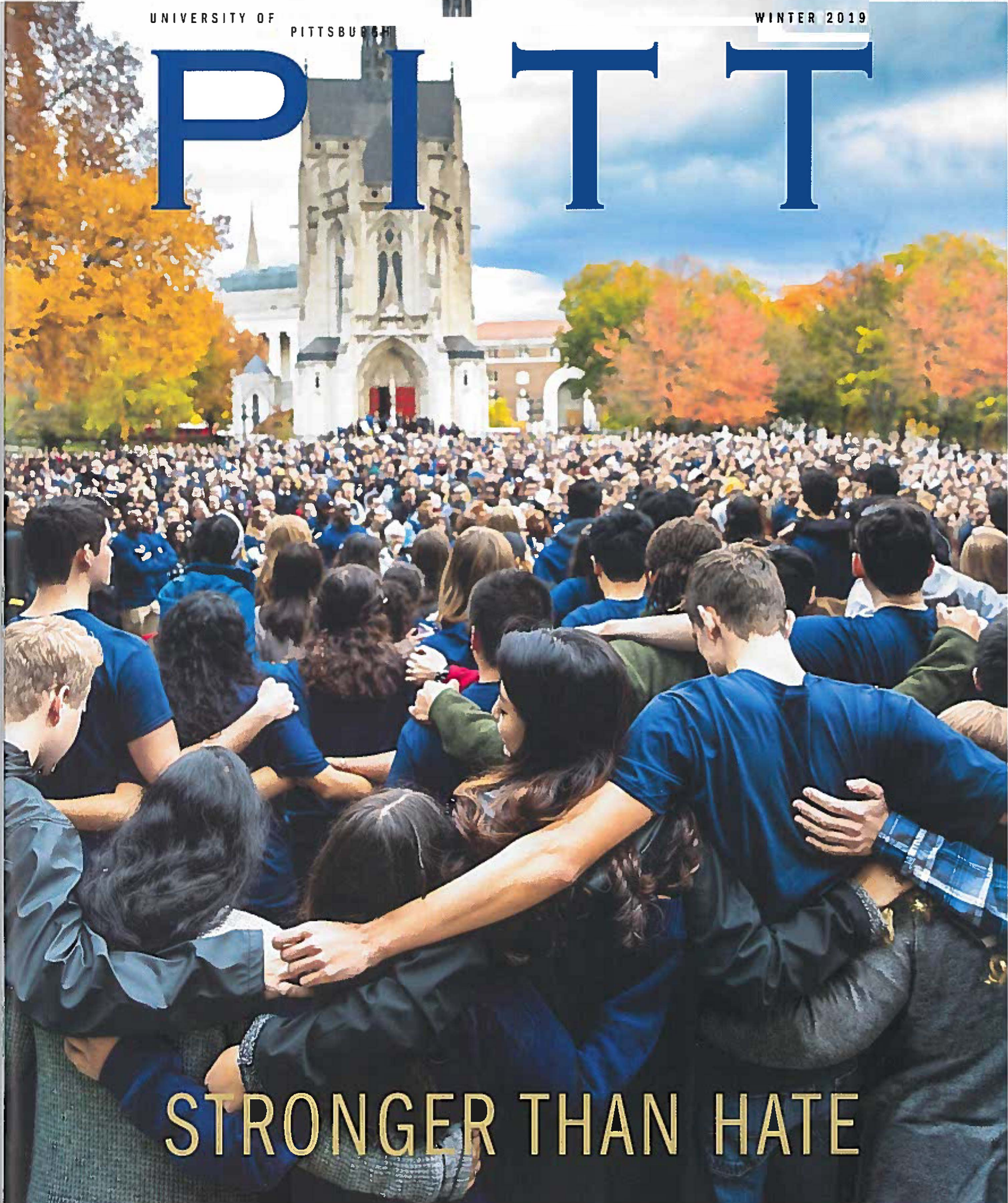


UNIVERSITY OF
PITTSBURGH

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PITTT



STRONGER THAN HATE

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COME TO LIFE

Memories of childhood film and storybook characters can warm the hearts of even the most grown of grown-ups. But for one group of Pitt undergrads, a shared love of fictional characters serves a purpose beyond nostalgia. With the help of make-up, wigs, and a dedicated base of members, a student-run club called the Imagination Project (TIP) is bringing some much-needed joy to local children and adults.



Julia Driscoll (right), TIP board member and treasurer major, helps bioengineering major Daniela Frane get into character.



Ronnie (right), Woodlands camper, is thrilled to meet a princess portrayed by Daniela Duarte.

COME TO LIFE

Dressed in costume as beloved heroes and heroines or serving as character assistants, members of TIP visit children, young adults, and families in hospitals and care facilities around Pittsburgh. Recently, the club traveled to the city's North Hills to visit the Woodlands Foundation, which hosts programming for people of all ages with disabilities and chronic illness. There, club members—including princesses and a superhero—met with young adult campers for a morning of imagination and meaningful connections.

"Our mission is just to spread happiness to as many people as possible," says biochemistry major Raksha Pothapragada, who cofounded TIP in 2017 with neuroscience major Revathy Pillai, Joanna Anninos (NURS '18), and Alexandria Saltzman (NURS '18).

The club was sparked by the idea to help Pitt students give back to the community. It now has 100 members, 40 of whom portray at least one character. Members don't have to dress up to make a difference, however. Fundraising and roles training characters, applying their make-up, and accompanying them on visits require an immense amount of work and are vital to keeping the magic alive. For many participants—who come from a range of Pitt schools and academic programs including rehabilitation science, communication, and theater—working with TIP builds upon their classroom studies.



Woodlands camper Anay is all smiles after a bracelet-making activity.



TIP princesses take turns giving farewell hugs. From left to right: Angelina, TIP board member and communication and English nonfiction writing major, Eshwari Ganesan, natural sciences major, and Daniela Rhee.



Andrea receives a superhero hug from marketing major Caleb Shalaby. Below: Woodlands camper Nicole shows off her dance moves.

