

Wednesday, October 21, 2009

Philanthropic students raise funds for St. Jude through Up 'Til Dawn

By Amanda Benjamin, student writer

The student-led, student-run philanthropy program, Up 'Til Dawn, is dedicated to raising funds and awareness for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Since its inception about five years ago, the Oakland University student organization celebrates its fundraising accomplishments at the end of the year by staying "Up 'Til Dawn" in honor of the patients and families of St. Jude with entertainment, activities and prizes.

"We really want to reach out to the rest of campus," said group adviser Christopher Jensen about his goal to get every student organization involved. Jensen, the assistant director of student activities and Greek life, got involved in Up 'Til Dawn as the director of student activities at Kettering University when the group was created there in 1999. When Jensen came to OU, Up 'Til Dawn was already in place so it was an easy transition for him to advise the group, he said.

According to Jensen, cancer touches many people's lives and brings a sense of urgency to fundraising efforts for St. Jude.

"I've heard people talk about it, and the impact is amazing," Jensen said. "It's a good cause to support."

The main Up 'Til Dawn event is the Letter Sending Party in November where volunteers bring in addresses and fill out envelopes to family and friends in order to raise money through donations for St. Jude, who takes care of the mailing.

The group also conducts smaller fundraisers, such as car washes and restaurant fundraisers, where 10 percent of the bill goes to St. Jude. Last year the group raised about \$25,000 for St. Jude, according to Jensen.

Senior Carissa Criscenti, the OU chapter's president and a communication major, traveled to Memphis last summer for the St. Jude Collegiate Leadership Seminar for Up 'Til Dawn groups from across the country. According to Criscenti, the seminar gave her a better view of what goes on within hospitals and cancer facilities.

"It's a good cause," said Criscenti, who has been involved in the group for two years. "It doesn't take very much time at all to make an impact."

St. Jude is the premiere treatment and research center for children with catastrophic illnesses. Since opening its doors in 1962, St. Jude has helped increase the overall survival rate from less than 20 percent to more than 70 percent today. Patients and their families never have to pay for treatments that are not covered by insurance, and those families without insurance are never asked to pay.

Criscenti added that being involved in Up 'Til Dawn also counts as volunteer credit for some courses. For more information, visit the [Web site](#).



Student participants Mallory Mierzwinski, Amanda Kochanski and Ashley Marthen proudly display their "Happiness is Helping St. Jude" bears.

SUMMARY

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