent vomiting. Nothing was helping at home so a trip to the ER was required. I (Mom) am an ER nurse, so I had to work, but Ryder's dad (Ron) was able to take him. I said to them, "Whatever you do, don't leave without a CT scan of his head. I don't have a good feeling about this."

20 minutes after I arrived at work, Ryder's dad called to say that they found a brain tumor and were rushing Ryder to Hershey. I raced to the Hershey Medical Center from York to meet Ron and Ryder's ambulance. I still have no idea how I drove there or got there. I stood without a coat at the ambulance bay waiting -- wondering what my son would look like. Will he be crying? Will he be his happy, joking self? He was both.

I remember shaking uncontrollably. I remember telling my husband the only way we can make it through this is together. As a family. We have to hold each other up. In the ER, they kept saying, "cancer," "tumor," "surgery," "radiation," "chemo." As a nurse, I knew the road ahead. No one else did. So, I had to make sure everyone else was okay. Ryder had surgery on his brain that night to create a pathway for fluid to flow through, since the tumor was blocking the natural path. He came home on January 17th, to a house FULL of friends, family, and neighbors wishing him well. Cheering him on.

On January 23rd, we had an appointment with a neurosurgery to see if his scar was healed enough to move forward with chemo. Ryder bent down to tie his shoes, and spinal fluid shot straight out of his brain incision. I drove so fast to Hershey Medical Center, where his doctors were waiting for him -- more surgery, which left him with a tube sticking out of his head. The pathway that had been created didn't work, so he needed a drain. The next day, he had more surgery, a port implantation, and a spinal tap. He was admitted from January 23rd to January 30th. He also had surgery January 29th to place a shunt to drain fluid from his brain to his abdomen. Then we had hearing tests and eye tests to get ready for chemo and radiation.

Chemo started February 9th. Ryder always had a smile on his face and a joke up his sleeve. Every single day we came home, there were multiple packages with gifts and cards and encouraging words. Each day was a new surprise. Chemo ended in April, and on May 15th, we took the train to Philly for radiation at CHOP

Ryder rang the bell on June 20th - he was DONE!! But his journey has not been forgotten. Ryder was given so much support that he decided he was going to create a foundation. He wants to give back to kids with cancer. So, he started Ryder's Smile Packages! These are pillowcases filled with items that helped Ryder get through treatment. He gives these to new cancer kiddos. Ryder gets donation and packs all of the pillowcases himself. His goal is that no one fights alone.

We were very excited to learn that we could participate in THON 2018 with our very special organization Kinesiology Club. We had no idea what to expect, but I can now tell you this -- it was better than Christmas!! We are forever grateful to the students, families, alumni, and volunteers who stand with us to give kids a chance. Our THON family is incredible. Those kids go above and beyond to truly become family. We love them to pieces and definitely appreciate the support. There's no other place we would rather be a cancer family at than Penn State. (Unless we didn't have cancer-- that would be cool!)

In January 2020, Ryder had stroke like symptoms, and we rushed him to the hospital. Turns out a cavernous malformation formed in his brain from the radiation treatment. This is a cluster of blood vessels that can bleed at any time causing seizures that appear like stroke. The plan at the time was to just watch him for a while. At THON 2020, Ryder had another attack. We were there for 30 minutes and had to leave. We were devastated. Then we got news that Ryder would have to have yet another brain surgery. He had to be awake for most of it. They put him to sleep to do the craniotomy and then woke him up so he could tell them if he had tingling or numbness for his safety. He was a Rockstar! Again. The neurosurgeon got it all and he is healing nicely. If you learn anything from our story, know that cancer doesn't stop after a cancer free diagnosis. For two years everything was smooth sailing, and you start to put it behind you and then bam. You just never know.

We are Penn State! We are Penn State! We are Penn State! & We are THON! Thank you!

