

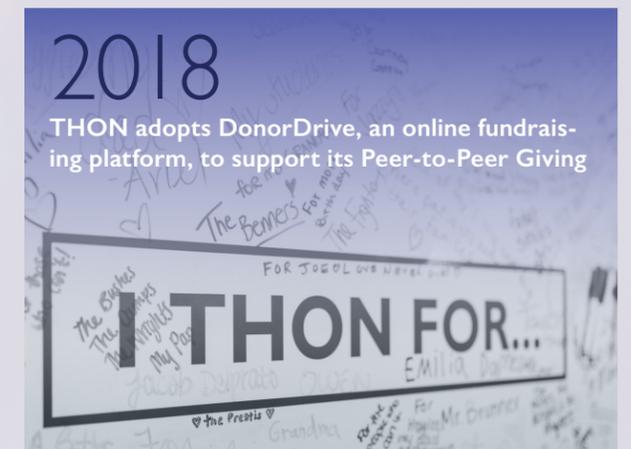
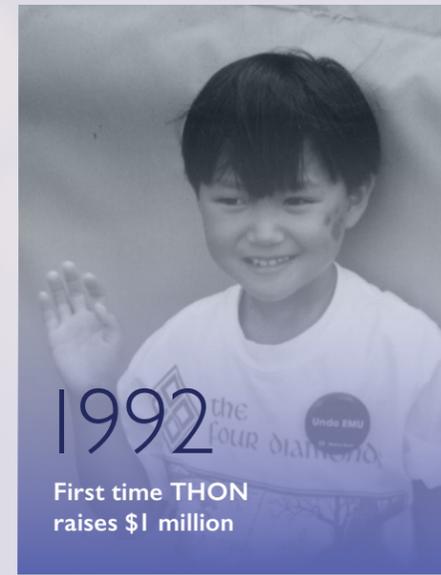


**THON™ 2020**  
**Impact Report**

# Memory Lane

Take a Look at THON Throughout the Years

A group of students seeking an opportunity to give back to their community first organized Penn State® IFC/Panhellenic Dance Marathon in 1973. 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 year-long fundraising efforts to benefit our sole beneficiary, Four Diamonds at Penn State Children's Hospital.



# Our Mission

*And a Letter from the Executive Director*

*Dear THON Supporters,*

When I think about THON, I think about the idea of family. It is not a time, event, or any geographical location; it is the feeling of being constantly surrounded by people who support one another through any journey. This family shares the collective hope of a future where no parents will ever have to hear the words “your child has cancer.” We are never far from each other at heart because THON creates a sense of family no matter where you go.

My name is Katie Solomon and I am the Executive Director for THON 2021. I am privileged to serve the community that has given me a home and family at Penn State. It is a true honor to lead this organization alongside some of the most passionate, creative, and selfless people I have ever known. This community continues to provide strength in the face of adversity and be a source of light for so many students, alumni, families, and friends.

THON comes from humble beginnings, starting in 1973 when less than 100 participants raised \$2,000. To see decades of hard work bring us to the point where we have 16,500 student volunteers raising millions for the fight against childhood cancer is a breathtaking sight. We would not be where we are today without every single member of this family. Thank you for your commitment to joining us in this journey that will not stop until the day we dance in celebration.

*Childhood is a beautiful thing, and we are fighting for it.*

For The Kids<sup>®</sup>,

Katie Solomon  
THON 2021 Executive Director

**THON is a student-run philanthropy committed to enhancing the lives of children and families impacted by childhood cancer. Our mission is to provide emotional and financial support, spread awareness, and ensure funding for critical research—all in pursuit of a cure.**

**“No matter how great the challenge, this community persists and continues to fight for the day that we dance in celebration.”**



# Crimmel Family

*Four Diamonds Family Since 2018*

Shiloh celebrated her 2nd birthday on May 15th of 2018. A few weeks later, Shiloh developed a low-grade fever that lasted 8 days. The lymph nodes in her face and neck were swollen, so our pediatrician sent us for bloodwork to check for Mono. Our pediatrician called within an hour to tell us to take Shiloh to Penn State Children's Hospital.

