



# Historic Epsilon Class

By Brad Stephens (2013)

When Nick Bratcher came to WKU, he said wasn't interested in joining a fraternity.

"I had a negative view of fraternities," Bratcher, a freshman from Ohio County, said. "Most didn't seem to live up to their values."

Bratcher attended the Honors College Freshman Retreat, where he became friends with some of the counselors, who were Honors undergraduate students.

"I noticed that some of the counselors weren't just buddies, but it seemed they shared some kind of bond," Bratcher said.

Indeed, five of the counselors did share a bond: that of brotherhood in the Chi Eta chapter of Phi Gamma Delta.

Louisville sophomore Chris Kinney, in his first semester as Chi Eta's recruitment chairman, said the chapter's recruiting strategy was to develop relationships with potential new members before formal recruitment began.

Informal recruiting events included cookouts, poker nights, dinner at Cici's Pizza, a Bowling Green Hot Rods game, and sports at local parks.

At various events there were as many as forty potential new members interacting with the chapter's brothers.



Front Row (L to R): Sam Knott, Trip Carpenter, Nick Bratcher, Ryan DeMuth, Ben Aroh, Kent Jones, Griffin Fruge | Second Row: Jeff Creech, Dylan Ward, Mac Burton, Will Garcia, Will, Owens, Tyler Lockhart, Jacob Hood, Ben Hussung | Third Row: Keaton Brownstead, Corey Johnson, Jason White, Jonathan Caron, Cody Hutchins, Spencer Wright, Austin Lanter

"We wanted men of integrity who understand hard work and what it means to be a team player, and will pursue excellence with us," Kinney said.

In the past, formal recruitment events had been held at sorority houses.

But recruitment coincided with the opening of the new chapter house at 1311 College Street.

"The house provided a central location where recruits could get to know Phi Gamma Delta," he said. "It was a good atmosphere for them to spend time with the brothers."

Chapter president Chaz Vittitow, a Louisville senior, said a well-kept house "showed the fraternity's personality."

"Recruits saw how much respect we have for our fraternity by the quality of our house," Vittitow said.

During the week of formal recruitment, pizza and chicken wings for formal rush events were donated by Hilligan's, a restaurant near the house.

Additionally, Fiji girls baked cookies, brownies, and cupcakes throughout the week.

Brothers mingled with recruits on the back deck while junior brothers Wade Haga and Jordan Minton played guitar.

Vittitow said the efforts of Kinney and his recruitment committee were "phenomenal."

"They were well organized and did an excellent job of communicating recruitment goals and events to the brothers," Vittitow said. "They kept in mind our expectation for men of quality."

After a successful preference night, twenty-two men signed bids and pledged into the chapter as Chi Eta's Epsilon Class.

The new members have already taken part in a retreat at the Logan County farm of junior brother Luke Simmons.

The pledges shot doves, went frog gigging, roasted s'mores, and discussed ideas for a pledge class project.

"I can barely contain my excitement for the next four years," Bratcher said. "At first I didn't even want to be in a fraternity, now I couldn't imagine life without Fiji."

As a senior who will soon have to step down from a leadership position, Vittitow said he is confident in the abilities of the Epsilon class.

"These guys understand what our fraternity is about," he said. "They're men of integrity who appreciate our fraternity for what it is and will uphold our five values with enthusiasm."



# Home is Where the Fijis Are

By Brad Stephens (2013)

The Chi Eta chapter, now in its fifth semester at WKU, has a place to call its own.

The house at 1311 College Street was purchased from the Sigma Nu fraternity in the spring by the Phi Gamma Delta Housing Corporation at WKU, Inc.

After undergoing extensive renovations during summer, 16 brothers moved into the new home throughout August.

The house features seven bedrooms, three bathrooms, a powder room for female guests, a study room, a TV room, a newly refurbished kitchen, and a large back deck area.

Thanks to renovations, the house looks remarkably different now than it did upon purchase. Housing Corp. vice president Jeff Baynham said, "Without volunteer help, moving into the house would've been unrealistic."

Gordon Lunceford (father of Richmond junior brother Malcolm Lunceford) led the renovation process for the house.

"As the head of the renovation committee, he drew up a schedule for renovation and acquired the necessary resources," Baynham said.

Brothers and parents provided the major legwork for each of the projects.

