

Penn State Public Broadcasting documentary captures the story of THON

Thursday, August 16, 2012

Each February, thousands of Penn State students take part in the IFC/Panhellenic Dance Marathon, better known as THON, to help combat pediatric cancer. Many people know that students collect money and dance for 46 hours. But few realize how much year-round planning goes into this no-sitting, no-sleeping phenomenon.

For the first time ever, audiences will get a behind-the-scenes look at the largest student-run philanthropy in the world benefitting the Four Diamonds Fund when Penn State Public Broadcasting presents the documentary "Why We Dance: The Story of THON" at 8 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 27, on WPSU-TV.

A sneak peek can be seen at <http://live.psu.edu/youtube/hsxrWfkX4kw> [1] online.

That same night, the documentary will air across Pennsylvania on the following public television stations:

- WVIA-TV in Wilkes-Barre/ Scranton at 8 p.m.
- WQED-TV in Pittsburgh at 8 p.m.
- WQLN-TV in Erie at 9 p.m.
- WITF-TV in Harrisburg at 9 p.m.

A live, online stream of the 8 p.m. premiere will be available at wpsu.org [2], and then posted to Vimeo and YouTube at 9 p.m.

The 60-minute television program introduces viewers to Four Diamonds families battling childhood cancer. It also follows Penn State THON student volunteers as they plan and carry out logistics for fundraising events and share special experiences with their adopted THON families throughout the year.

"Some people think that it's just a dance party, but it's so much more," said Jeff Hughes, executive producer of the documentary. "Not only is raising money to combat childhood cancer a wonderful cause, it's a powerful example of college students making things better for these families."

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The money raised goes to the Four Diamonds Fund at Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital, which provides specialized care, financial assistance for medical expenses and cancer research.

Since 1977, THON has raised more than \$88 million.

Production of the documentary began in September 2010.

Additional events will also take place in the weeks leading up to the premiere, including a private screening for THON families and guests on Sept. 14, at the Hershey Theatre, and screenings in select cities co-hosted by the Penn State Alumni Association and public television stations.

For more information, visit <http://wpsu.org/thondocumentary> [3] online.

Penn State Public Broadcasting, licensed to Penn State, produces noncommercial television, radio and online media. Their public service media programming and complementary outreach materials address important societal issues for Pennsylvania, the nation and the world.

Links:

[1] <http://live.psu.edu/youtube/hsxrWfkX4kw>

[2] <http://wpsu.org>

[3] <http://wpsu.org/thondocumentary>

Contact

Dave Aneckstein

Email: dxa141@outreach.psu.edu

Lisa Warren

Email: luw15@psu.edu