

2009

Dance Marathon

sweeteens with record-setting event

By Julia Turner
Contributing Writer

What happens when you combine music, a choreographed dance and tons of spirit? A dance marathon!

This past Saturday, Tech held its seventh annual Dance Marathon at the CRC to benefit the Children's Miracle Network and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. Throughout the school year, the Dance Marathon steering committee is in charge of planning and publicizing the event. Students sign up to participate in the event with different student organizations. Each team is responsible for raising money throughout the year, and every person on the team must raise at least \$30 to participate in the event. This year's theme was "keeping it sweet for the kids." Participating groups ranged from Greek to freshmen organizations.

"This year was our most successful Dance Marathon yet with just under 300 participants and about \$12,000 [in donations]," said Craig Rawe, a fourth-year MGT major and executive director of Dance Marathon. "We set our goal this year of growing our event. We wanted the event to include more people and a more diverse set of organizations, and we were proud when [we succeeded]" Rawe said.

The move from last year's location at the O'Keefe gym to the more spacious CRC basketball courts reflects the event's goal-shattering growth.

The steering committee was also in charge of setting up several major fundraising events for Dance Marathon throughout the year.

"We had a letter-writing campaign where family members of dancers sponsored them," said Jenna Castle, a fourth-year INTA major and morale team captain. "We also held a coffee house fundraiser at Under the Couch where local bands played, and we charged an entrance fee. We also had restaurants like Chick-fil-A and Steak 'n Shake donate a percentage of their profits on a particular day to our Dance Marathon."

While the event is called "dance marathon," a variety of games and activities, including dancing, took place during the seven-hour event. Some of the activities and entertainment for the night included a live band, dodgeball, a relay race and dance performances and lessons from the GT Salsa Club, Tekstyles, the Ballroom Dancing Club and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.

At the top of every hour, the morale team leaders, the volunteers who are in charge of their teams, performed part of a choreographed mo-

rale dance. The purpose of the dance was to keep everyone energized throughout the marathon. The team leaders, along with the morale team captain, taught part of the dance to the rest of the dance marathon participants. At the end of the night, all the morale team leaders and participants danced the complete version of the morale team dance.

Throughout the night, the dance marathon participants had the opportunity to hear the stories of the "miracle children" who had been saved by Children's Healthcare hospitals. Ruth Woldetsadik's daughter was a patient at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta who needed two open-heart surgeries.

"You know, the donations are not much to [the students], but they save lives. I could not afford the thousands of dollars it costs for my daughter's medical care without them," said Woldetsadik, whose children were playing on the inflatable obstacle course as she spoke.

For Woldetsadik, the most important thing in bringing her children was for the dancers to see where their money is going and, specifically, whom it is helping.

Terilyn Walton, Children's Healthcare liaison, has been active in Tech's Dance Marathon for the past three years. Walton works at the Foundation as a fundraiser. She keeps the steering committee informed of where the money they raise is going. Each year, the money is donated to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

"I've enjoyed watching the program grow and maintain its identity on campus," Walton said. "It's also neat to see people connect with the families, come back the next year and still maintain that special connection."

"We came last year," said Laura Lewis, whose son Ryan was born with only half a heart. "And the boys just couldn't stop talking about it. Some of the students gave them headbands, and they still have them!"

Before Lewis's son had his heart transplant in 2007, he had a lot of trouble getting around and often had to stop to catch his breath.

"Now I can't keep him still," Lewis said, pointing to her son running through the obstacle course. "He's just like any normal four-and-a-half year old boy."

Many of the morale team leaders expressed how much they enjoyed dancing for a greater purpose. "I really like Dance Marathon because all the miracle children make the whole event so much more real," said Drew



Photo by Ben Keyserling / Student Publications

Dance Marathon participants pledge to remain moving throughout the night, raising money for Children's Healthcare.

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Professor sheds light on stimulus bill

By Aaron Parkman
Staff Writer

Congress passed the whopping \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act this month, intending to infuse the economy with a much-needed dose of cash. Willie Belton, associate professor in the School of Economics, shared his opinion on the bill this week, giving expert insight into the issue.

"I think [the bill] is a very positive thing and is probably the only thing that [Congress] could do," Belton said. Although there is an ideological dispute in Congress concerning the size of the bill, Belton said that the dispute is "pure politics."

The bill provides tax relief for individuals and state and local governments. The bill also pumps money into transportation and infrastructure, renewable energy and the healthcare system.

From a Republican perspective, a spending strategy that includes a \$19.9 billion increase in food stamps and an \$86.6 billion increase in Medicaid is irresponsible and will not stimulate the economy, but Democratic congressmen claim that the increase is necessary to support American families.

The main ideological difference between liberal and conservative economics has been a point of contention since just after the Great Depression, when the United States began to see more economic regulation by the federal government as necessary. The dispute has always concerned the reach of government.

