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WKU, other universities join to support kids

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Jan 24, 2024



Members of Dance Big Red pose during one of the group's events in 2023.

Photo courtesy of Hannah Adams

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Western Kentucky University's student-led charity event Dance Big Red has joined with DanceBlue at the University of Kentucky and RaiseRED at the University of Louisville for the fourth annual Commonwealth Cup, a statewide fundraiser that supports pediatric cancer and heart care.

Hannah Adams, a senior at WKU, is co-chairing this year's Dance Big Red event with senior Grant Oller. Adams said this is the second year Dance Big Red has participated in the Commonwealth Cup, and it was U of L that reached out this year.

"We had a lot of success with it last year, so we decided to do it again this year," Adams said. "It's been really fun getting to network with different dance organizations."

The event kicked off Monday, and will end with a "reveal" in Elizabethtown on Saturday. At the reveal, the groups from each university will reveal how much they raised.

Adams said Dance Big Red has a goal of \$90,000 for the year, and hopes to raise \$10,000 this week alone, before Dance Big Red's main event happens in March. The money raised from Dance Big Red will go to the Norton Children's Hospital in Louisville.

Oller said once the weeklong event started, Dance Big Red began a social media campaign.

Oller said there has been “good progress so far” in gathering donations.

“So far, we have seen a lot of participation in that,” Oller said.

“Seeing all the social media posts that our members were sharing and seeing those numbers rise in such a short amount of time is really awesome.”

Donations to Dance Big Red and registration for the main event can be made online through Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals.

Dana Matukas, communications project manager, Western Kentucky Region for the Norton Children’s Hospital Foundation and a liaison for Dance Big Red, said benefits like Dance Big Red and the Commonwealth Cup provide hope for children and parents alike.

“These families are faced with so much,” Matukas said. “Every year when I get to experience upfront and visit with the families and talk with them at this event, you see the joy that it brings to these parents’ faces.

I'll even see tears from families that just cannot believe how much these college students care.”

Matukas said she has worked with Dance Big Red for around 10 years, and in that time the event has raised over \$600,000 to support pediatric heart care and pediatric cancer care.

She said several students who organized Dance Big Red in the past have created their own charities, and events similar to it have spread to middle and high schools as well as elementary schools.

“People want to give back,” Matukas said. “It’s awesome when you get to see that.”

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