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Dance Marathon 2018 raises over \$1.1 million for Cradles to Crayons, Evanston Community Foundation



photo credit Colin Boyle/Daily Senior Staffer Dance Marathon 2018 raised over \$1.1 million for Cradles to Crayons and the Evanston Community Foundation.

Alexis White, Assistant Campus Editor
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Dance Marathon raised \$1,175,709 this year, breaking \$1 million for the eighth year in a row.

The 30-hour event's primary beneficiary, Cradles to Crayons, was presented a check for \$942,793.20. Cradles to Crayons is a nonprofit organization that provides essential materials, from clothes to school supplies, to low income children in Chicagoland.

Dave Cotugno, the senior manager of development at Cradles to Crayons Chicago, told The Daily that the organization has the goals of doubling the amount of children they will serve to 60 thousand and reaching 250,000 more children in the next four years. Cotugno said the reason for this growth is due to NUDM's support.

"It's been truly transformational," Cotugno said. "It's the best thing that could've ever happened to us actually because we are a fairly new nonprofit to Chicago. We've only been around for a year and a half. When we first applied (to be the

primary beneficiary), we had been here for less than a year.”

Cotugno said Cradles for Crayons only has 13 staff members who all visited the tent and saw the dancers in action.

At the thought of participating with the dancers, Cotugno said he couldn’t do it himself and didn’t do any activity as rigorous when he was in college. However, he said he “commends” dancers for trading in time, health and rest for a good cause.

“When I walk through the tent and I meet a bunch of dancers ... they could barely open their eyes because they’re so tired, but they won’t stop dancing,” Cotugno said. “They keep going because they understand it’s something bigger than underneath that tent. It’s about our entire community coming together to support kids in need.”

Bernard Cherkasov, the executive director of Cradles to Crayons Chicago, spoke just after midnight on Sunday during Block 10. He shared the story a young girl, Trinity, who couldn’t sit still or focus in class because her pants were so tight. She had to suck in her stomach to button them. He said these are the children that Cradles to Crayons can help with donations.

Evanston Community Foundation, which supports local organizations in their missions, received \$104,754.80. ECF has been the second beneficiary of NUDM for 21 years.

Right before revealing the total money raised, the NUDM executive co-chairs, Weinberg senior Daniel Nussbaum and SESP senior Jamie Newman, encouraged dancers to continue to work for issues they’re passionate about, after they get some rest. Newman said this event proves that the dancers are not part of a “generation that looks idly on.”

Nussbaum told the dancers, while there is still work to be done, Northwestern is “up to the task.”

“We took action to show families living with poverty that we are here and that we care, even while some in Washington might look away,” Nussbaum said. After the dancing concluded, Nussbaum reflected on the impact DM had on the primary beneficiary and the local community.

“The beneficiary really had a unique opportunity to grow their roots in Chicago,” Nussbaum told the Daily. “They’ve only been around for a year and a half and with the support of the Northwestern community. ... Cradles to Crayons is going to be able to expand faster than they ever could have dreamed before.”

Alison Albelda, Alan Perez and Benjamin Apelbaum contributed reporting.

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