

IMPACT REPORT

THON™
2021

Featuring Melaina of the
Mina Horan Family



Our Mission

Dear THON Supporters,

2020 was a year of trials and hardships, setbacks and disappointments. But for THON 2021, it was also a year of incredible growth, unparalleled support, and unprecedented learning. During THON 2021, we learned that THON is not merely a place or a building, but that it is more than that—THON is home. We learned that the THON Community is resilient, selfless, and more passionate than we had ever dreamed. We learned that the depth of our love for our families and for each other knows no bounds. During THON 2021, we learned again that cancer doesn't stop, so neither can we.

My name is Kate Colgan and I am the Executive Director for THON 2022. I have the privilege of serving this community that has given me my home here at Penn State. THON is one of the most amazing things I have ever experienced. The outpouring of love from Penn State Students to Four Diamonds families across Pennsylvania is unparalleled. I am so lucky to have the honor of working alongside thousands of the most passionate, creative, caring, and truly incredible individuals in the fight against childhood cancer.

THON comes from humble beginnings, starting in 1973 when less than 100 participants raised \$2,000. In its 50th year of hard work, THON has amassed 16,500 student volunteers, raising millions of dollars yearly for the fight against childhood cancer - an astonishing sight. We would not be where we are today without every single member of the THON Community. Thank you for your commitment to joining us in pursuit of a day where no parent has to hear the words "your child has cancer."

One day we will dance in celebration, until then we dance for a cure.

For The Kids,[®]

Kate Colgan
THON 2022 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.



“The THON Community has proven time and again that no challenge is too great and that no obstacle will stand in the way of our pursuit of a future without childhood cancer.”

THON 2021

THON 2021 was a challenging year filled with necessary adaptations and substitutions. While the year came hardships, it also gave us the opportunity to create new and innovative ways to engage audiences and families. We look forward to using the lessons of last year in our continuous effort to better support families impacted by childhood cancer.

46

*hour no sitting, no sleeping
dance marathon*

16,500

*student volunteers dedicated to giving
kids the opportunity to be kids*

COVID Safe Events

Alyssa Bielinski, Special Events Director

The Special Events Committee was challenged to find new ways to provide our families and community with unforgettable moments leading up to and following THON Weekend. We implemented hybrid events, such as the THON 5K powered by PNC, 100 Days 'Til THON, and the THON Showcase, and completely virtual events, including Family Carnival, the Closer to a Cure Celebration, and all athletic events. Throughout every challenge we have gained a greater ability to connect with supporters across the world, instilling THON's mission into the hearts of thousands.

Family Engagement

Caroline Camp, Family Relations Director

The Family Relations Committee adapted to the COVID-19 Pandemic by bringing our signature events and programming for families to the safety of their own homes. We kicked off the year by hosting a virtual Harvest Day, complete with pre-sent packages containing crafts, snacks, and games that were utilized throughout the event. Families enjoyed interacting with volunteers on Zoom during Teen Nights, the first ever THON Family Fun Night, events with Penn State Athletes, and more. We stayed connected to the families during the THON Weekend Livestream through a virtual Family Lounge, countless Zoom events just for families, and THON Weekend packages that contained fun, interactive items corresponding to the livestream so families could follow along at home!

Engaging a Global Audience

Caleb Klemick, Entertainment Director

The Entertainment Committee adapted last year by transforming all of THON's event programming to a livestream format. We worked with every committee to help them translate their event visions into something that could be successfully produced through virtual means while still being as engaging and exciting as possible for every attendee. We worked throughout the year to support committees in the production of pre-recorded videos and small-scale in-person games/activities to fill the timeline for each event. THON Weekend especially wouldn't have been possible without our close partnership with 46Live, who helped us produce the most interactive THON Weekend livestream ever, something that will become a staple of our events moving forward.

