



photo submitted by Nick Hart

May 22, the Gear Up Florida team made a stop at the Give Kids the World Wish, a foundation that works closely with Make a Wish Foundation, Pi Kappa Phi President senior Nick Hart said. He said their friendship visit consisted of giving parents of the children at the facility a night out. The team participated in many activities with the children, including the carousel, he said.



photo submitted by Nick Hart

After a 40-mile bike ride, Pi Kappa Phi President senior Nick Hart said participants were greeted by friendly faces at the Webster Memorial Baptist Church in Lakeland, Fla.

Fraternity journeys for service

Pi Kappa Phi adds new program, raising thousands of dollars for philanthropy

Naomi Davis
Staff Reporter

The summer was a time for service for five members of Pi Kappa Phi social fraternity, continuing a tradition of volunteerism and reaching a new fundraising high in the process.

The Pi Kappas raised a total of \$17,000 through their national philanthropy, Push America, which is dedicated to "Building Leaders of Tomorrow By Serving People With Disabilities Today," according to push-america.org. The program features Journey of Hope and Gear Up Florida, both cross-country bicycling missions, and Build America, a new addition to the program focused on building facilities for people with disabilities.

"[Push America] serves people with mental, developmental and severe learning disabilities of all ages," Pi Kapp President senior Nick Hart said.

Juniors Joe Baumann and Andrew Greiner and senior Scott Lesinski were the first Truman students to participate

in Build America, which began in summer 2003.

The men spent six weeks on the road, beginning in Fort Collins, Colo., and ending in Washington, D.C., building amenities at camps that serve people with disabilities and lodging at the camps, donated hotel rooms and churches along the way.

Each participant was responsible for raising \$3,500 before the trip for a total of \$30,000 from 14 participants. Baumann said they built gazebos and observation decks and repaved paths at six different camps for one-week periods, with the extra money going toward gas for the trip.

Baumann said his favorite part of the project was the time spent with the children.

"We worked until dinner time, and afterwards we had some time to interact with the campers," Baumann said. "That was the fun part because we got to be friends with them and the counselors."

Baumann said the money raised for the program had to be acquired personally. The volunteers received funding through a couple of campus fundraisers, such as Penny Wars, as well as donations from their church communities and from Pi Kapp alumni.

Hart, who participated in Gear Up Florida, spent the first two weeks of vacation with a team of 35 other cyclists, biking anywhere from 30 to 100 miles a day across Florida. The program began May 14 and ended May 28 and covered 800 miles total.

Gear Up Florida also involved regular stops for the cyclists to visit organizations that serve people with disabilities. Hart said he enjoyed the interactive nature of the philanthropy.

"The best part is that you're there to see exactly where the money that you raise goes, so it's very rewarding," he said. "It's an eye-opening experience to be exposed to a realm of society that many people choose to ignore because they don't understand."

Many have participated in Journey of Hope, another cycling philanthropy, in past years. This year junior Matt Ratliff participated in the program: a 71-day, 4,285-mile bike trek beginning in Florence, Ore., and ending in Washington, D.C.

Ratliff said that after a long conversation with Truman alumnus and fel-

low Pi Kapp member Nick Cloud, who was a project manager in the program, he decided it was a good way to become more involved.

"I knew it was a very big commitment, and I'd be gone all summer," Ratliff said. "Overall, I'd do it again in a heartbeat."

Ratliff and 20 other cyclists stopped daily in different towns to interact with the various organizations they were serving.

"You name it, we did it," he said. "We went bowling, swimming, and we played wheelchair basketball, rugby and soccer."

The end of the summer months didn't signal the end of service among these volunteers. The five summer participants, along with several other Pi Kapp members, drove last weekend to Prairie du Chien, Wis., to participate in Give a Push Weekend, a smaller time-commitment opportunity of the Push America Program, Baumann said.

Pi Kappa Phi national philanthropy

Push America

- Build America (new)
- Gear Up Florida
- Journey for Hope

The volunteers' duties were to build a gazebo, garden and observatory for a camp for people with disabilities. This particular event had no fundraising goal but was an opportunity for service.

Baumann said the six-hour drive and weekend of work was worth the time.

"I enjoy this, it's a lot of fun" Baumann said. "Two days of personal freedom is a really small sacrifice to make people's lives that much better."

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