Once we arrived, Shiloh needed a blood transfusion because she had a third of the red blood cells she should have. Initially, the doctors thought the flu had caused all of this, but quickly realized something else just didn't seem right. Two days later, they did a bone marrow biopsy and we heard the words that no parents ever want to hear: "Your child has cancer." Shi was diagnosed with B-Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia, a type of blood

cancer. She had surgery the next day to place a port in her chest and begin chemotherapy.

When our world was falling apart around us, Four Diamonds brought us hope. Our social worker came to our room, introduced herself, and explained Four Diamonds. It felt as if a weight was lifted off our shoulders during the scariest moment of our lives. Thanks to Four Diamonds, we could focus on what was important: taking care of our two-year-old.

We never imagined having a support system as large and strong as the one we have thanks to Four Diamonds and THON. The girls have fallen in love with Penn State, and the THON Volunteers have become some of their favorite

friends! Our relationship with the Lionettes Dance Team, our paired organization, cannot be explained in words. The girls adore them, and they have been there for us every step of the way. There are no words to explain how much Four Diamonds and THON have made our journey so much brighter. We are so thankful for the research that Four Diamonds and THON help support. Because of this research, Shiloh was able to cut multiple doses of chemotherapy thanks to a study that had recently been completed!

After 2 years of chemotherapy, spinal taps, and clinic appointments at least every month, Shiloh, now 4 years old, took her last dose of chemotherapy on August 21, 2020. We look forward to ringing the end of treatment bell this fall!



THON Weekend, 2020



Shiloh's first THON, 2019

# Jenna Dettorre

*Family Relations Chair, Lionettes Dance Team*

When I first attended orientation at Penn State, the section about THON is what stuck with me the most. I knew it was something I had to be involved with. After my freshman year, I became the Family Relations Chair for the Lionettes Dance Team. At the time, we were paired with the Ashley Fazekas Family, who we have been paired with 14 years! We love and adore the Fazekas' and wanted to expand our love by having two THON families instead of just one.

I will never forget the day that my Family Relations Liaison asked if I could meet her to talk about a few things. At first, I was nervous. I thought I was in trouble, but quickly I realized that this meeting could be the news of a new family! The chances were small, but I still had hope. When I sat down for the meeting, I

learned that we had been paired with a new family! I immediately started crying tears of joy, I was SO excited! "The Shiloh Crimmel Family," I repeated over and over in my head all day, I couldn't believe it. When I told the team, we all cried when I explained Shiloh's diagnosis and then cried more looking at pictures of our new little sisters. We were all in shock.

Fast forward to present time, and the Crimmel's could not be a more perfect fit for our team and the Fazekas Family! This will be my third and final year as Family Relations Chair for the Lionettes. Although sad, I feel so blessed to have been able to facilitate and witness this relationship between not only the Crimmel family and our team, but the Fazekas as well, to create one big family.

The Crimmel's have shown my teammates and I undeniable strength, bravery, love, compassion, and laughter; even in the darkest times. Shiloh is truly a warrior who never let cancer phase her. Our warrior! She took her medicine like a champ and on hard days, would call myself or The Nittany Lion, her best friend, for support and encouragement. Our time with them is so special to us, and I can't believe my time with THON, as a student, is ending. The Crimmel's and Fazekas will have a special place in my heart for the rest of my life, and I am confident that our bond will only grow stronger, no matter the distance. I am forever grateful for the relationships I have with both families. For The Kids®, always!



Harvest Day, 2019



**"Shiloh is truly a warrior who never let cancer phase her. Our warrior!"**

# Local Research. Global Impact.™

*Giving Hope to Kids Everywhere*



At the core of THON's mission is the provision of funding for life-saving pediatric cancer research, taking our fight beyond central Pennsylvania and spreading hope around the world. In the last decade, THON has contributed more

than \$100 million to Four Diamonds at Penn State Children's Hospital to fund ground-breaking clinical trials and experiments, ensuring the highest quality of care for all Four Diamonds children without the financial burden.

