

Beta members help with local landscaping project

The fraternity members did yardwork Saturday for low-income housing

By Erin Snelgrove
Oregon Daily Emerald

Despite drizzling rain and ankle-deep mud, 20 members of Beta Theta Pi fraternity arrived at the construction site with shovels in hand and wheelbarrows in tow.

Ready to help landscape the yards of low-income housing developments, the fraternity brothers relinquished Saturday morning to provide their services to the Neighborhood Economic Development Corporation. By planting trees, hauling dirt and performing heavy lifting, Beta members hoped their efforts would make a difference for some Eugene citizens.

"We donated our time to NEDCO because we wanted to give something back to the community by helping build the community," said Patrick Carr, the president of the campus chapter of Beta.

Aaron Pocklington, the philanthropy chair for the fraternity, discovered NEDCO by browsing through the phone book. After finding the program, he called its director and asked if he and his fraternity brothers could be of any assistance.

"I picked this philanthropy because the guys prefer physical labor," Pocklington said. "I thought working for NEDCO was something they would be interested in doing."

NEDCO, a non-profit Eugene corporation, builds affordable housing for people who earn moderately low incomes. By receiving loans and grants, the program provides approximately 14 families with new homes each year.

Sandy Halonen, the executive director for NEDCO, was glad to receive the help of the fraternity men. Without their assistance, Halonen said the landscaping project would have been a lot more difficult and time consuming.

"Having these young, strong guys help us out has been great," Halonen said. "It was nice to see them work with everyone to get things done."

Besides the Beta men, owners of the nearly completed homes also helped landscape. In two weeks, when the yard work and the finishing touches on construction are completed, the owners can move into their new homes.

"I can't wait to live here" said Danielle Moran, a NEDCO home owner. "It's amazing that my house payments are going to be as much as my old rent payments. Without NEDCO's program, I would not have been able to afford owning a nice home like this one."

Debbie Hinderlie, another recipient of a NEDCO home, is grateful for Beta's assistance. Most of the people moving into the development are single mothers, so Hinderlie said the physical strength of the men came in handy.

"The guys have been doing all of the hard work, and that has been awesome," Hinderlie said. "Most of us moving into these houses don't have the strength to do a lot of the manual labor, so we really appreciate the guys helping us out."

Although not required to perform philanthropies, Beta, and all other Greek organizations, regularly engage in acts of community service, said Shelley Sutherland, assistant director to student development programs and greek advisor.

"The University doesn't require the chapters to help the community," said Sutherland. "They do it anyway, on their own."

Other philanthropies being held by greek organizations include pool and basketball tournaments and spaghetti feeds or fun runs to raise money for charities. Many other groups do like the Betas and go out to do the hands-on work needed for organizations.

Nate Bucholz, the vice president of public relations for the interfraternity council, said the humanitarian efforts of fraternities and sororities helps to dissolve some of the negative connotations people may have about the greek system.

"With philanthropies, the Greek system pulls together to help other people," Bucholz said. "By helping the community, some of the stereotypical ideas about Greek systems are put to an end."



Beta Theta Pi Fraternity members Patrick Carr (left) and Ryan Cornutt (right) plant a tree. The Beta house helped landscape a low-income housing development Saturday as part of a philanthropy project.

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