Dancing From Home

Caroline O'Rorke, Dancer Relations Director

Leading up to THON Weekend, Dancer Relations (DR) Committee Members (DRCMs) and dancers utilized FaceTime and Zoom calls to get to know each other. Our Color Wars Kickoff event is the first time dancers meet their DRCMs and was held over Zoom, giving them a chance to bond by competing in games in breakout rooms. In order to limit in-person interactions during THON Weekend, DR had multiple shifts over Zoom for dancers to stretch or play games with DR Captains and CMs to keep them entertained, and also created the Dancer Website which provided health/safety resources and entertainment for any dancer to utilize throughout the weekend. DRCMs were also able to have short in-person visits to drop off food, activity boxes, and mail to their dancers.

Dancer Snack Boxes

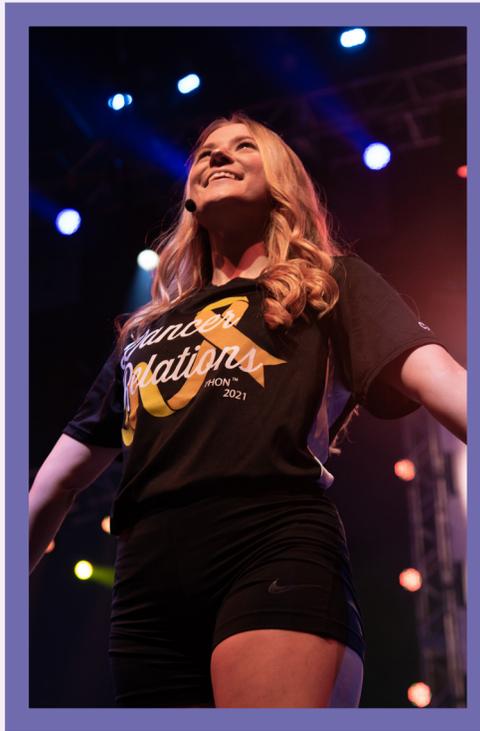
Nate Paisley, Hospitality Director

The Hospitality Committee continued to fuel the fight against childhood cancer by delivering snack boxes to dancers. These snack boxes included fresh fruit, granola bars, Gatorade, coupons to local businesses, and much more. In a time where it seemed impossible to carry out the mission of the Hospitality Committee, we were able to continue to serve our dancers and engage our donors.

A Lifelong Connection

Atlas, Student Organization

One of our kids, Samir, never wanted to leave the Zoom call - he was up with us until 7:00 AM. Even when everyone told him to get some sleep so he could be awake for the Final Four hours, he still didn't want to go. He was put in a breakout room by himself with his camera off so he could sleep without leaving the Zoom. He was the biggest support and hype-man. The dancers and organization members got so much energy from him which we needed!



TIMELINE FROM 2021

- **August** - Executive Committee announces that THON 2021 will be held virtually.
- **October** - First ever Virtual THON 5K is held, featuring an app where runners could receive pledges for each mile logged.
- **November** - Dream Forward Campaign raises \$690,013.
- **November** - Students watched the reveal of the THON 2021 logo at the 100 Days 'Til THON Celebration.
- **December** - During virtual Family Carnival, organizations and committees were provided with a toolkit consisting of games and activities to supplement their virtual interactions with families.
- **January** - THON Showcase was held virtually, with videos of various acts livestreamed for the entire community to tune into.
- **February** - THON Weekend
 - i. Entertainment transformed all of THON's programming to a livestream format, creating the most engaging THON Weekend Livestream ever.
 - ii. Family Relations sent THON Weekend Packages containing interactive items to engage families alongside the Livestream.
 - iii. Dancer Relations interacted with dancers over Zoom and through short in-person visits to deliver food and gifts. The committee created a new Dancer Website, which provided dancers with entertainment and health / safety resources throughout THON Weekend.