Each year, we are proud to say that the majority of THON's contribution to Four Diamonds is allocated for research at the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and Penn State College of Medicine. Our emphasis on pushing the envelope in the global fight against childhood cancer has helped Penn State Children's Hospital to remain ranked among the top 50 children's hospitals in the nation for the past 10 consecutive years, according to *U.S. News and World Report*.

Four Diamonds' team of more than 90

doctors and scientists at Penn State College of Medicine conduct the full spectrum of cancer research. This exploration begins with learning more about how cancer forms and what can be done to either destroy or reprogram cancer cells. Having a better understanding of how cancer works will help to develop new, more effective treatments, which are tested through conducting Phase I, II, and III clinical trials.

Clinical trials lay the groundwork for the global fight against childhood cancer. Collaboration between Penn State researchers and the multitude of others working in this effort would not be possible without your dedication to our mission. No matter the form of a contribution to THON, you are making a difference, For The Kids® everywhere.



By continuing to expand the depth and breadth of research, the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and Penn State College of Medicine will benefit kids around the world. Every day, Four Diamonds researchers generate new knowledge to better prevent, diagnose, treat, and cure childhood cancer in order to save the lives of kids in our community and around the world.



*Four Diamonds is a member of five national and international research consortia, which connect doctors and scientists to combine their efforts and find more effective treatments.*

**With THON's support, Four Diamonds' scientists and doctors are able to advance their work to:**



**Offer Treatment & Hope**  
to patients whose disease is not responding to therapy. Ensuring patients are supported physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.



**Foster Collaboration**  
with doctors and scientists around the world. Unity is essential as the fight against childhood cancer extends beyond Pennsylvania and around the globe.



**Conduct Clinical Trials**  
that innovate and develop new treatments and drugs, advancing our efforts against childhood cancer.



**Train Researchers**  
to ensure doctors and scientists are prepared to continue the global fight for the next generation.



*Four Diamonds funds a team of more than 90 scientists and research professionals who are actively working towards a cure.*

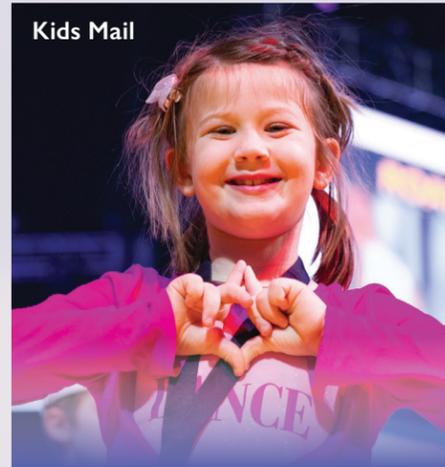


*From 2012 through 2021, Penn State Children's Hospital has been recognized by U.S. News and World Report as one of the leading pediatric cancer centers in the United States.*

# THON Weekend

## So Every Cub Can Grow Up to Be a Nittany Lion

Every February, our year-long efforts culminate in a 46-hour no sitting, no sleeping dance marathon. Over 16,500 student volunteers and supporters fill the Bryce Jordan Center to give children and families the opportunity to forget about their cancer diagnosis for the weekend.



Kids Mail



Dancers Stand



Final Four



Pep Rally



Bryce Jordan Center



Stage Acts



Kids Talent Show and Fashion Show



The Line Dance

# Pritha Sandell

## Entertainment Captain, THON 2020

### Why did you first get involved in THON at Penn State?

I first came to visit Penn State in October of my Junior Year of High School. The very first thing I heard when I came to campus was THON. The pictures said it all—they showed thousands of students coming together in the Bryce Jordan Center to support families impacted by childhood cancer. I knew immediately that I wanted to be a part of it. Growing



up, I lost both of my grandfathers to cancer, so I knew I wanted to get the chance to give back. No family should ever have to have a loved one diagnosed with cancer, and no child should ever have to experience it.

