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Block 1: Comic Books and Captain Hooks

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For the 44th year, more than 1,000 Dance Marathon participants ran down the steps of Norris University Center toward a large white tent to begin 30 hours of dancing.

During Block 1, participants danced to a mix of superhero-themed songs, Disney hits and pop music. The block, themed “Comic Books and Captain Hooks,” featured a speaker from Cradles to Crayons, this year’s primary beneficiary. The nonprofit provides clothing, school supplies and other essentials to children from low-income households.

Dave Cotugno, Cradles to Crayons’ senior manager of development, said the money raised through NUDM could allow the nonprofit to serve an additional 250,000 kids in the Chicago area over the next four years.

“Cradles to Crayons now has the Wildcat community behind us,” Cotugno said to a cheering crowd.

The block also featured a speaker from Evanston Community Foundation, NUDM’s secondary beneficiary for the 21st consecutive year.

ECF worked to help Cradles to Crayons expand to Evanston, Monique Jones, president and CEO of ECF, told The Daily.

This year, Jones said ECF will receive 10 percent of the net proceeds from NUDM. She added that the dancers' effort was "meaningful."

"I want (students) to understand what that impact (of NUDM) will do for the primary organization which is new to Chicago and would be new to Evanston," Jones said. "And what it does for the ECF, too."

Dancers later watched a video starring the emcees, Communication senior Kelly Eichenholz and Medill junior Adam Yates, as the superheroes NUDM Woman and NUDM Man.

Eichenholz and Yates then appeared onstage to remind the dancers to stay mindful of their mental and physical health during the next 30 hours, before the first song, "Kryptonite" by 3 Doors Down, began playing.

Children from SGA Youth & Family Services, one of Cradles to Crayons' partner organizations, danced onstage and in the crowd during the first several songs.

Halfway through the block, students learned the first part of the 30-hour dance, which is set to Cardi B and Bruno Mars' "Finesse (Remix)."

Vice president for student affairs Patricia Telles-Irvin was scheduled to speak an hour and a half into Block 1, but she canceled due to illness, said SESP senior Jamie Newman, NUDM executive co-chair.

At the end of the block, singer and songwriter Ben Rector starred in the first celebrity video, telling the dancers to "hang in there."

Medill freshman Duncan Agnew told The Daily that it was "rewarding" and motivating to see some of the children who would benefit from NUDM's fundraising efforts.

"I would say my legs are a little sore, but my mind is fresh and I'm feeling good," Agnew said. "I definitely feel like I can go a lot longer for now."

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Read more of The Daily's coverage of Dance Marathon [here](#)