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Dance the night away: Dance Big Red raises money for hospital

By JUSTIN STORY jstory@bgdailynews.com Mar 30, 2019



As the curtain dropped Saturday morning on Western Kentucky University's Dance Big Red 2019, Baylee Lackey looked every bit like a person fighting fatigue after spending the previous 12 hours dancing.

"I'm halfway between exhausted and totally pumped," said a sweating, flushed Lackey, a junior at WKU from Clarksville. "I'm three energy drinks in, but I'm enjoying it."

The fifth annual Dance Big Red fundraiser attracted more than 900 students to Preston Health and Activities Center for a late-night-blending-into-morning of dancing, games and fun.

The annual student-led event benefits the Children's Hospital Foundation, which raises funds for Norton Children's Hospital and its sister facilities in Louisville.

At the end of a 12-hour marathon session at 8 a.m., students who had been on their feet since the beginning collapsed gratefully to the floor, and organizers revealed that the benefit raised \$71,780.17.

Event co-chair Paige Priest said money raised from this year's Dance Big Red will support pediatric heart and adolescent cancer care at Norton Children's Hospital.

"It's a great cause and a great way to bring people on campus together, whether you're Greek or not Greek, no matter what grade you are, no matter what clubs you're in," said Priest, a senior from Santa Claus, Ind.

A host of scheduled activities throughout the night in addition to the dancing – including Zumba, a limbo contest and several group games – kept the energy high among the students.

A sitting room off the main floor and snacks were available for students in need of a breather, but otherwise the two hard and fast rules that applied on the dance floor were no sitting and no leaving until the end.

"Once you're in, you're in," said co-chair Kelsey Humpert, a senior from Union.

As Dance Big Red neared its conclusion, some students looking to beat back exhaustion resorted to creative solutions.

Griffin Beckner and a group of friends organized an impromptu game of leapfrog as the time approached 7 a.m.



"We build off each other. Anytime one of us gets tired, you've got to keep everybody up," said Beckner, a junior from Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Beckner has been to Dance Big Red each year he's been a WKU student.

Beckner didn't know whether he would return for next year's Dance Big Red, but he admitted that might be the sleep deprivation speaking for him.

“God knows whose idea (leapfrog) was,” Beckner said. “Maybe someone with less of a brain than I have.”

Dance Big Red originated in 2014, when Kelli Robinson, a WKU student at the time, contacted Children’s Hospital Foundation about creating a dance event to support Norton.

In the first four years, the benefit has managed to raise more than \$170,000 from community sponsors and individual donors.

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Justin Story

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