



CAROLINA  
FOR THE KIDS

P.O. Box 628  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Dec. 6, 2019

SPEECH TEXT

The best 96 hours of my college career  
Kalina MacKay, Speaker

Five years ago, if you told me I would stand for 24 hours straight not once... but four times in college... I would have said you were crazy.

But the truth is... those 96 hours have been some of the best moments of my college career.

The concept of UNC's dance marathon is absolutely insane. Hundreds of undergraduates gather together and stand in solidarity for the patients and families of the local children's hospital. But there's something special about the marathon that I can't quite articulate. It's one of those things that you really have to be there to experience.

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I'll be honest... 24 hours straight standing on your feet isn't exactly fun. It's painful and it really sucks. But it's all worth it.

At about hour six of my first marathon I genuinely thought I wasn't going to make it. I'll never forget the feeling of being bent over already in pain and knowing that I was just barely a quarter of the way through. Why did I put myself through this torture?

The next few hours were a complete blur. Honestly... I probably couldn't tell you much that took place throughout the night. There were performances from the best of the best at the university and games to keep us distracted and entertained but they really weren't working for me. All I could think about was how I couldn't wait to go home and crawl into bed.

Eventually the next afternoon rolls around and I had made it to the home stretch. The last few hours are the ones everyone always talks about... and I was about

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to find out why.

The kids and their families that benefit from our organization joined us and completely shifted my perspective on the event. First the kids put on a talent show for all of us. Whether it was singing the alma mater or showing off their toy trucks... they did it with a smile on their face. A smile so big, that it almost made me forget about the pain of standing for the past 20 plus hours.

Then their parents took the stage and shared their stories. They expressed their gratitude for our work and explained how much this organization has changed their lives. Hearing those words makes all the difference.

Just by standing and being a part of the Carolina tradition... I had changed lives. And that feels really good. I felt so selfish for whining about the pain in my toes or swollen ankles for the past few hours.

At the end of the day... I got to go home and enjoy

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life without worrying about what needles I would get stabbed with tomorrow or when I could see my friends next. The kids in the hospital aren't as lucky.

The work of Carolina For The Kids and Dance Marathon strives to reduce the burdens of being in the hospital. Just as the kids helped me forget about the pain of my feet during the talent show... our goal is to help them forget about the pain of their illnesses every day.

It's about much more than the money... but it feels good when you see that grand total revealed after standing for 24 hours knowing that you played a role in the success of that number.

No one ever said standing for 24 hours was easy... but it's in life's biggest challenges that we find our greatest strengths. I am so thankful for the 96 hours of my four marathons that have showed me just how much I can achieve and all the while made me a better person.

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## POTENTIAL QUESTIONS

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1. Do I have to raise money to participate?
  - a. Yes, all dancers have to raise \$200 in order to participate. Emphasize that Carolina For The Kids provides numerous opportunities to achieve this goal – including volunteering at athletic events and canning in local neighborhoods. Dancers are not expected to donate out of pocket.
2. How do I get more involved?
  - a. Follow our social media accounts @carolinaftk or join our listserv in order to receive more information about signing up to participate. Generally, students can apply for a committee in late August or sign up to dance in November. Committee members attend weekly meetings and work throughout the year to support the organization, while dancers only participate in the marathon in March.
3. How much money does the marathon raise?
  - a. Dance marathon is a celebration of the year's fundraising efforts. Since it's inception in 1997, CFTK has raised over \$6 million. Last year's dance marathon raised over \$440,000.