Renovations included:

- Installing a new heating and air system.
- Replacing windows, toilets, and interior doors.
- Sanding and staining floors.
- Repainting rooms, including



- the trim and ceilings.
- Gutting and rebuilding the kitchen.
- Building and knocking down walls.
- Making improvements to the roof.
- Painting the outside deck.
- Adding insulation to exterior walls.
- Improving electrical wiring.
- Cleaning the attic and basement.
- Removing graffiti from the interior and exterior

Each week's progress was published on the [wkufiji.com](http://wkufiji.com) website, and these updates are still available for [viewing online](#).

"We would not have a house were it not for the skills of Wayne Jury (father of Elizabethtown junior brother Tyler Jury) and Gordon," Baynham said.

Bob Anderegg served as Housing Corp. president. Anderegg, a former Purple Legionnaire for Chi Eta, had prior experience as housing corp. president for the UC-Riverside and UC-Irvine Fiji chapters and Kentucky Pi Kappa Phi chapter, as well as being housing corp. treasurer for the Kentucky Fijis.

"The Chi Eta chapter house has an incredibly home-like quality," Anderegg said. "It fits nicely in the neighborhood and doesn't look like a fraternity house except for the Greek letters

on the front."

Russellville senior brother Will Stuart was named the first Housing Manager for the chapter.

"I saw this position as my chance to serve the fraternity," Stuart said. "And as a management major, this will give me experience for after I graduate."

In order to keep the house in good condition, live-in brothers are paired up each week and assigned a set of chores. Baynham said it's the responsibility of the brothers to look after the house. "The house will be a great place to live as long as the men respect the house," Baynham said. "With all the volunteer work put in by brothers and parents over the summer, the brothers want to take care of their house."

Phi Gamma Delta Housing Corporation at WKU, Inc  
 Bob Anderegg, President  
 Jeff Baynham, Vice President/Treasurer  
 Ray Blankenship, Secretary  
 Ben Harper, Director  
 Dean Kahler, Director  
 Charlie Vittitow, Director (Parent)  
 Gordon Lunceford, Director (Parent)  
 Barry White, Director (Parent)  
 Sherry Ryle, Director (Parent)





# Fijis Across America

## From Tragedy to Triumph

By Brad Stephens (2013)

Tragedy and triumph are feelings that everyone experiences during a lifetime. But when a tragedy results in a triumph, something special has happened.

And something special did happen for six weeks this summer as five Chi Eta brothers known as Fijis Across America biked from coast to coast, their triumph touching the lives of millions.

According to Elizabethtown brother Tyler Jury, the idea of riding across the country was an adventure that had always appealed to him.

But it was when Jury's grandfather was suffering the effects of Alzheimer's, that found had a purpose for his ride.

"I felt led to take this bike ride and turn it into something that would raise local, statewide, and nationwide awareness for Alzheimer's research," Jury said.

Jury lost his grandfather July 10, 2009. But his passion to follow through with the ride was only made stronger.

In order to make the ride a reality, he recruited Louisville brother Chaz Vittitow, Lexington brother Wade Haga, Bowling Green brother Mitchell White, Glendale brother Justin Cave, and University of Kentucky student Cameron Hamilton to go coast to coast with him.

The group became known as Fijis Across America, and they set a goal to raise \$75,000 for Alzheimer's research.



The riders pose with Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell before setting out on their 3,200-mile ride.

They began marketing themselves around campus and the community selling shirts and bracelets with proceeds going to the cause.

While busy fundraising the riders also had to focus on training and logistics. Cave was mostly responsible for planning the route, using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to mark daily mileage goals.

The route Cave selected was a combination of the Race Across America Route and the Transcontinental Trail, taking the riders from Oceanside, Calif. to Yorktown, Va.

Once the ride actually started Cave said he was amazed at the daily progress of the riders, as they met every one of their mileage goals.

He said the second day of the ride was what convinced him they were going to succeed.

"On Day 2 we were supposed to cover 127 miles, and I thought 'there's no way we'll make this,' but it happened," Cave said. "For a bunch of novice guys on bikes we became very skilled."

The riders dealt with geographical obstacles along the way. The heat of Arizona,

mountains of Colorado, humidity of Missouri, and hills of Appalachia made for a grueling six weeks.

"We had our days where it was really hot and we were fatigued," Cave said. "But it was really cool how we cast aside our differences and just rode together for the cause."

The riders dedicated each day to a family or individual affected by Alzheimer's.

They were helped along the way by Fijis living around the country, notably the Psi Mu chapter at Missouri State, Omicron chapter at Virginia, and the Rho Alpha chapter at Virginia Tech.

