

UNIVERSITY

Black greek groups focus on service

□ Big or small, University African American organizations are committed to their causes

By Lisa Millegan
Emerald Associate Editor

University junior Gene Shaffer-Strathman knew he wanted to be a member of Kappa Alpha Psi when he was four years old.

Senior Rose Marie Beatty was so interested in joining Delta Sigma Theta, which used to have no University members, that she called the sorority's national headquarters to find out how to pledge.

These groups that have inspired such ardent devotion are predominantly black greek organizations.

With six groups represented on campus, about 25 University students are members of these fraternities and sororities. The University has close to 240 black students.

Most students, including Beatty, learn of the groups from friends or relatives who were members.

"If you grew up around Deltas, you want to be one," said Beatty, who is one of two University members of the sorority. "It's a family kind of thing."

University black fraternities are Kappa Alpha Psi, Alpha Phi Alpha, Phi Beta Sigma and Omega Phi Phi. The sororities represented on campus are Delta Sigma Theta and Alpha Kappa Alpha.

Some of the groups' national organizations date back to the turn of the century. Alpha Phi Alpha was the nation's first black fraternity and was founded in 1906.

Students of any race can join the groups, but the organizations focus on doing community service for blacks. Currently, Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority is the only campus black greek organization to have a non-black member.

Beatty said one of the main reasons she pledged Delta Sig-



Members of the University's African American greek organizations say the lack of houses hasn't kept them from forming lifetime bonds.

Photo by Sol Neelman

ma Theta was because of the group's emphasis on community service.

Her sorority is currently working on programs involving teen parents and black men.

Although their numbers are small, the black fraternities and sororities on campus never recruit members. The groups do occasionally hold general interest meetings, but they usually wait for prospective members to seek them out.

Shaffer-Strathman said his fraternity, which has 13 members, doesn't have pledge quotas.

"It's more important to have quality brothers than quantity," Shaffer-Strathman said.

Lisa Lawrence, one of seven University members of Alpha Kappa Alpha, said her sorority doesn't admit members unless they are serious about making a strong commitment to the group.

"It's a sisterhood for life," Lawrence said. "It's a bond you can't put into words. After I graduate, I'll be part of a graduate Alpha chapter, and the commitment will continue."

Lawrence said her sorority's

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