### How has THON shaped you into the leader you are today?

THON has shaped me into the leader I am today by giving me the confidence to pursue my dreams. When I came to Penn State, I was incredibly nervous about coming to such a large school where I knew no one. Looking back, I barely knew myself! Through being inspired by the THON Community, I have been shaped into the person I am today. I learned how to be hard-working, kind, and uplift the people around me. I learned that positivity is key no matter the situation and if you dedicate yourself to something, you can persevere. THON impacted me most when I was awarded the Tally Sepot Memorial Award

in THON 2019, which is a recognition given to a student who continuously gives themselves to others while exemplifying spirit and enthusiasm for THON and Penn State. This humbled me incredibly and showed me how being kind in the little moment in life can make a great impact on someone.

### What professional skills have you learned as a THON volunteer and how will these affect your future career?

Some professional skills I have learned as a THON volunteer include relationship building and time management. Being 16,500 student volunteers strong, it can take a lot of communication to plan and execute a task. THON has taught me the value of working with others and how being genuine is key when building professional relationships. Additionally, I have learned the importance of time management. As a student volunteer we were always told that we are a student first; therefore, academics are a priority. I had to learn how to effectively manage my time so I could do well in school and do work for THON effectively. With THON meetings & events alongside classwork, it was critical to be successful in time management.

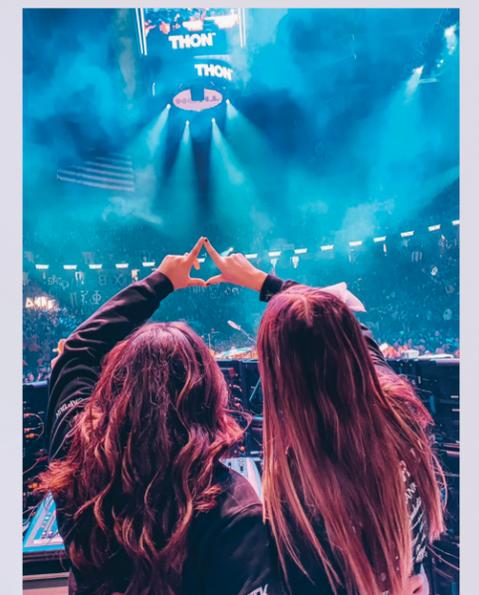
### What is your favorite THON memory?

My first year as a Captain in 2019, our Captain Committee theme was “Share Your Light.” This signified that we all have a beautiful light inside of us, and by igniting the passion in others, it would not dim our own. To this day, I hold that saying deeply in my heart and always try to uplift and “spark” the others around me. Keeping these words with me, during THON 2020 I was in the DJ booth during Final Four. As Go Go Gadget played “Use Somebody,” I saw the stands fill with

people lighting their phone flashlights. In that moment, I teared up as I saw the visual embodiment of “Share Your Light.” How Penn State continuously uplifts each other and has created a community that consistently cares.

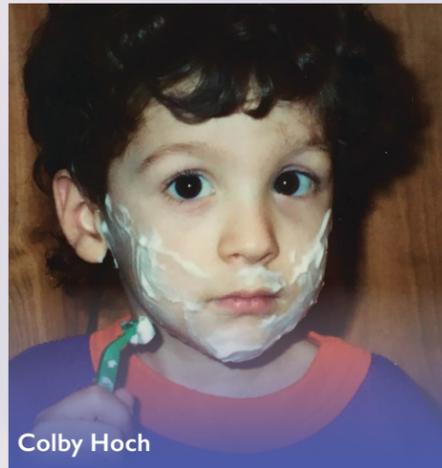
### If you had to describe THON in one word, what would that be?

