

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Democracy is a device that ensures we shall be governed no better than we deserve."
George Bernard Shaw

YOUR WORLD

CONTACT US

NOVEMBER 28, 2008

Questions concerning area club schedules and event listings for Daily Digest should be directed to the editor at (903) 984-2593.

DAILY DIGEST

MONDAY

TOPS (TAKING OFF POUNDS SENSIBLY) meets Mondays 5:30-6:30 at St. Luke's UMC. For information call Linda Myhand 903-934-6794 or Linda Brotherton at 903-258-3463. Come join a group well known for losing and loving it.

KILGORE HIGH SCHOOL FFA BOOSTER CLUB will meet 7 p.m. Dec. 1 at the KHS Ag Building. All parents are invited to attend.

GREGG COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS are involved in many community gardening and landscaping projects. A 10-week Master Gardener training course will begin Jan. 7, 2009. Cost to enroll is \$100. Applications for training are due by Monday, Dec. 15. For complete schedule visit <http://greggtx.tamu.edu/>. For more info visit www.greggmastergardeners.org.

TUESDAY

THE KILGORE BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP will meet at the Kilgore Public Library Dec. 2 at 2 p.m. Both fiction and non-fiction will be discussed. The public is invited.

PESTICIDE RECERTIFICATION SEMINAR will be held Dec. 2 and 4 at the Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Overton. Registration for the program will begin at 7:30 a.m. each morning, with the program starting at 8:30. Training is scheduled to end at 2:45 p.m. Registration fee for either day is \$25 and will include a catered barbecue lunch. For info, call Dennis Smith, Gregg County Extension Office, at 903-236-8429 or by e-mail at dg-smith@tamu.edu.

SATURDAY

HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION, LONGVIEW CHAPTER, will meet Dec. 6 at Wesley-McCabe Methodist Church, 1115 S. Moberly, at 10:30 a.m. The Christmas party will feature Christmas music, a gift exchange, and a luncheon. Please bring a wrapped white elephant gift and a covered dish for the luncheon. Visitors welcome.

SUNDAY

MT. MORIAH BAPTIST CHURCH, 8316 West Goforth Rd., Kilgore, invites the public to attend their anniversary Nov. 30 at 3 p.m. The guest minister will be Rev. Thomas E. Jones, Associate Minister, Willow Springs Baptist Church, Longview.

KC THEATER DEPARTMENT will perform "A Christmas Carol" in Van Cliburn Auditorium 7:30 p.m. Friday-Sunday, Dec. 5-7, with matinees at 2:30 p.m. both Sundays. For ticket info, call 983-8126 or e-mail kbarber@kilgore.edu.

FYI

KILGORE COMMUNITY CRISIS CENTER is in desperate need of toiletries - soap, deodorant, shampoo, toilet tissue and pampers. If you would like to make donation please call 903-984-3019

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF NORTHEAST TEXAS (LONGVIEW) is looking for volunteers to help at the animal shelter. Participants must be at least 18 years of age and complete a volunteer application. For more information, contact Roxanne Hutson at 903-297-2170.

THE H.E.A.R.T. GROUP, a domestic sexual assault group for women, meets every Thursday from 6-7 p.m. at the Kilgore Community Crisis Center located at 905 Broadway. The public is welcome to attend. For more information call 903-984-3019

THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT GROUPS meet each Thursday evening at 6 p.m. at 905 Broadway. For more information call 903-984-3019.

HELPING HANDS NEED VOLUNTEERS to work 3 to 5 hours once a week or once a month helping bag food for the families. Please call between 9-12 Monday through Friday at 903-984-1796.

THE ROY H. LAIRD FOUNDATION AUXILIARY is still taking paper back books in the gift shop. These books generate monies for scholarships for Kilgore Jr. College students who are enrolled in the medical field, and also to pay for prescriptions to the elderly.

Christian fraternities offer a different path

By JAY REEVES

Associated Press Writer

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (AP) — It's 11 a.m. Saturday, and whiskey is flowing at the big houses on fraternity row at the University of Alabama. Guys in ties and baseball caps are laughing and dancing with sorority girls in bright dresses as a band blares away just around the corner.

Smack in the middle of that row is the Lambda Sigma Phi house, but things are a lot quieter inside. Parents are helping put out the lunch spread before a Crimson Tide football game and a few members lounge in the den watching TV.

A Bible passage decorates the door to the main room. "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord," it begins.

Lambda Sigma Phi is part of a wave of Christian fraternities and sororities that has gained a foothold on U.S. college campuses, sometimes despite the wishes of school administrators. Members get pumped up about prayer, Bible study and service projects, passions they say campus officials should and often do embrace as fresh amid a Greek culture typically seen as centered on hazing, keg parties and little else.

Founded in 2001, Lambda Sigma Phi hopes to show other groups at the university what Jesus is all about.

"We're almost in a bubble because we're surrounded by all this. That's why we're here on Jefferson Avenue, to minister to these guys," said chapter president Daniel Weaver. "We want to be a light on this campus."

