

THE BEST FACE OF GREEK HOUSES

Butler University President Writes Us About the Positive Side of Fraternity

One question I was asked early on in my tenure as President of Butler University was, "Are you for or against Greek life on campus?" I found the question nonsensical, then and now. It implied that anyone could make a wholesale value judgment on a segment of the Butler population. Members of Greek fraternities and sororities are, individually and corporately, representatives of both the virtues and failings of human beings in general. A more substantive question would be, "How do Greeks contribute to the quality of life at Butler?" That question can be answered in a number of ways. As a professor of English, I'd like to answer the question by briefly recounting four stories.

In the wake of September 11th last year, at the instigation of the TKE fraternity, the Greeks caded a trampoline from Galyan's and sponsored a 96-hour jump-a-thon to raise money for American Red Cross relief efforts. Their efforts garnered over \$10,000, involved students from the dorms as well as the Greek houses, and served as an opportunity for many to do something to help. Having begun my first academic year as President only weeks before, I will never forget their efforts, which represented my first encounter and memory of the Greeks at Butler University.

Several Greek houses underwent renovations this summer. The most

unusual redo happened at Lambda Chi, where the men planted shrubs and trees and put up bird feeders in their yard. Their efforts gained them designation as a Backyard Wildlife Habitat from the National Wildlife Federation, the first fraternity in the nation to gain this honor.



Bobby Fong
President of Butler University

Recently, the members of Sigma Chi and Alpha Phi treated 70 elementary-age children from the Martin Luther King Center in Indianapolis to a day on campus. The fraternity and sorority received donations of food, drink, and games; arranged for bus transportation for the children; supervised the activities; and presented a \$500 check to the King Center. They hope to make

this an annual affair as their service outreach to kids who may have never dreamed of being on a college campus.

Finally, during the Jewish celebration of Sukkot, members of the Butler Hillel society erected a Sukkah, a temporary shelter, or tabernacle, made out of wood and metal bracing. Unfortunately, the rickety Sukkah collapsed that same evening. Next morning, one of the Hillel members determined to try and repair the structure, only to discover fifteen members of Phi Kappa Psi already hard at work with drills, saws, and hammers to restore the Sukkah. None of the fraternity members were Jewish. Wrote Rabbi Sandy Sasso in *The Indianapolis Star*, "While incidents of ethnic profiling and anti-Semitism have begun to raise doubts about the ability of a diverse humanity to learn to live together, a group of college students managed to teach us differently and restore our faith. . . . 15 fraternity brothers taught us what it will take to rebuild our world."

We all fail to live consistently up to the standards of our best selves; what matters is that we try. I have no illusions about the Greek houses and those who pledge them, but I have seen their best face. To the Greeks, I invoke the words of the author of the letter to the Hebrews, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, . . . but exhorting one another."