

PANTHER ALUMNI MAKING A BIG IMPACT:

Lindsay Wilson's Dance Marathon Journey

"Through DM & LCCDS, my peers and I learned the power of being a part of something bigger than ourselves."



1

What year was your first DM?

My first Dance Marathon was my 7th grade year in 2014. This was the first DM at LCCDS, so we were all learning about it. I remember hearing miracle stories of families and children who have seen the impact of DM directly in their lives at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital. This is where I truly started to see how much of an impact this organization could have on our community. I knew I wanted to continue my involvement in my final year at LCCDS and beyond. Little did I know that I would be the Executive Director of the largest student-run philanthropy 8 years after I graduated from LCCDS!



2

What was your favorite memory of DM at LCCDS?

Seeing all of the students together in the Life Center – even the preschoolers. To see kids at such a young age learning about this organization and taking part in this movement is something so unique and special about LCCDS. It really allows for students to learn the importance of spreading love and hope to a community that needs it the most. Even though I was still in middle school at this time, I knew this program would make an impact for years to come.

3

What made you want to stay involved with DM even after graduating from LCCDS? Was there an experience or a certain moment that touched your heart?

My peers and I learned the power of being a part of something bigger than ourselves. I fell in love with giving back to the community through this organization, knowing that every student and family member who walked into the Life Center made a difference in the lives of children and families everywhere. Listening to miracle stories from the families themselves really puts into perspective the power of this organization, and all that it has the potential to do for the lives of so many. When I moved on to high school, I decided to volunteer at Johns Hopkins All Children's in the Occupational Therapy department. I remember seeing the miracle balloon stickers on equipment, signifying that the equipment was funded by Dance Marathon. I knew that this organization was making impacts in so many ways. The hope we are able to provide for miracle children so that they may have more birthdays is what inspired me to continue to become more involved.

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4 Why do you think DM is important?

Dance Marathon truly emphasizes providing hope for the future, that maybe one day we may celebrate a day without pediatric illness and injury. However, for as long as these children need hospitals and medical care, they need Dance Marathon, and they need students like us. Not only are you fundraising for medical equipment, research, and child life services, but you are bringing awareness to pediatric illness and injury as you join in their fight. These children and families have no choice but to fight, so we must stand and fight with them, for a brighter tomorrow. Making a choice to take part in this movement, so that they don't have to fight alone, is what Dance Marathon is all about. These children and families need a big army of people fighting for them each and every day - for medical equipment, research, and child life services. You can be a part of providing that and so much more through Dance Marathon - for hope, for more birthdays, and for a brighter tomorrow.



5 What message do you have for our students?

Whether or not you decide to become involved in Dance Marathon beyond LCCDS, I hope you know that you are impacting the lives of so many children and families in more ways than you'll ever know. The choice you're making to fight alongside these miracle children and their families is something you should be so proud of. You are the future of change, and are setting an example for others for years to come. I was in your shoes just a couple of years ago, unaware of who I wanted to become. However, in just a few short years, by putting my heart into a cause like Dance Marathon, I have learned more about myself than I could ever have imagined. It truly is such an incredible movement, and I am so excited that you all have the opportunity to experience it in the same way that I did. For this, I am forever proud to be an LCCDS alum!



6 What message do you have for our families?

Thank you, families, for supporting your students' participation in such an incredible movement. This is not just a fundraiser. These are real lives, and real children who are directly impacted by every single dollar you raise. The miracle families and children that I have developed relationships with over the years have shown me just how much of an impact DM has had and continues to have on their lives. You truly are making so many miracles. I was lucky enough to visit Shands in Gainesville pre-pandemic, and saw first-hand where all of the money from FSU's Dance Marathon goes. From technology to art supplies to beds for families to sleep in, Dance Marathon balloons were all around the hospital. Not only are you raising funds for CMNH, but you're also bringing more awareness to pediatric illness and injury and the struggles that so many families are going through. Dance Marathon did so much for me as a student, and continues to shape the way I look at the world and those around me. It all started 8 years ago at LCCDS, and I cannot thank my parents enough for giving me the opportunity to learn and thrive in such a positive educational environment.



7 What does it mean to be the Executive Director of DM at FSU?

Seven years ago, when I was helping lead the LCCDS Dance Marathon in middle school, I never would have imagined that I would be Executive Director of Dance Marathon at Florida State University. But, because of the lessons and skills that my teachers and peers at LCCDS instilled in me, I have grown in so many ways as a student, friend & leader. I have learned the power of giving back to those who need it the most. Dance Marathon has given me purpose, helping me grow in more ways than I could ever imagine, even shaping my future career as a Speech-Language Pathologist. The love and passion that our students have for this organization at FSU is what keeps our community together amidst the face of adversity in our ever-changing world. My love for DM never waivers, and I cannot be more excited to lead this organization in its 28th year through positivity, growth, and the hope for a better future - because the kids deserve everything we've got.

The funds raised by FSU's Dance Marathon are used to help support pediatric research, programs and equipment at UF Health Shands Children's Hospital, and the other half goes to help fund programs in Gadsden County through FSU's College of Medicine that provide healthcare to low-income children and families in the Tallahassee area.