Resilient—From the kids to the volunteers and all the families. THON has shown to be everchanging and resilient. I can think of little things like not having enough baby powder for Slides of Strength a week before THON 2019 where Alumni and Students immediately rallied and donated money so that Dancers would have the opportunity to slide on a giant mat. To larger changes such as the shift to Donor Drive where organization quickly adapted to learning how to use it and students being able to share THON’s mission further than we ever imagined. THON never ceases to amaze me. One day, we will dance in celebration. But, until then, THON will continue to be resilient just like the kids we support.



# Hoch Family

Four Diamond's Family Since 1994

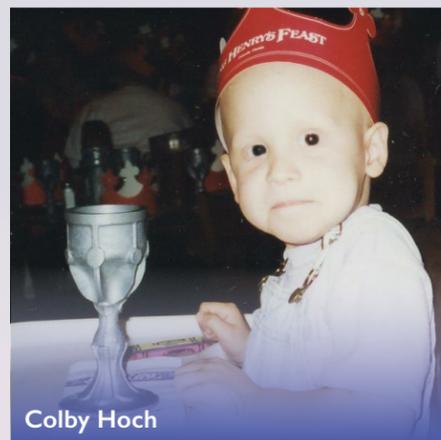


Colby Hoch

Colby was diagnosed with Stage IV Neuroblastoma in 1994 when he was 2 years 8 months old. It was a long 2 years of surgeries, chemo, radiation, and a bone marrow transplant. The hospital was home for us as we were there more than home. His little body and spirit went through a lot, but he didn't complain. No matter what he went through, he always enjoyed and loved the people who took care of him. Whether it was his doctors, nurses, nurse assistants, x-ray techs, child life workers, or our social worker, Greg. They all became our family. Before Colby relapsed, there was a 6-month period where he was able to play without worry, and just be a kid. He went to preschool and made new friends. When I asked him what he would do if his cancer came back, he said, "Make new friends!"

When we found out he had relapsed, he had less than a week and a half to live. He relapsed immediately after THON in 1997. That was the only THON he made it to. He was 5 years old when he passed away. Colby was a wise, old soul. His life was short, but it was large! When they confirmed Colby's relapse, we had

to drive to Hershey for transfusions. I asked him if he knew what was going on. He said no, and I told him that his cancer was back. He just looked at me. I asked, "Are you scared?" He said, "If I die, how will I be able to talk to you?" I said, "Well, if I die first, send me a balloon and I'll come see you in my dreams. But if you die first, I'll send them to you, and you can visit me in my dreams." He said okay with a quick nod while biting his lip. I asked him what color balloon he wanted, and he said green. I said, "Why green?" He said, "The glow in the dark green so I can see it at night!" I said, "I don't know if I can find those. Pick another color just in case." He said, "Okay, red." That was all he needed to hear and slept the 90-minute ride to Hershey.



Colby Hoch

Colby was a wise, old soul. One thing that helped me begin to heal was realizing his soul knew he would only be here for a short time, and he had work to do. He spoke fluently and with complete understanding at 18 months. He was special. Sometime after he passed, I realized that his soul picked mine to be his mom out of all the other moms, and he showed me how to have grace under

