

Family Relations

Objectives:

- **Assemble a committee to make Riley children and their families an integral part of Dance Marathon**
- **Be the liaison between the council and the Dance Marathon Coordinator at the Riley Children's Foundation**
- **Hold events to build relationships between Dance Marathon and the participating families**
- **Encourage family retention and relationships with participating organizations**

➤ The Dance Marathon Vision

- It is important that you become a resource on everything related to Dance Marathon. You will consult committee members, student organizations, campus administrators and businesses. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the duties and responsibilities of every committee.
- You are a spokesperson for DM. Discuss and represent the views of Dance Marathon throughout the campus and community.
- Make sure that you understand all rules/ guidelines set up by your school, the hospital, and even your community. These will guide you and your members need to understand the importance of following these guidelines.
- The responsibilities of a director are endless and limitless- you must learn to delegate. Many committees will work together to accomplish their responsibilities. Make sure your committee set-up is comprehensive and that one chair is ultimately responsible for each task.

➤ Committee Creation

- Chairs responsibilities can be time consuming. The majority of former Dance Marathon council members say the most important task they accomplished was selecting a strong council. After you relay the Marathon vision, the committee members carry this vision to reality.
- Involve as many people as possible, but make sure to assemble a committee that is dependable and energetic. Search to find individuals that are hard working and able to commit a large amount of time to fundraising for the kids!
- When faced with a great task, many of us find the urge to turn to our close friends. If you feel that urge when it comes to selecting your Dance Marathon council, try to resist it. The committee should be a diverse group that has the drive and determination to make Dance Marathon a hit. Use objectivity in your selection process. Just because someone is a close friend doesn't mean they are a good selection.
- Encourage students of all levels to apply.

➤ Run Committee Meetings

- Once the committee is selected, it is time to bring everyone together. This is a good time to get chairs comfortable with each other. Define expected actions and have them set goals.
- Make the first meeting fun. Conduct some ice breakers and team building games. These activities can immediately make you aware of committee members' personalities and how best to work with them throughout the year. Make the meetings motivational with members leaving feeling empowered to help the kids at Riley.
- Teach the chairs everything about Dance Marathon. Every member must know all marathon information inside and out.
- Be the critical eye and ear for your committee. Often chairs have great ideas, but they also have the tendency to get carried away. It is your responsibility to provide members with a reality check and help them design back-up plans.
- Keep the students on track. Everyone has great stories to tell about the weekend, etc, but you are there for a purpose.
- As you move throughout the year, you will be able to gauge how often meetings should be held. Some committees hold weekly meetings, some don't. This is up to you, however as it gets closer to the marathon (no less than three months away) each committee should hold weekly meetings.
- Set your meeting day, time and place in stone. Attendance should be mandatory and it is helpful to send out a reminder one week in advance.
- Be sure to construct a committee timeline and see that the president receives a copy as well as your committee.

➤ Make children and their families an integral part of Dance Marathon

- The kids are the reason for your Marathon. They are what make Dance Marathon special. Having Riley Children and their families not only attend your event, but be a part of the process from the beginning will add a meaning that cannot be expressed with words, it must be experienced.
- The first thing to do when getting families involved is to talk to your local Dance Marathon Coordinator. He or she is your advocate and anything having to do with families must go through them. Ask about the best way to get Riley families involved. Your Dance Marathon Coordinator already has a communication system with local families set up. Please always show the families respect especially when considering their privacy.
- Explain the big picture to the Riley families, and enlist their support. What is expected of them? What should they expect during the planning process and the actual event? Families may participate in a variety of activities before and during Marathon. Communicate dates, times and places of every function you would like them to attend. Also, develop a tentative schedule for families during Dance Marathon.
- Other ways to get families involved are to plan events to work with kids at the hospital such as atrium parties. Invite key people in your Marathon and organization representatives. This gives new families a way to meet students and

each other, and can be an additional motivator for all involved.

- Be the liaison between the council and the Riley Families through the Dance Marathon Coordinator at the Riley Children's Foundation.
 - Develop a needs list and give the list to Marketing. Include everything you need for any family events and the marathon. Include hotel rooms and meals for families (accommodating for different diets), unless arrangements have been made with the Dance Marathon Coordinator.
 - Be sure to secure all hotel rooms at least one month in advance and ask families if they need special accommodations.
 - Coordinate family schedules with council and the DM Coordinator. For example, what time will families be scheduled to be on the floor or talk to the dancers? If space is available, arrange for a room for the families during the Marathon. If you can't get a separate room, try setting up a tent to mark off the family area. Sometimes the experience can be overwhelming- make sure there are activities in case a family wants to rest or just get away from all the chaos.
 - Start collecting Riley family stories early. You can share these at council or committee meetings; they are great motivation.

- Tours
 - One of the features of Dance Marathon is that you can actually see where your money goes and what it goes for. You can see this when you tour Riley hospital and find out about the wonderful things it does for kids in your community. If you are including competitions between campus organizations in your Dance Marathon, hospital visits can motivate these groups. Talk to your Dance Marathon Coordinator about how you can integrate hospital visits for campus organizations in your pre-Marathon activities.