"We could probably do nothing, but I'm not sure we want to feel that kind of pain," Belton said, alluding to the 25 percent unemployment rate of the 1930s. Currently, the U.S. unemployment rate is only 7.6 percent, almost double what it was in March 2007. Georgia's unemployment rate has also steadily increased, reaching a 26-year high in December at 8.1 percent.

Georgia Senate Majority Leader Chip Rogers (R-Woodstock) expressed his dissatisfaction with the bill to reporters last week, speaking out against the "almost...trillion dollars in debt" that the federal government is placing "on the American people."

Regardless, the fact remains that Georgia is not doing any better economically than other states, bearing an unemployment rate that is 0.5 percent above the national average.

Last week, Governor Perdue signed a piece of legislation that re-routes most of the \$460 million of stimulus money intended for Georgia's Medicaid. That legislation will essentially keep Georgia from bouncing the \$200 to \$300 checks it wrote to homeowners in the form of tax relief grants last fall.

Some optimism came from Belton, saying that "Georgia isn't any better or any worse than any [other state]," but also adding that the mortgage crisis is especially painful in Georgia.

Still, there are many reasons why new graduates or even current students may want to purchase a home as opposed to renting in this economic climate.

First of all, homes are selling for historically low prices, some auctioning for as little as a few thousand dollars. Also, first-time home buyers qualify for a tax credit of up to \$8,000 under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The thing to keep in mind when buying an auctioned home, however, is that the costs associated with making the home livable are often more than the purchase price. Distressed homes cost tens of thousands of dollars to restore, not to mention the thousands of dollars per year in property tax.

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If one is looking to make a financial investment, Belton suggests "following the government's lead," meaning that if the government is preparing to pour billions of dollars into infrastructure, now is the time to invest in road-building companies.

Concerning the stock market, the Dow Jones Industrial Average has dropped 21 percent since the beginning of 2009.

While some Americans attribute losses to poor decisions being made in Washington right now, others point to a ripple effect coming from the recently distressed economies of Romania and Hungary.

For Americans, the trillion dollar question is: How long will the bill in question take to work? To some, the road ahead looks like an eternity, but to Belton, "[The bill] is already having an impact on expectations."

Citing some of his own expectations, Belton said that he was

looking forward to an infusion of funding to universities from the federal government. Although Tech only receives 35 percent of its funding through the government, every little bit helps.

Thanks to the stimulus bill, Georgia's educational system will be able to stave off further losses. The state will no longer have to cut \$20 million in education funding for the year 2010. Counting K-12 schools and universities together, the system was already dealing with budget cuts of more than \$150 million this year.

In response to an outcry from college students, Pell Grants were increased by \$500 per student. Nationally, an additional \$200 million was set aside for work-study programs.

Whether or not spending has been strategic is a question that economists can theorize about now but will not be able to answer for years. "I think [Congress] is spending the money [in] the only places they can spend the money," Belton said.



Photo by Kelvin Kuo/ Student Publications

Economics professor Willie Belton says the stimulus bill recently passed by Congress was the only choice they had, though he acknowledged the size of the bill was controversial.

Facebook app provides shipping savings

By Chris Russell
Staff Writer

We've all had to go through it. At one point or another, we have all spent hours tracking down some random purchase in local stores to save on shipping, only to give up and resign ourselves to paying for the three pounds of cardboard and packing peanuts that are apparently needed to protect a paperback book from the hazards of UPS.

Ram Ravichandran, CS '04, thought there had to be a better, more cost-efficient and eco-friendly solution. Thus, ShipTogether was born.

According to Ravichandran, ShipTogether provides "carpooling for your online purchases." It is a Facebook application that allows Amazon shoppers to combine their orders and save on shipping costs by making it easier to meet the \$25 minimum order for free shipping. The application also scores bonus points for helping the environment by reducing the amount of packaging required.

ShipTogether works by first having a user pick what they want to order, then pick who they feel comfortable sharing shipping with (just friends, people in their networks, etc.) and how long they want to look for a match (any duration between one day and two weeks). After a match has been found and the users have approved each other, a single-click link to Amazon's checkout window is generated with both users' purchases selected. The purchase is then ready for payment.

Currently, one user pays for and receives both shoppers' purchases. It is up to the two users to work out the reimbursement on their own.

However, there is a system in the works that will allow users to

pay for their own purchases separately.

"[ShipTogether] started off as a small hack to save on shipping for a few of my friends and me and evolved over time as more people were interested in it," Ravichandran said. "But one of my main motivations to actually spend time and effort on developing a Facebook application was to reduce the impact on the environment. It actually turns out that this is a win-win-win situation for customers, Amazon and the environment."

"For customers, this means no shipping charges, no postponing orders and no filler items; [in other words] it saves them time and frustration," Ravichandran said. "The shipping costs that Amazon absorbs when the total is over \$25 makes a lot more sense only when people actually buy stuff worth \$30 or more per cart. But by adding filler items, people get the order total to just over \$25 and, in effect, Amazon makes less profit from them. Lastly, shipping together saves the environment. One-third of the stuff in landfills is from packaging materials.... By shipping together, users can really reduce [the amount of packing materials used to pack smaller items]."