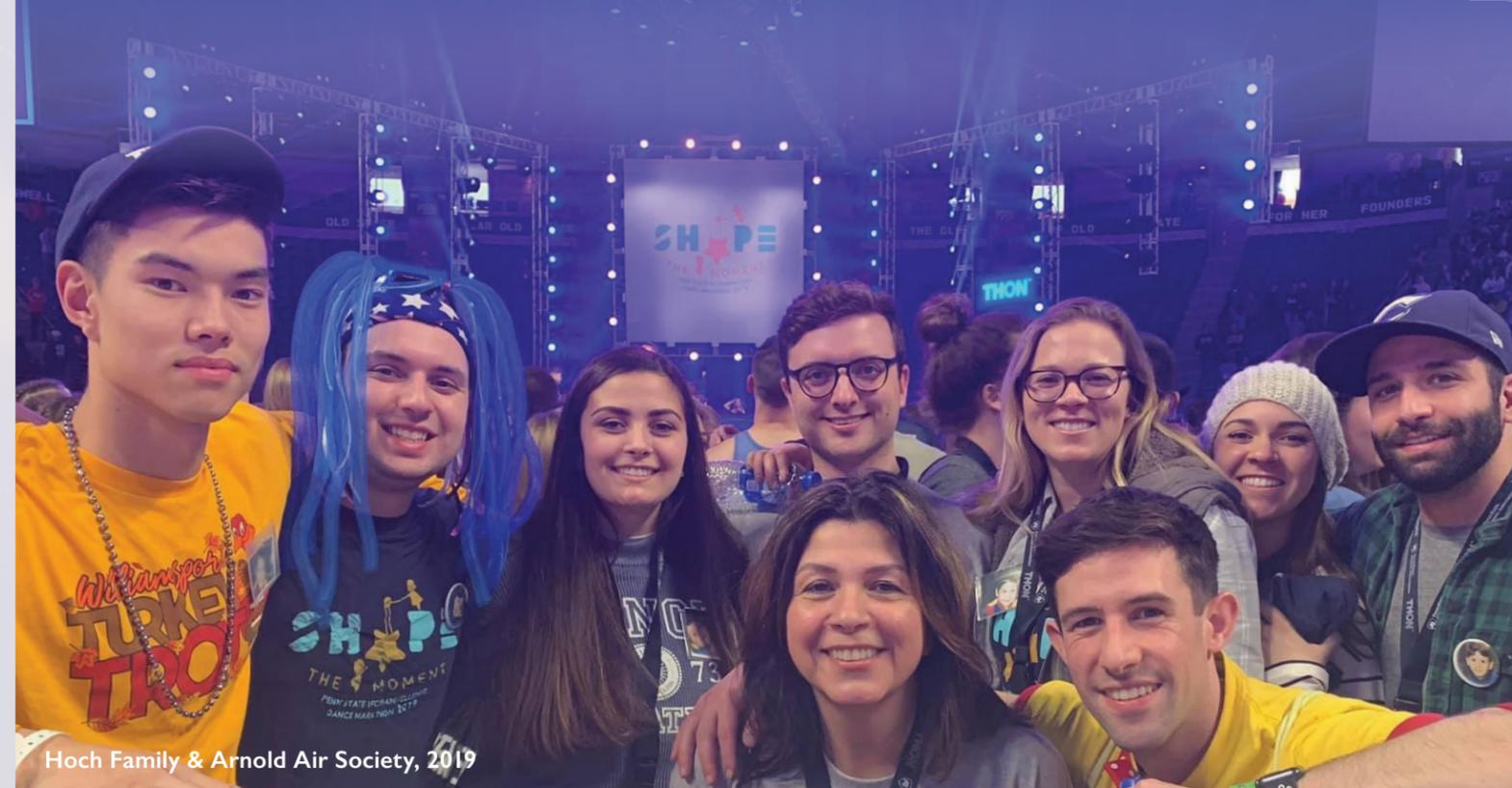
fire. He died in my arms. I held him for an hour. I didn't want to let him go. Finally, when I got up and we put him in the bed, he had the most beautiful smile from ear to ear. He passed peacefully and I was so blessed and honored to bring him into the world and hand him back.

Our love story with the Arnold Air Force Society (AAS) began in 1994 when we were paired following diagnosis. They have not only been our organization, but part of our family ever since. Over the last 26 years, we have met and become close to so many wonderful souls in the Arnold Air Society. I can humbly say that our relationship and bond could be the role model for what a family-organization pairing is all about. It's not just the fundraising or the money raised. It's the loving bonds that are formed and kept for years. That's what it's all about deep down inside.