"It's remarkable how Fiji is represented across the country," Cave said. "The ride proved that if you are

in need, and you are representing the name of Fiji, there's a brother out there waiting for you."

Louisville brother Jordan Minton, who served as support driver, said, "every Fiji chapter (the riders) met along the way was very welcoming."

"They would take us out to dinner, let us hang out at their houses, and talk about their chapters," he said. "The brotherhood was really cool."





When the riders touched their front tires in the Atlantic Ocean in July, they had completed the journey of a lifetime.

Jury said though the ride was over, Fijis Across America will continue to raise money for Alzheimer's research. To this point they have raised about \$50,000.

He said a 30-minute documentary is in the works, and proceeds from viewing parties will go to the cause. He also brought up the possibility of future rides that would involve representatives from a collection of Fiji chapters teaming up to do the route.

Whatever the future holds, Jury said he is both proud and humbled that the tragedy of his grandfather's death led to such a triumph.

"A lot of times when people have bad things happen in their life like death, it's easy to dwell on them passing away," Jury said.

"But now I know that God's plan for my grandfather's death was so much bigger than I could've ever imagined."



The riders enjoy the scenery of Utah as they make their way across America. The brothers got to see a few sights along the way, including where Forrest Gump stopped running.

## Building Hope in Baton Rouge

### Chi Eta Serves with Habitat for Humanity

By Brad Stephens (2013)

The Chi Eta brothers used their fall break as an opportunity for a service trip to Louisiana.

Thirty nine brothers, including 15 from the chapter's Epsilon pledge class volunteered with Habitat for Humanity and the St. Vincent DePaul Society in the Baton Rouge area.

London sophomore John Whitaker, Chi Eta's community service chair, was responsible for organizing the trip.

He said the idea of a service trip came from reading awards applications submitted by other chapters who had done something similar.

"I was looking for areas that weren't too far of a drive, and that I had never been to," Whitaker said. "Louisiana intrigued me because of its unique culture and the hardships the state has been affected by recently."

Hurricane Katrina struck the state in August of 2005 devastating millions, especially in the New Orleans area. More recently, Hurricane Gustav, which made landfall in September of 2008, caused heavy wind damage in Baton Rouge, leaving many homeless.

Habitat for Humanity and St. Vincent DePaul are two organizations that have helped residents recover.

Habitat has been building simple, decent, and affordable housing for those displaced by Katrina and Gustav through its Gulf Coast Recovery program.

St. Vincent DePaul, a Catholic organization that works in over 100 countries, does things for the poor in the area like provide meals and operate a thrift store. Brothers volunteered with both organizations.





Nashville sophomore Bryan Hartzell said his favorite service opportunity was working on the roof of a Habitat house.

“Being on top of a house is quite an experience,” he said. It was a little scary, but to realize that we put together an entire roof in less than a day is pretty awesome.”

Whitaker said he was impacted by those working for St. Vincent DePaul.

“The way they approached their jobs and the pride they took in helping other people out inspired me to be more of a servant,” he said.

In addition to serving others, Chi Eta was the recipient of plenty of hospitality courtesy of the recently colonized Beta Rho Fiji colony at LSU.

Beta Rho opened up their chapter house to Chi Eta, providing free lodging that kept the trip relatively inexpensive.

Somerset freshman Jonathan Caron, a member of the Epsilon class, said the brotherhood gained by spending time with their colony was valuable considering that Chi Eta recently went through the same colonization process.

“Since I got here after we became a chapter, I never got to experience our fraternity as a colony,” Caron said. “Seeing the LSU guys gave me greater perspective on what our chapter went through.”

Whitaker also appreciated time spent with the Beta Rho colony.

“We’re used to how we do things here,” he said. “But the trip allowed us to see the similarities and differences of Fiji brotherhood at a much bigger school.”

The trip also included sightseeing in New Orleans and a visit to the gravesite of Daniel Webster Crofts, one of the six founders of Phi Gamma Delta.

When the brothers returned, they came back from a great trip with stories they’ll be able to tell for a lifetime.

“We can look back 20 years from now and say ‘Hey remember when we took that trip to Baton Rouge and put on that roof in one day?’” Hartzell said. “Brotherhood is built through those kinds of common experiences.”



**Top:** Members of the Epsilon pledge class Ryan DeMeuth and Will Garcia work together to nail a board to the roof of a Habitat for Humanity home. **Bottom:** Zack Ryle pauses to observe the progress being made on the roofing project.

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