

Northwestern News

<http://www.northwestern.edu/newscenter/stories/2016/02/dance-marathon-blessings-in-a-backpack.html>

## NUDM 2016 TO HELP FEED HUNGRY CHILDREN IN CHICAGO AREA

### Northwestern students to dance for 30 hours weekend of March 4 to 6

**February 29, 2016** | [by Judy Moore](#)

*Northwestern's 42nd annual Dance Marathon is this weekend, March 4-6. Produced by Kristin Samuelson.*

EVANSTON, Ill. --- For the first time in Northwestern University Dance Marathon's (NUDM) 42-year-history, funds raised by students the first weekend in March will be used to combat childhood hunger in the Chicago area and across the country.

The majority of this year's net proceeds will benefit a nonprofit organization that provides weekend meals for thousands of needy elementary school students. A portion of the net proceeds will be directed to a local group dedicated to helping Evanston thrive through grants and projects.

From March 4 to 6, NUDM will celebrate the conclusion of a yearlong student-run philanthropic effort supporting [Blessings in a Backpack](#) and the [Evanston Community Foundation \(ECF\)](#), NUDM 2016's primary and secondary beneficiaries, respectively.

That weekend an energetic group of more than 1,500 undergraduate students will gather at Northwestern's Norris University Center to dance nonstop for 30 hours to raise funds for both organizations in NUDM's 42nd annual fundraising event.

**A live stream of the entire Evanston campus event can be viewed online at [www.nudm.org](http://www.nudm.org).**

[Blessings in a Backpack](#) is a leading nonprofit child hunger organization that currently feeds more than 85,000 children in 800 schools in 46 states and the District of Columbia. It provides weekend meals for food insecure elementary school students.

Every Friday, more than 3,700 Blessings in a Backpack volunteers distribute bags of nutritious and non-perishable weekend food to children. During the week, these kids rely on the federally-assisted National School Lunch Program for free and reduced price meals in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. Without food assistance, many of these children could go up to 65 hours -- from the time they leave school on Friday to when they return Monday morning -- without eating, officials say. This lack of food affects their ability to learn, grow and dream of a brighter future.

Backpack food includes easy-to-prepare and ready-to-eat foods, such as granola bars, juice boxes, macaroni and cheese and oatmeal. A donation of \$100 will feed one child on the weekends for one 38-week school year through the Blessings in a Backpack program.

Hunger affects 46.5 million people in the U. S. Locally, Cook County has the fourth highest rate of hunger in the nation, with close to 300,000 children receiving the government's free and reduced meal plan in public schools.

"When you consider that just \$100 feeds a child for an entire school year (of weekends), you realize NUDM has the power to directly impact the overall health and academic performance of thousands of kids," NUDM 2016 executive co-chair Arielle Miller said.

To kick off this year's NUDM fundraiser and to expand its outreach, last September NUDM invited students from Kellogg School of Management and various student organizations to gather in Northwestern's Deering Meadow to help pack 200 bags of food for students in need at Lincoln and Dawes Elementary Schools in Evanston and Stagg Elementary School, located on the South Side of Chicago.

Other related special fundraising events have included a series of Trivia nights, a Lifesource Blood Drive, a Battle of DJs, and canning for cash donations on Evanston and Skokie streets.

### **Evanston Community Foundation**

The [Evanston Community Foundation](#), NUDM's secondary beneficiary since 1998, will receive 10 percent of this year's NUDM net proceeds.

"The Evanston Community Foundation is focused on helping Evanston thrive now and forever as a vibrant, inclusive and just community," said Monique Brunson Jones, ECF's new President and CEO.

"This means we connect resources and knowledge with the work of local organizations for the common good. We do this by investing in the community through grant making, leadership development and capacity building."

Jones said ECF is grateful for having NUDM as a grant-making partner because it allows ECF to have a greater impact in Evanston. The annual NUDM contribution supports ECF's responsive grants, community catalyst grants and program assistance for organizations that serve Evanston.

"Each year ECF receives grant requests from organizations working across a broad spectrum of program areas like basic human needs, community development, early childhood education, environment, health, housing, seniors, workforce development and family support and counseling. We are grateful to have NUDM 2016 co-chairs Kevin Harris and Arielle Miller serving on the responsive grants committee, helping to choose the organizations that receive funding," Jones added.

### **Upcoming NUDM 2016 Fundraising Activities**

- NUDM 2016 begins at 7 p.m. Friday, March 4, and concludes at 1 a.m. Sunday, March 6, at Norris University Center, 1999 Campus Drive, on the University's Evanston campus.

- A Silent Auction online from Friday, Feb. 26 through 1 a.m. Sunday, March 6, can be viewed at [www.store.nudm.org/auction](http://www.store.nudm.org/auction).
- A 5K and 10K run around Northwestern's scenic "lakefill" begins at 10 a.m. Saturday, March 5. The pre-registration fee is \$25, though runners are encouraged to fundraise more for NUDM and its 2016 beneficiaries.
- The 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, March 5 Kids Fair at Norris Center will feature fun, family-oriented activities. Tickets can be purchased at Norris on the day of the event.

### **About Northwestern University Dance Marathon (NUDM)**

Now in its 42nd year, NUDM is one of the largest entirely student-run philanthropies in the nation. Since 1975, NUDM has raised more than \$16 million for more than 30 different charities.

Last year, NUDM raised more than \$1 million in cash and in-kind donations for the fifth consecutive year in support of Starlight Children's Foundation -- an organization that partners with experts in healthcare, entertainment and technology to create a unique blend of family-centered services from hospital to home -- and the Evanston Community Foundation (ECF).

In 2014, NUDM celebrated its 40th anniversary, and raised a record-breaking \$1,385,273 in cash and in-kind donations for Team Joseph, a non-profit organization that funds cutting-edge research to find a treatment or cure for Duchenne muscular dystrophy -- and ECF.

To learn more, visit [www.nudm.org](http://www.nudm.org).