Fundraising Weekend at the Hoch Household, 2018

Fundraising trips and visits are like holidays at our home. Our girls grew up with our Arnies and THON. Our Arnies kept in touch and made sure that we knew they were our family, and not just "their" THON family. There's a big difference. Over the years we have become increasingly closer to the group, members ever changing... and yet still the same. At one point, I gave them a chance



Hoch Family & Arnold Air Society, 2019

## Arnold Air Society

"We have a long history with the Hoch Family, over 26 years now! Each new candidate class that enters our society are taught the importance of our THON pairing with the Hoch's and why we dance for Colby. We are so grateful to be paired up with the Hoch's and are honored to help Colby's legacy live on. Traditions such as Hershey Park trips, dinners, fundraising weekends, THON weekend brunches, Air Force ROTC balls, and releasing red balloons to Colby on THON Weekend are all events that keep us close with the Hoch's and allowed our relationship to stay strong after all these years."

Grace Kimzey  
Family Relations Chair, Arnold Air Society

to apply for another family, so they could have a live child. They said no! Almost daily contact, as they check in with me. Visits to our home have always been filled with a lot of home cooked food, games, dancing and love...lots and lots of love! Wonderful memories are made every time.

We live in Zionsville, 3 hours from Penn State. For years, we met halfway in Hershey to visit with our Arnies. We would meet for lunch or dinner, and do the Christmas Lights and rides in Hershey Park. I have had the honor of

attending their Air Force Balls, as well as them Commissioning to become Officers of the United States Air Force. We have attended one of their weddings, and I was asked to be at the finish line of the Boston Marathon to greet a past Arnie as she crossed over the line. There isn't a birthday or holiday that my phone isn't filled with love from my Arnies.

You can't imagine how full my heart is from the genuinely amazing love we all share. I had no idea how many amazing souls would enter our lives when we lost Colby. He left us in good hands. Although

the loss is profound and life changing, we became the survivors. But our hearts grew with more family and love year after year. To have the chance to influence their lives as their THON Mom is a truly amazing gift.



Commissioning Ceremony, 2019

# THON by the Numbers

## COMMUNICATIONS | COMM

COMM works to support about **250+** student organizations in their THON fundraising efforts throughout the year!

21 Captains | 105 Committee Members

## FINANCE | FIN

About **1,200** hours are spent by FIN processing all personal gifts to THON.

22 Captains | 75 Committee Members

## SUPPLY LOGISTICS | SL

SL lowered THON's internal costs by just over **\$132,000**, maximizing our contribution to our sole beneficiary, Four Diamonds at Penn State Children's Hospital.

17 Captains without Committees

## TECHNOLOGY | TECH

TECH manages over **625,000** lines of code across **18** actively managed repositories.

24 Captains without Committees

## DANCER RELATIONS | DR

DR collected and distributed roughly **15,000** letters and **2,800** packages to dancers during THON Weekend 2020.

24 Captains | 552 Committee Members

## EVENT SAFETY | ES

Cost of staffing security for THON Weekend alone is almost **\$300,000**, and R&R serves to ensure that cost is never seen.

20 Captains | 400 Committee Members

## FUNDRAISING SAFETY | FS

During THON 2020, FS approves **1,905** alternative fundraisers and **1,862** donation boxes.

19 Captains | 350 Committee Members

## SPECIAL EVENTS | SE

Over **3,000** participants collectively ran or walked over **57K** miles through the Virtual 5K initiative this year.

16 Captains | 90 Committee Members

## HOSPITALITY | HOS

HOS served over **3,000** sandwiches during THON weekend last year!

20 Captains | 230 Committee Members

## MERCHANDISE | MERCH

The MERCH Committee manages the orders, processing, and distribution of over **20,000** shirts to volunteers and supporters each year.

20 Captains | 46 Committee Members

## PUBLIC RELATIONS | PR

THON has over **88,000** followers on Facebook, spanning across **50+** countries around the world.

26 Captains | 90 Committee Members

## OPERATIONS | OPP

OPP's 2020 TREE Initiative recycled over **76,065** aluminum cans For The Planet!

21 Captains | 500 Committee Members

## FAMILY RELATIONS | FR

FR 2021 sent **43** packages with craft supplies, THON Merchandise, notes from volunteers, and Halloween treats to **120** family members to enjoy during our Virtual Harvest Day event!

