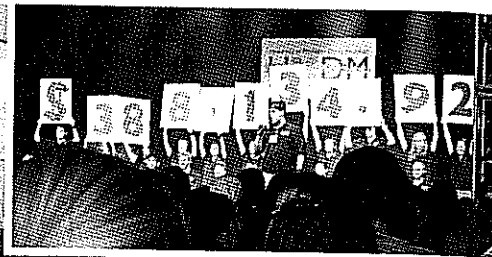
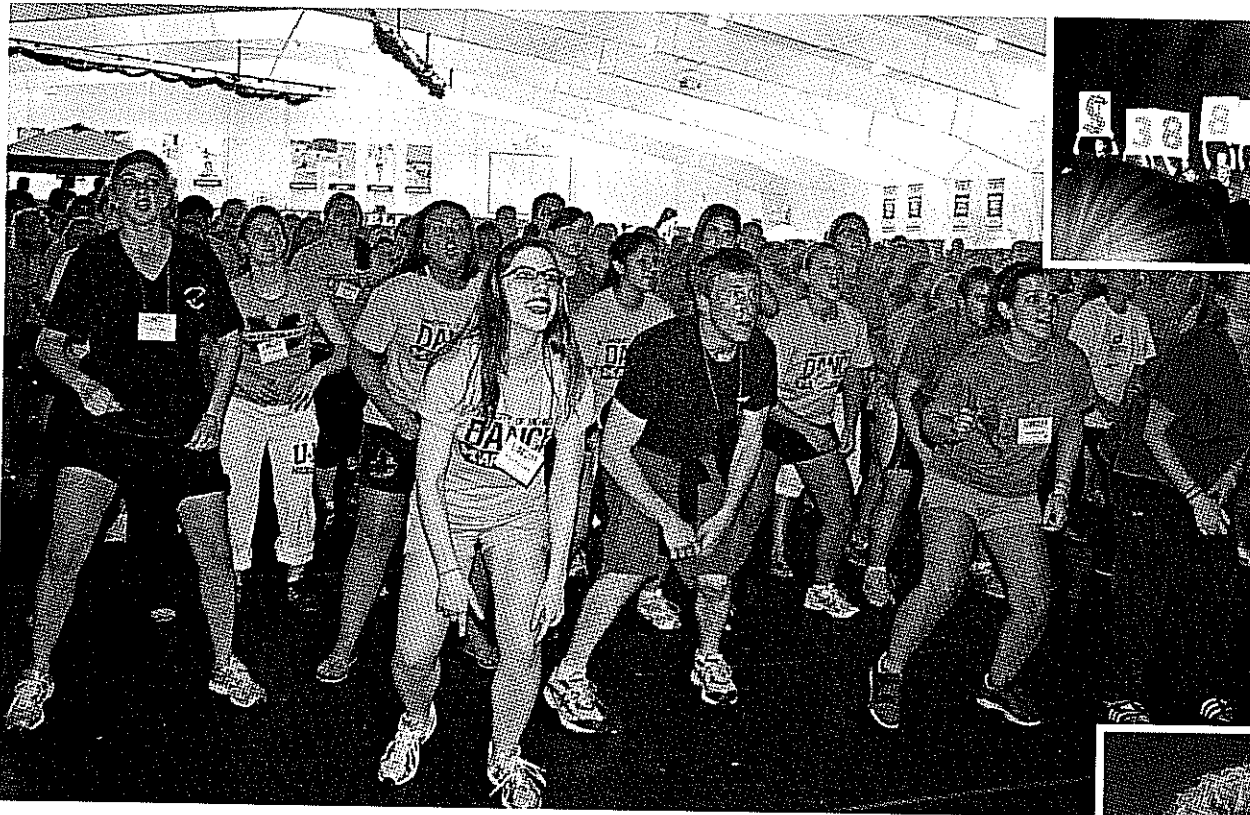


Photos by Gaines Collins



(Left) University of Michigan students dance en masse to benefit two area hospitals. This year's Dance Marathon raised \$388,134.92 (top).

'SWEAT' Shop

Lawyer helps U-M students dance for dollars

BY TARYN HARTMAN

For the past several years, attorney Jeff Neilson and his Bloomfield Hills firm Lipson Neilson Cole Seltzer & Garin have sponsored a weekend party in a University of Michigan field house where hundreds of sweaty students stand for 30 straight hours. All for a good cause, of course.

Neilson and his firm are leading sponsors of the school's student-run Dance Marathon program, which raises funds year-round for pediatric rehabilitation programs at Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor and Royal Oak's Beaumont Hospital. The group's efforts culminate in a spring marathon where dancers remain on their feet for 30 hours, much of it spent dancing.

"I try to spend my time trying to support organizations like DM" that improve "quality of life programs that wouldn't otherwise be available," Neilson says.

He first got involved with Dance Marathon through his oldest daughter

Lizzie, who held a number of key leadership positions within the organization while a student at U-M. He estimates that he's donated upward of \$80,000 to Dance Marathon to date.

"DM is so appealing because you see who the beneficiaries are in terms of children," Neilson says.

He cites the relief he's seen on the faces of parents when they're told the Dance Marathon-supported therapies — which include martial arts, bicycle and tree climbing programs for disabled children, medical play programs to help ease fears about hospitalization and treatment, and even eating therapies for children who struggle with processing different textures — are provided completely free of charge.

In 2006 and 2007, Dance Marathon received money from the Susan B. Neilson Charitable Fund, established after the death of Neilson's wife, a former Wayne County Circuit and U.S. Court of Appeals judge. Money from Judge Neilson's



Jeff Neilson

memorial fund also went to the Grosse Pointe Animal Adoption Society and Soroptimist International of Grosse Pointe service club.

But Dance Marathon and its hospitals aren't the only ones benefiting from Neilson's generosity. Each year, he and his firm donate substantial amounts of money to Detroit's Karmanos Cancer Center and Children's Hospital of Michigan, where his firm was a founding partner in the Endowment for Surgical Research (ENSURE) and has since donated well over \$100,000 of the more than \$500,000 the fund has raised for the hospital.

Charitable giving is "just a mindset" for him and the firm, Neilson says. **ME**