The Aly Palacio Family

And their paired organization, Penn State Dance Alliance



Alyanna (Aly) Palacio is a positive, happy, and incredibly strong six year old. At only five years old, Aly was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL). Aly and her family joined our THON Community during the COVID-19 Pandemic, but that did not stop them from forming some truly impactful connections! Paired with Penn State Dance Alliance (PSDA) through the Adopt-a-Family Program, Aly has inspired and motivated us all through her strength and resilience. Read more about the special connection between PSDA and Aly's family below!

“What I look forward to is in-person THON since we came in during COVID. Also, just being able to stay connected with PSDA even when Aly is done with treatment. Aly loves those girls so much.”

-The Aly Palacio Family

Caroline Maloney: PSDA Family Relations Chair

Can you tell us about your relationship with the Aly Palacio family?

PSDA was paired with the Aly Palacio family in January 2020, and she is one of three families that PSDA is currently paired with. We have gotten the chance to meet her mom, Nikosha and her older sister Cara, who is nine years old. We have also been introduced to her two friendly guinea pigs, Cookie and Oreo. Aly likes to keep us playing games and staying active and she brings so much fun and laughter to the whole team.

How did PSDA support Aly and her family through COVID-19?

PSDA supported the Aly Palacios family through COVID-19 by finding ways to still interact with one another. We did our first Zoom call with Aly shortly after we were paired with her. We got to play Pictionary and 'guess the animal game.' I also got to text with Nikosha, Aly's mom, a lot to check in on her and see how everyone was doing. Ultimately, we still got to see Aly when we went to her house and met her for the first time and then her family came up to Penn State to see us. Being able to see each other in person while still being safe was so important and special to us and we are so grateful that we were able to see them!

What is your favorite memory with Aly and her family?

Our favorite memory with Aly and her family is when they came up to visit Penn State for the first time this past spring. When we were paired with Aly in January, we learned that her family had never been up to Penn State before. Luckily, we were able to coordinate a day where Aly, Nikosha, and her grandmother were all able to come up and see Penn State and meet some of the girls on the team! We went to SNAP Pizza downtown, Old Main Lawn to play duck-duck-goose, freeze tag, and saw some of the campus. We took pictures at the Lion Shrine and visited the Creamery for some delicious ice cream. This day was so special to all of us and we can't wait for Aly to come back with her family!

What has the Aly Palacio family taught you?

Aly is one the sweetest and happiest kids you will ever meet. Every time we have had a Zoom call or been able to meet in person, she greets us with a smile and such positive energy that fills up a room. We learn through her eyes how exciting and enjoyable life can really be, and she has made the most out of every situation she has come across. Although this past year was more challenging to communicate with our families, she was paired with us at such a perfect time and we could not be more grateful to have met such a loving family. We are so excited to continue to get to know her this upcoming year and learn from her enthusiasm and experiences. Kids like Aly remind us the real reason why we THON and how important it is to keep dancing and raising money For The Kids.®





SO EVERY
CUB
CAN GROW
UP TO BE A
NITTANY
LION

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Focus

Interview with Ashley Nguyen, Education-Outreach Coordinator for THON 2021

While many events took a pause during the pandemic, racial tensions escalated across the United States. We saw people take to the streets and protest unjust treatment, corrupt structures, and failing systems. As a community, we took this time to reflect on the structure of our organization and address our shortcomings. THON's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals were born out of these conversations.

Why did you help start the DEI initiatives in THON 2021?

Penn State has a diverse campus where our differences should be celebrated. As a student organization, THON should be a reflection of our campus community. Alongside the THON 2021 Executive Committee and Communications Committee, I helped create new DEI initiatives. Our goal with these initiatives are to make the THON community a diverse, equitable, and inclusive place. We want a community where every Penn State student, regardless of their background, can feel welcomed and valued. Our different perspectives can help open up the minds of our fellow peers and inspire us to be the best volunteers we can be. We hope that one day, every student can find a home and make an impact within the THON Community.

What step(s) did THON take towards its DEI goals that you think are most important?