Ravichandran explains that although he plans on expanding ShipTogether to include other sites, it makes more sense to limit the number of sites available through the service.

"I am planning to add support for Buy.com, Barnes and Noble and VitaminShoppe," Ravichandran said.

"I didn't want to dilute the market by giving people too many options. For instance, if someone found a book at the same price at both Amazon and Barnes and Noble, they might choose fifty-

fifty on which site they want to go to. By restricting ShipTogether to just Amazon, I can make sure that it is more likely they can get a shipping buddy to share their purchase," Ravichandran said.

"Currently, the Facebook version is the only one that is available. Depending on user response, I might have a stand-alone site authenticated by Facebook Connect," Ravichandran said.

ShipTogether is not the first program of its kind that Ravichandran has developed.

"I like to develop stuff that would be useful for a few people around me, and then eventually expand it as more people use it," Ravichandran said. "While at Tech, I did something similar with food—a project called OrderKhana. 'Khana' in Hindi means food. I am a vegetarian, and when I came to the U.S. in 1999, I had trouble finding good Indian vegetarian food around campus."

"On the other hand, there were these Indian housewives (mothers of friends) who could legally work, but didn't due to language and cultural barriers. They would, however, make the most amazing food.... So I started a website service called OrderKhana where students could place orders for home-cooked food, and Indian housewives would basically cook and drop off the food at predetermined locations and times around campus," Ravichandran said.

Ravichandran is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Computer Science at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

His area of study encompasses the interactions between computers, economics and business, while his current research focuses on the evolution of privacy policies in social networks and the viral adoption of new products.



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maybe i'll stop sharing information so you'll never know anything cool that's going on in the world
it's a big blue watery road *arm oscillations*
I just want to tell her how I feel. And then never speak to her again.
Say what you mean and mean what you say.
you can't die from clap, so it'l okay
Reem, this one's for you :D
uh, what is it with tech guys and following me home??
Now who should I take?... Keith, and..... T-Pain!
It's 3am, and I want to go to bed . . .
Jon: You watched the movie!?
Ken: Yea It was really sad
Ken: It had a fat man with a little mustache
Jon: All sad movies do
The last time I had on a pair of 'rain boots' I was in the creek catchin crawdads to fish with and they didn't have hello kitty on them. Wet sidewalks? c'mon ladies
Today, I am a chemical engineer in senior design. FML.
Three guys walk into a bar...I forgot the rest of the joke, but your mother's a whore.
what's with all the asian guys with silver rings, is it some man-jewelry cult? it looks like you're all <3 together
I just want to sleep until 9:30. Is that too much to ask?
Pikachu you are the scourge of the sliver.
damn republicans wont let me get drunk on sunday
IAC SAB Website Redesign Contest! Do it!!!
its goods that you said that, cause your a friggin idiot
yep, detroit. the home of robocop
porque?
I WANT TO EAT CHOCOLATE

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Pak, a first-year INTA major and morale team leader for the FAB Runts. "At other charity events, you don't immediately see the impact of your efforts. With Dance Marathon, the evidence of your hard work is right in front you."

For Margaret DeGrace, a first-year INTA major who organized Alpha Xi Delta's team, the charity was a little more personal. DeGrace has close ties to the Children's Miracle Network after having been a patient and volunteer there for several years.

"I have a peanut allergy, [and] my best friend had a lot of heart problems, so I have been volunteering [at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta] for a few years," De-

Grace said.

While many teams relied on individual contributions as their main fundraising strategy, other organizations held specific fundraising events. FreShGA, for example, sold chicken biscuits in front of the Athletic Association for the week preceding the event. Phi Mu, whose national philanthropy is the Children's Miracle Network, held a bake sale and began fundraising for Dance Marathon during football games first semester.

"We went canning at football tailgates and asked for donations," said Sarah Watson, a second-year MGT major. "In two weeks, we're doing a Tea Social to raise money."

Watson also participated in Dance Marathon last year and

has enjoyed seeing how different student organizations continue to come together for the same cause.

At the end of the night, awards were given for the top fundraisers. This year, Phi Mu won for organization fundraising, raising approximately \$4,800. Meg Gunther and Drew Pak tied for first in the individual division with \$225.

With such a staggering success rate at this year's Dance Marathon, it seems that next year's steering committee will have a lot to live up to. In fact, applications are already up for positions on next year's committee. Interested students should check out <http://marathon.gatech.edu> for an application.

Or just get out there and dance—it could save a lot of lives.



Photo by Ben Keyserling/ Student Publications

Dance Marathon organizers announce total donations of \$11,718.65 for Children's Healthcare on Feb. 22, 2009.

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