Many social fraternities and sororities have Christian tenets in their teachings, and Christian-lifestyle fraternities have existed for generations. Several

began about 80 years ago to promote faith-based fellowship during the Roaring Twenties.

Greek-letter organizations that promote Christian practices have become more common in recent years with young evangelicals seeking new ways to live out their faith and parents looking for a haven from the drunken daze that often happens in college.

At least 210 exist on campuses nationwide from the West Coast to the Deep South, where they are most common. But the groups are also strong in parts of the Midwest and in Southern states along the Atlantic coast.

Rules against drinking are common in these groups, along with Bible studies and service projects that resemble church-based missions work.

Alpha Delta Chi, a Christian sorority with 14 active chapters nationwide, is straightforward about its membership requirements: Churchgoing Christians only. No smoking or illegal drugs. No premarital sex. And please, no drinking to the point that it would reflect badly on Christianity.

A small committee works with members who break the rules, said Kiran Thadhani, president of Alpha Delta Chi at Georgia Tech, where a chapter began five years ago. But the group says it isn't just about rules, it's about young women trying to live like Christ.

"All the girls are in Bible studies. We also do sisterhood retreats and outreach," she said. "Many girls work at soup kitchens, go on summer mission trips and work right here on homelessness and poverty issues in Atlanta."

Many campuses welcome the combination of old-time religion with Greek-letter social groups, but others haven't.

At the University of Florida,

Beta Upsilon Chi filed a federal discrimination suit last year after administrators refused to officially recognize the fraternity because it required members to be Christians. The school considered the requirement discriminatory, and the fraternity claimed it was wrongly deprived of meeting space and the ability to recruit on campus.

The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has ordered the school to recognize the group as a fraternity while the lawsuit winds its way through the legal system, and Beta Upsilon Chi has asked the court to make that recognition permanent.

An attorney for the Christian Legal Society, Timothy F. Tracey, said Christian Greek-letter groups have been opening on the nation's campuses more frequently since the mid-1990s, and such court fights have been rare.

"I can think of four or five cases that have come up with fraternities like this," said Tracey, who represents the group at Florida. "You'd think that (schools) would look at this and see the benefit of having them on campus, but they don't always."

At Auburn University, members of Alpha Kappa Lambda decided in 2000 to switch the focus of their fraternity from athletics to Christianity. Drew Bonner, a junior from Birmingham, Ala., visited the group and liked what he saw.

"I didn't really look into fraternities at first because of the reputation," said Bonner. "I met a bunch of these guys through the semester and started looking into it. I really liked it. I'm active in a church here, too, but it's not the same as this."

AKL, part of a secular fraternity with more than 30 chapters, rents a house and throws

parties, but without alcohol and members keep the fun pretty tame. "Animal House" it's not.

"We pride ourselves on not hazing," said Bonner. "We consider the pledges to be brothers in Christ, and we treat them that way."

Traditional, secular fraternities also have banned hazing — the physical or mental abuse of new members — as arrests and lawsuits over the practice threatened the Greek system. But it persists in places.

Bonner's group, like many Christian fraternities or sororities, is small by big-campus standards. Alpha Kappa Lambda's membership hovers between 30 and 35 — less than half the size of many Auburn fraternities — even though its semester dues of \$750 are much cheaper than many.

At Alabama, Lambda Sigma Phi lost about 40 members last year in a split over whether to become more like a traditional fraternity. "We really stood up against it because we wanted to remain Christian," said Weaver, the president.

The group only has about 30 members now, which is fine with Weaver and his fraternity brothers. They often feel like they're under scrutiny for their beliefs, but they say they're not willing to sacrifice their faith for parties.

Clete Hux, a Presbyterian minister who has two sons in Lambda Sigma Phi, said he hopes the group sticks to its principles. He said he's got a peace of mind that eludes many parents who send their children off to college.

"You know there's not going to be any wild parties going on. They have accountability groups and Bible studies," he said. "It's kind of furthering what you as parents instill in your children."

TCA pushes national designation for Neches

BEAUMONT (AP) — A state conservation group is pushing for the Neches River to receive a special federal designation that would shield the East Texas waterway from dam or channel projects.

The Texas Conservation Alliance launched an initiative to have the Neches recognized as a National Scenic River. The group says the designation would protect the river yet not restrict commerce and industry stemming from it, the Beaumont Enterprise reported.

City of Dallas and state water planners have looked to the Neches for a reservoir they say will be needed in North Texas by

mid-century.

Conservationists say the river and its natural areas have increasingly become tourist destinations that need to be protected.

TCA leaders think the Neches River's beauty, diverse flora and fauna and historic significance would help it qualify for the designation.

Before the Neches can receive the designation, Congress must authorize a study of the river's eligibility and suitability under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. If the study recommends it be a classified as a National Scenic River, Congress would have to pass a bill to make the designation official.

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