Transparency, transparency, transparency. One of the first DEI initiatives in the summer of 2020 was to develop a THON Action Plan. The THON Action Plan is a living document that outlines THON's efforts in increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion. It highlights problem areas within the THON Community that need to be addressed. For each of these problem areas, there are a few actions geared towards remedying the problem. An important aspect of the Action Plan is that it is a living document, meaning it can be updated at any time. We had to recognize that DEI initiatives and goals will change over time, so it's necessary that our plan reflects that flexibility.

This document is one of THON's first steps in transparency with our DEI efforts. Transparency is important because it allows the THON Community to be aware of our DEI efforts and engage with them. The I in DEI stands for inclusion, and many people will be involved in THON's mission to build a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization.

How do you think DEI education is changing the THON Community?

DEI education is changing our THON Community for the better. It's teaching us about cultural awareness, our implicit biases, how to foster an inclusive environment, and so much more. At the end of the day, DEI education can teach us how to be better volunteers and people. Through this education, we can build a community of advocates against injustices and discrimination.



Our Global Impact



THON's mission is to not only provide emotional and financial support to kids and families, but also to conduct pediatric cancer research with the goal of providing better care to kids around the world. Penn State THON has contributed more than **\$190 million** to our sole beneficiary, Four Diamonds and partner in the fight, Penn State Health Children's Hospital.

Penn State Health Children's Hospital is a member of five national and international research consortia, which allows them to conduct and participate in large trials and work with numerous patients. These groups connect doctors and scientists, allowing them to share knowledge and collaborate to create new treatment methods. This knowledge impacts hundreds of other hospitals and patients around the country and the world.

Four Diamonds funds a team of more than **90 scientists and researchers** who are actively studying pediatric cancer treatments. Without the support of Four Diamonds and THON, Penn State Health Children's Hospital would not be able to provide world-class support and hope to patients around the world.



THON Legacy

The Cinker Family

During THON Weekend 1991, a Penn State Cheerleader named Dawn volunteered to help the dancers stretch. At four in the morning on Sunday, a mutual friend introduced her to Mike Cinker, a dancer from Sigma Pi. Who would have guessed that this chance meeting could lead to a multi-generational THON Legacy?

Today, Mike and Dawn have two children: Ben (PSU '21) and Will (PSU '24). The Cinker family raised their kids to love Penn State and THON, making trips to campus for football games and THON Weekend as the boys were growing up. Ben and Will took on leadership positions at an early age by orchestrating their high school's Mini-THON. The brothers cited THON as a major reason for choosing to study at Penn State.

Once arriving at college, Ben involved himself more than ever before, working first as a Finance Committee Member and then progressing to become a Finance Captain. During his senior year, he served as the Alumni Relations Chair for his THON Organization, where he loved getting to interact with families on a smaller and more personal scale. This close connection is something he wishes his parents could have experienced.



“My business fraternity, Delta Sigma Pi, is paired with three amazing families: the Bushes, the Camps, and the Wrights. The bond that I, alongside the rest of our organization, have with our families is incredible, and it is very special to know our families on such a personal level. Being able to interact with families on a regular basis and participate in activities throughout the year really hits home, because moments like these are the reason why we THON.”

However, it was dancing in THON 2021 that made the whole experience the most memorable for Ben, who was grateful to have continued the tradition that his father began thirty years before.

“My favorite THON memory has to be the Final Four of THON 2021. Standing with my arms wrapped around my fellow DSP dancers, this period of time allowed me to reflect on the four years I volunteered with THON, and everything came full circle. Dancing was something I always wanted to do, but I never could have imagined the impact the journey to this moment could have had on my life. From the resilient families I met, to the amazing friends I made, and the countless memories that will stay with me forever, that moment made me realize how grateful I am to have been a part of THON.”

Ben knows that his involvement with THON will not end with his college career, and he looks forward to seeing how the Cinker family legacy will continue with Will.

