

## For The Kids. Always and Forever.

November 25, 2011

The night of Nov. 8, about 1,000 Penn State students rallied on Old Main's lawn to support Joe Paterno.

Less than 24 hours later, thousands more students took to Old Main's steps to protest Paterno's firing as head football coach, the start of a riot that caught national attention.

In between, hundreds of students occupied Penn State's main lawn to celebrate 100 days until Thon, when preparations for the world's largest student-run philanthropy kick into high gear. They wore bright shirts and yelled. Thon volunteers took over the student union.

In normal times, Thon would have been the news of the day on campus. But Paterno's dismissal amid the Penn State scandal drowned out anything to do with the annual dance marathon that raises money for the fight against pediatric cancer.

A week later, Lauren and Kevin Brobson drove their daughter Claire to State College from their Middle Paxton Township home for Thon's family carnival. It's another energy booster for the student volunteers, where they get to meet families such as the Brobsons that have benefited from The Four Diamonds Fund.

"We weren't sure what to expect with the Penn State kids," Lauren Brobson said. "You know what? We walked into that White Building, and it was as if none of that ancillary stuff was going on. It was all about Thon and The Four Diamonds Fund and our kids."

While Penn State's reputation is taking a hit for its handling of allegations against Jerry Sandusky, Thon so far appears to be unscathed.

Corporate donors affirmed their pledges and alumni have said they will continue their support, said Elaine Tanella, the Penn State senior serving as Thon's overall chairwoman. Tanella did not say how fundraising compared to last year; Thon does not release totals until Feb. 19. But she said there have been no indications that support is flagging.

Every family that has been helped by The Four Diamonds Fund that wanted to participate before the scandal broke is still involved, according to the fund.

The students are still committed, Tanella said.

"It was obviously a distraction," Tanella said. "But Thon is a positive thing we can focus on and restore faith in the Penn State name."

Since Thon began, it has raised more than \$78 million. Last year, through donations, sponsorships and change collected by canners on corners across the Northeast, Thon raised more than \$9.5 million, topping the high of \$7.8 million the previous year.

Thon has consistently reached new peaks in recent years, drawing praise for its success even as many nonprofit groups have struggled to raise money in the tough economy.

After the allegations against Sandusky surfaced, the Penn State family rapidly responded to a viral campaign to raise money for victims of sexual abuse. That shows Penn Staters will open their wallets for good cause, Tanella said, especially one that reflects well on their university during the turmoil.

Corporations have not wavered.

"We are absolutely going to continue our support for Thon," said Johnson & Johnson spokeswoman Carol Goodrich. "We've been a longtime supporter and will continue to support what they believe in."

It helps that some of Thon's biggest corporate supporters are also Penn State's business partners. When asked if Pepsi would keep supporting Thon, the company replied with its standard statement on Penn State matters:

"We are very concerned about the current allegations surrounding certain individuals at Penn State University, but will continue to honor our longstanding relationship."

Students will be out with their cans collecting change for the first time since the scandal broke Dec. 2. They hope people will understand why they are there, Tanella said, and respond as they have in the past.

Thon itself is months off. No one is sure what news could break between then and now, but if the mood on campus is still down, could it put a damper on the high-energy atmosphere inside the Bryce Jordan Center?

The Brobsons doubted it.

"I don't think the story is how the scandal will affect Thon," Lauren Brobson said. "I think it's how is Thon going to affect Penn State. ... I can't help but think Thon is going to be a huge signal to the rest of the country of what Penn State really means."

To read the original article, click the link below:

[http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2011/11/support\\_for\\_penn\\_state](http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2011/11/support_for_penn_state)

« [History of Old Main 1857-1929](#) — [Old Guys with an Old Guy](#) »