Stacey Getchis & Family (Ryder, Avian, & Ron)



THE SYDNEY BUSH FAMILY

Sydney Bush is a 12th grade student at Hempfield High School. When she was two years old, she was getting sick a lot, and she had pain in the back of her head and neck. At the time, none of the doctors could figure out what was wrong; they first thought she had whiplash from the Whip ride at Dutch Wonderland. After weeks of doctor visits, she finally was admitted to Lancaster General Hospital for an MRI. On August 23rd, 2005, Sydney was diagnosed with a brain tumor, and she was sent immediately to Penn State Children's Hospital. Two days later, she was in surgery and had the tumor successfully removed. The type of tumor she had was called an Ependymoma, and only ten percent of pediatric brain tumors are that type. She was entered in a clinical trial and had 7 weeks of radiation therapy. There were no known chemotherapies that were effective for treating her type of tumor. After this treatment, Sydney was declared cancer free; however, the tumor came back a year and a half later.



She went back into surgery, and her surgeon was able to remove the second tumor. Due to the re-occurrence, she was no longer eligible for the first clinical trial. The problem was that there were no other clinical trials or protocols that were designed to treat a second tumor. Her Oncologist and Radiation Oncologist decided that the gamma knife would be the next course of action; gamma knife is high dose radiation to the area where the tumors were located.



Treating a child that is two or three years old with radiation to the brain is very risky due to long term effects on a developing brain; how do you decide if you should treat a young child with all the risks, or do nothing and risk the return of the cancer? This is whyTHON is so important to pediatric cancer research.

Sydney's older sister Katie graduated Penn State this past year. During her time at Penn State, she was actively involved as a Dancer Relations Committee Member. The Bush Family celebrates Sydney's cancer-free anniversary every April, and Katie describes THON as a huge part of their lives.

In Sydney's own words: "THON means everything to me! It gives me a sense of hope, and I'm so happy I'm able to give back through Mini-THON! For Mini-THON..., I [was] an Overall, so I'm able to impact how we raise money a lot more, FTK! I [will]... attend Penn State [Altoona] in fall 2021 and study [Human Development and Family Studies], all while participating in THON—hopefully as a captain! Later in life, I would love to become a child life specialist to give back even more.

THANK YOU

Dear THON Community,

My name is Katie Solomon, and I am the Executive Director for THON 2021. It has been nothing but an absolute privilege to serve in this role during my senior year at Penn State. After all this time, I still will never be able to properly express my gratitude for this community – in your own unique ways, you have left your mark on me, each other, our families, and the fight against childhood cancer.

Thank you all for continuing to support THON despite such complicated and unusual circumstances. Everything we have faced and accomplished this year continues to show the world that cancer cannot stop us from envisioning a world where no parent will ever have to hear the words “your child has cancer”. I hope you recognize that no matter your role in this community, you have made helped make strides in ensuring that dream someday becomes reality.

First and foremost, I want to honor all of the Four Diamonds Families who continue to so openly and thoughtfully share their stories. Your strength inspires us every single day and we cannot thank you enough for welcoming some of us strangers into your lives with open arms. We love you and are anxiously waiting to be reunited in-person again soon!

I want to recognize all of our alumni, parents, and friends that commit not only financially to our fight, but give their time and resources, too. We have leaned on your guidance in our times of need and will forever be grateful for your support: you spread our mission around the globe, provide invaluable counsel, give funds that ensure no family will ever see a medical bill, and contribute to the research that provides growing hope for a cure.

And lastly, I want to celebrate all of our student volunteers for persisting through hardship when it would have been easy to just throw in the towel. You have done what no one expected of you during a global pandemic; you ensured not just the continuation of the organization but managed to leave it better than you found it. None of this would be possible without you.

Whether this is your first or 40th THON, I am looking forward to dancing with you. It will certainly be different, but because of you, it will be one to remember.

Take in every moment and enjoy, it's the best weekend of the year!

**For The Kids®,
Katie Solomon
THON 2021 Executive Director**