“I hope to see Will experience THON in a way that is unique to his college years. As a freshman OPPerations Committee Member throughout the virtual year of THON 2021, I saw Will have such a passion for getting involved in THON and maintaining an optimistic attitude throughout it all. I hope he takes THON as an opportunity to get to know and support many amazing families and make connections with plenty of other THON Volunteers.”

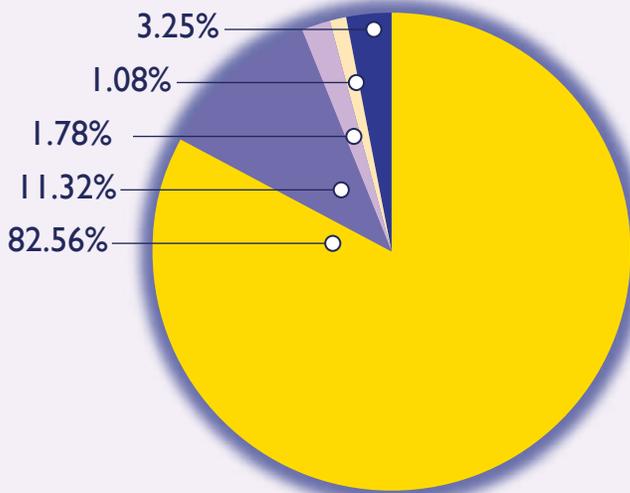
THON™ 2021

Summary of Fundraising Activities

TOTAL: \$11,588,237.07

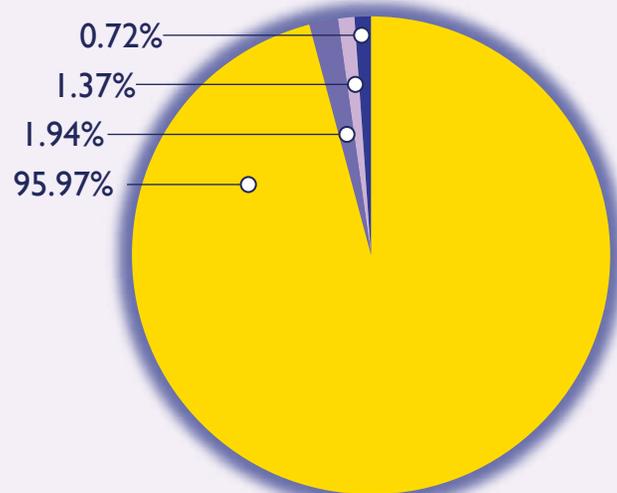
The following information is an official Summary of Fundraising Activities for the THON 2021 fiscal year, beginning July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021.

Sources of Funds



- 
Gifts from Individuals
Canvassing solicitation, Lion Line, online donations, and personal checks
\$9,567,749.26
- 
Corporate Donations
Gifts from a corporation, foundation or small business; matching gifts
\$1,312,290.01
- 
Fundraising Events
Alternative fundraisers, hospitality promotions, THON 5K, and THON Raffle
\$206,735.18
- 
THON Store
Profits from the sale of official THON merchandise
\$125,148.93
- 
Miscellaneous
Operating budget and miscellaneous holdbacks
\$376,313.69

Uses of Funds



- 
Four Diamonds
Total contributions made towards Four Diamonds
\$11,120,779.60
- 
Development
Direct mailing campaigns, donor stewardship initiatives, printed THON informational material, credit card fees
\$224,577.11
- 
Event Management
Pre-THON events, THON Weekend
\$158,985.64
- 
Operations & Administration
Office equipment, postage, space usage, other general administrative expenses
\$83,894.72

In the 2021 fundraising season, THON raised
\$11,588,237.07



96¢ of every \$1
 donated directly benefits
 Four Diamonds



In the 2021 fundraising season, THON spent just
4¢ to raise every dollar



“The **selflessness & determination** of each student ensures that our family is well taken care of and loved as we face one of the greatest challenges of our lives.”

-The Abigail Regalado Family

THON™