22 Captains without Committees

## DEVELOPMENT | DEV

DEV sends out more than **1,000,000** direct mail campaigns each year!

17 Captains | 85 Committee Members

## ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT | AE

THON has over **25,000** alumni supporters each year!

16 Captains | 75 Committee Members

## ENTERTAINMENT | ENT

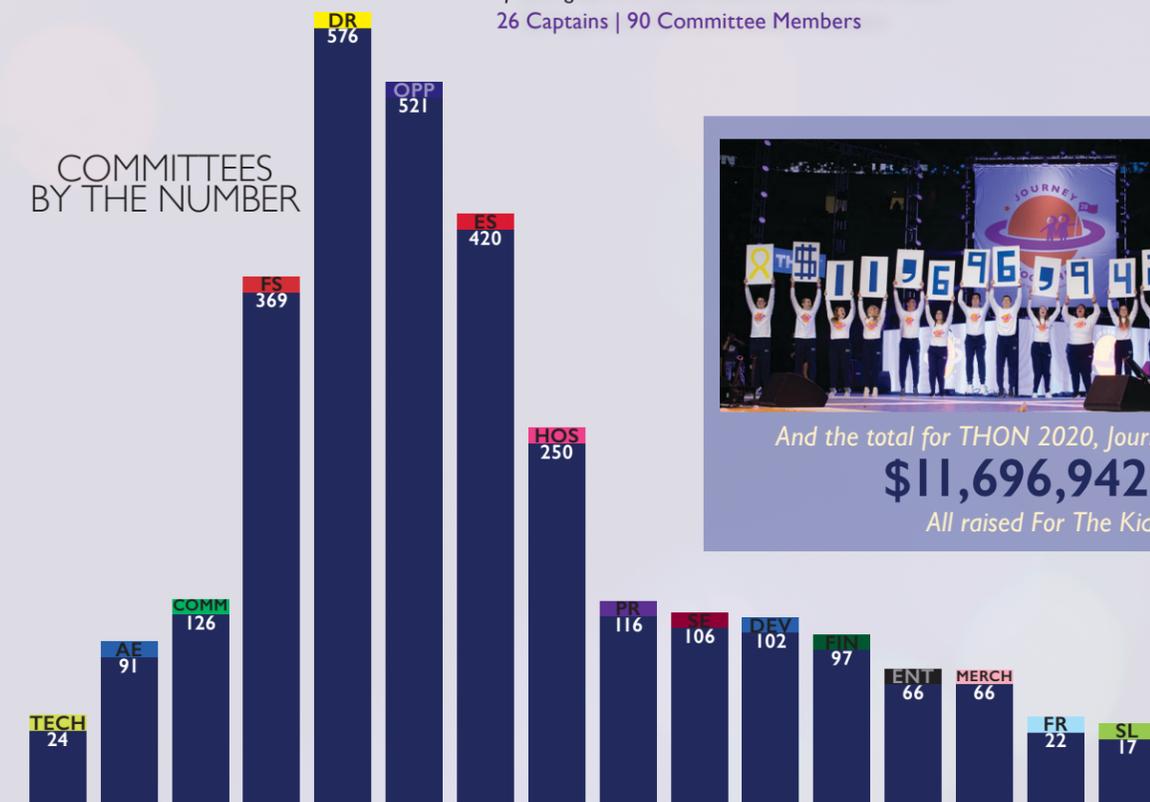
ENT facilitated and coordinated over **65** acts and band performances for THON Weekend 2020, providing exciting engagement opportunities for our dancers, families, and spectators.

22 Captains | 44 Committee Members

**“Chris said that...if he died, he'd come back as a wizard and make people well. You're doing that.”**

**Charles Millard**  
Co-Founder, Four Diamonds

COMMITTEES BY THE NUMBER



And the total for THON 2020, Journey Together, is...

**\$11,696,942.38**

All raised For The Kids®

**THON**™



Cancer