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## Fraternities make you smarter

Most are not animal houses and do a lot of good

January 23, 2014 12:00 AM

Several of my fraternity brothers and I read the [Dec. 30 Perspectives piece](#) by James Grieff, “[Fraternities Make You Dumber](#),” with mixed emotions. We aren’t so naive as to think that the tragic events he describes don’t play out each year on college campuses across the United States. My heart goes out to parents whose children have been senselessly injured or worse in hazing incidents.

Sadly, however, these incidents are not limited to the Greek system. And I’d like to suggest that we not paint the Greek landscape with such a broad brush. Many positive things happen in a well-organized Greek community.

The “animal house” environment Mr. Grieff described certainly was a reality back in my days at Bethany College in the 1970s. I’m not proud of that behavior, but I can tell you that the bond with my brothers is stronger than virtually any other that most of us experience in our lives.

The beneficiaries of that kind of commitment include colleges and universities and their surrounding communities.

Greeks make up a small percentage of students at any institution, yet they contribute to scholarships and endowments at far greater levels than non-Greeks, not to mention the volunteer efforts they lead on most campuses.

My bond with 900 living alumni from my chapter transcends the generations, and it is why I felt compelled to write. All fraternities are *not* created equal. Greek organizations are made up of various personalities, just like churches, schools, hospitals and businesses. Each has its own culture.

One thing that differentiates fraternities are their guiding values. The beliefs of my fraternity, Beta Theta Pi, are reflected in the Men of Principle initiative. These include: “I recognize and respect the worth of each person, refusing to take part in activities that undermine the dignity of others or

myself.” And: “I choose to act responsibly, weighing the consequences of my actions on those around me.”

Chapters that follow these principles no longer haze. And our alumni try to help the young men of our chapter live a centered college life that prepares them to be outstanding citizens in the years to come.

For instance, we established a scholarship program that recognizes and financially rewards active brothers for academic achievement, campus leadership, philanthropy and the like. One result: Our fraternity has had the highest average GPA of any organization on campus, independent or Greek, male or female, eight of the last 12 semesters. I don't think our men are getting dumber.

We started a mentoring program for upperclassmen in the fraternity that partners young men with alumni who work in their fields of interest.

We sponsor active brothers to nationally acclaimed leadership and education programs. One such program is appropriately named after UCLA coaching legend John Wooden, who was a member of our fraternity.

These are but a few of the things our alumni do to enrich the lives of young men. And here is just a short list of activities that members of our chapter have been involved in over the last year. They ...

- Hosted a car wash with Alpha Xi Delta sorority to raise money for Autism Speaks and the Augusta Levy Learning Center in Wheeling.
- Donated blood during a Red Cross blood drive.
- Purchased toys and a Christmas tree for underprivileged children.
- Held a “Meet Santa” day at Augusta Levy where one of the brothers dressed as Santa and five others bought every child a toy and helped decorate the center.
- Raised money for a family who had a daughter die in a tragic house explosion.
- Participated in FUN Day, where more than 100 local children with disabilities came to campus and enjoyed games and prizes we coordinated for their benefit.

- Raised funds to buy and donate children's books to Bethany's new children's library.

No one is perfect, but this track record makes our alumni very proud. Many of these activities occur on college campuses around the country every day.

There is a reason that millions of Greek alumni and students are so loyal to their fraternity brothers and sorority sisters, as well as their alma maters: Greek organizations add value to their lives — inside the classroom and beyond.

The Greek community is alive and well and working hard to develop young men and women into responsible and caring citizens of whom we all can be proud.

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