- Hold a reception to kick off Dance Marathon
 - Meet with the Financial/ Fundraising, Marketing and Board of Managers to discuss a reception. A reception is not essential and may be an unnecessary expense. On the other hand, a reception is a good tool to motivate your chairs, administration and the families. If you decide to have a reception, the best time is one and a half to two hours before the marathon begins.
 - Reserve a room for the reception and think about your menu. Consider having light refreshments, finger foods (cheese, meats, rolls, etc.) or punch and cookies. Lighter food will help you avoid costs such as tables and will keep costs to a minimum. Invite the Riley families, show some videos, explain the event, etc. Short, simple, and informative!
 - Another option is to have a reception after the Marathon. For example, the University of Iowa's Dance Marathon ends in the morning. They hold a post-event brunch which allows families to stay and not drive home late. It also provides a wonderful closing for families, chairs, directors and organization

representatives.

- Be sure to create a welcome packet for the families with all necessary information. Include an itinerary as there might be certain activities the families would like to attend or avoid. This packet can be sent in advance with directions.

➤ Lodging

- If you request the involvement of a Riley Family and they need to stay overnight away from their home, it is the duty of the Dance Marathon committee to arrange for their accommodations.

➤ Helpful Hints:

- All communication and interaction with Riley families should be approved and sent to the families by the DM Coordinator. Share your ideas with this person and listen to his or her feedback. After the family agrees to participate, you serve as the liaison between Riley Hospital for Children and Dance Marathon. Several people contacting the families are confusing and disorganized. Your goals are to be professional and show the families that Dance Marathon is a first class organization. This professionalism will eventually lead to more families wanting to participate.
- What do you do with a family during Dance Marathon? One suggestion is to work with Operations/ Facilities and set aside a room specifically for families to go and rest or just get away from the noise. What goes into a family room? Make them as relaxing as possible for children and adults. Some schools have included couches, food, newspapers, children's videos, comic books, coloring books and crayons, hand-held games, cots and enough room to learn the line dance.
- When you have the opportunity to meet with Riley Families, learn as much about them as possible. Allow their stories to motivate you. Share their moving stories with your campus.
- Successful Marathoners say the key to years of success is Riley Families. The families are a tremendous inspiration. They allow everyone to see the cause in action. Treat the families with all of the respect in the world. They are what Dance Marathon is all about.
- If a family would like to stay in touch with you after the marathon, let the Dance Marathon Coordinator know so that they have record of the relationship.

*** Remember:

- Always have a back-up plan!
- Delegate! Do not allow yourself to become overwhelmed.
- Act as a DM role model. You represent DM whether you are meeting with a potential sponsor, briefing campus administrators, or sitting in a class. Encourage all committee members to remember they are also role models; everything they do reflects on DM. Have fun but remember to never jeopardize the perception of your organization.

Do it for the kids!

The University of Iowa Dance Marathon

June 15, 1999

Dear Families,

I would like to welcome all of you to another exciting year of the University of Iowa Dance Marathon. My name is Danielle Dodman, and I am the Family Relations Director for Dance Marathon 2000. This will be my fourth year that I have been involved with Dance Marathon and I am looking forward to having the wonderful opportunity to get to know and interact with all of you over the coming year.

The Family Relations committee has been chosen and we have assembled a wonderful and dedicated group of students. The committee is already hard at work brainstorming new ideas for family events, Dance Marathon and communications with the families. Dance Marathon works to bring emotional and financial support through special projects to families served by the pediatric oncology unit and other special causes. The Family Relations committee works hard the whole year through to make these goals become a reality because the families are Dance Marathon's greatest assets.

I am looking forward to the journey we have ahead and I hope to get to know each and everyone of you. Please do not hesitate to phone me at any time if you have any questions, comments, suggestions, or just want to chat. I would love to hear from you. You can reach me at the Dance Marathon office (123) 456-7890 or at home (987) 654-3210. Your feedback is very important to us; please do not hesitate to give us a call. Take care of yourselves and enjoy the summer weather. Hope to see you soon!

Dancing in Spirit,

Danielle Dodman
Family Relations Director
Dance Marathon 2000

P.S. Please return the enclosed evaluation as well as the family info sheet as soon as possible. When you return the evaluation, we also ask that you include a family picture. Thank you.

P.P.S. Don't forget to highlight the weekend of February 4-5 on your calendars as we dance our way into the new millennium!

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The University of Iowa Dance Marathon

Dance Marathon 1999 Family Evaluation

Any suggestions or comments you have would be greatly appreciated.

Would you like to continue to be involved with Dance Marathon?

Would you like to be sponsored by an organization? If you were sponsored by an organization last year, would you like to be sponsored by same one?

Would you be interested in being paired up with another family to get to know 4 the year through mail, e-mail, phone, and anything else you can think of?

Do you think the family events provide entertainment for all ages? Any suggestions for future family events?

Please write down any additional comments that may help us to improve Dance Marathon and the Family Relations program.