

Theta Chi remains unified despite house damage

Theta Chi members, left with a temporarily unliveable house after a summer fire, find ways to remain close

By Chelsea Duncan
News Reporter

Each fall, members of the University's Theta Chi fraternity show potential brothers around their three-story house on 1125 E. 19th Ave. during rush week. This year, however, members are showing off a damaged home.

The house is undergoing repairs this fall because of a summer fire that destroyed its top two floors, making it unliveable for the majority of the fraternity members.

"It's kind of a strange situation," chapter President Dustin Funes said.

Deputy Fire Marshall Mark Thompson, who was the lead investigator of the fire, concluded in August that a plastic can, located on the sun deck and used to extinguish cigarettes, caught fire and ignited the wall.

Members of the fraternity, however, rejected that conclusion, saying they believed the fire was electrical in nature and that nobody in the house smoked.

Much of the house needs remodeling because of extensive smoke and

water damage. Parts of the house are also being upgraded, and a new wing is being added where the outdoor porch once was. Insurance from the fire is covering \$600,000 in damage, while Theta Chi alumni are paying for up to \$100,000 in additional upgrades to the house, Funes said. Part of that cost will pay for a new sprinkler system required by the University, which must be added to all greek houses by fall 2004.

In the meantime, about 20 members are living in the Phoenix Inn Suites where they are sharing 10 rooms. Hotel expenses are covered by the insurance, but members still have to pay rent and utilities for the house.

Theta Chi member Jay Gentzkow, who holds the house scholarship and personal relations chairs, said living at the hotel has been a great experience. He said the hotel has been supportive and helpful under the circumstances, offering the members lower rates, free laundry service and free breakfast among other things.

Funes said other members live off campus and four members still live in the house and pay reduced rates.

Mike Wyant, alumni treasurer of the Theta Chi House Corporation, said the fraternity likes to have someone live in the house for security purposes.

Funes said even though the members are split up, they still remain united as a fraternity.

"We haven't lost touch with one another, but it hasn't been easy either," he said.

He said it has been difficult keeping up with the daily activities they usually hold in the house, but they still try to have barbecues and other events as regularly as possible. The members also visit the house daily for catered meals, which will be available until they move back Nov. 1. They continue to hold chapter meetings at the house.

Funes said the Phoenix Inn has a much different atmosphere than the members are accustomed to, and he said he feels a little closed off from his friends.

"It's just not as much openness as usual," he said, adding that he's used to being able to walk into other members' unlocked rooms in the house to chat any time, but now he has to knock on hotel room doors. Since many of the members are grouped together in the hotel, however, they are not as spread out as they could have been if they had chosen to stay in residence halls on campus, Funes said.

"That's really kind of kept our unity together," he said. "We didn't want to split people up like that."

Still, recruitment for the fraternity



Mark McCambridge Senior Photographer

Stephen Kost and Robbie McEachern watch "Animal House" at the Phoenix Inn Suites.

has been more of a challenge this year, Funes said. The house's current state did not appeal to newly recruited freshmen this summer, and many signed year-long leases in the residence halls.

"It does make it tough," he said. "We like to have freshmen move in."

He added that members have worked hard to exemplify a sense of brotherhood, and that he expects to recruit about 20 new members, which would be more than usual.

Gentzkow said that although it has been difficult showing potential members around the house, he thinks they all realize how nice it will look when the construction is completed in January.

"While it may seem like a hassle, it's all worth it," he said.

Contact the higher education/student life/student affairs reporter at chelseaduncan@dailyemerald.com.

SMOKERS

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help," Berlin said. "These are preventable deaths."

The study breaks new ground in comprehensively assessing women's smoking-related health conditions and the policies that have proved effective in reducing smoking, according to the study's authors.

It grades and ranks each state based on 11 health statute indicators

and evaluates the strength of state tobacco control policies through 10 policy indicators.

Oregon was one of 38 states to receive a failing grade, tying with Virginia for 20th place in the nation.

The report also found that Oregon fares worse than the national average when it comes to the number of pregnant women who smoke. The national goal for the number of pregnant women smoking is less than 1 percent, but 25 percent of pregnant women age 15 to 19 smoke. Overall, in Oregon, 13

percent of pregnant women smoke.

"The rates of smoking among teenagers and young women, whether pregnant or not, is extremely discouraging," Berlin said.

Williams admitted that she was in high school when she first picked up smoking, and said she has tried to quit in the past but couldn't. According to the survey, 53 percent of female smokers in Oregon are trying to quit.

Health educator Annie Dochnahl said that at the University, 82 percent of smokers have considered quitting

and 61 percent have tried.

Dochnahl said that it typically takes approximately five quit-attempts before a person is successful. She said students should consider their first attempts as building blocks to quitting.

"Students shouldn't be discouraged the first, second or third time," she said. "It's about learning what works and what doesn't."

The health center offers free nicotine replacement therapy for students in both patch and gum form. The replacement therapy is available at the

health center pharmacy, as well as the Peer Health Education Office.

Berlin said the most successful way to reach the national goals for women and smoking is to keep women from ever picking up a cigarette in the first place.

"The best advice for women is to never start," she said. "If you smoke, you need to stop as soon as possible."

Contact the crime/health/safety reporter at alishaughnessy@dailyemerald.com.

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Horoscope by Linda C. Black

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Oct. 8). Finish up all those projects that you started and only got halfway through. The more work you complete this year, the more attractive you'll become. To get the advantage, check the day's rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) _ Today is a 6 _ Continue to follow through on promises you've made. Don't start new projects yet. Take care of the cleanup work first.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) _ Today is a 6 _ A friend in need may be threatening to talk your ear off. Don't offer your savings to bail out this person. Your tough love is a better gift.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) _ Today is an 8 _ It's getting closer to the time when your secret can be revealed. Start thinking about the consequences. No need to show too much too soon.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) _ Today is a 7 _ As things get more unsettled, the tension could rise. If you end up with home improvements, the whole thing will be worthwhile. Keep that in mind.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) _ Today is an 8 _ Finish figuring out the costs so that you can take action. You're getting tired of talking. Get suited up for the doing.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) _ Today is a 5 - Changes, many of which seem

to be way beyond your control, create anxiety and expenses. Luckily, your creativity may be able to help you dodge these problems.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) _ Today is a 7 _ You may have been working too hard for too little, but that's about to change. The money should increase steadily over the next few weeks, and not a moment too soon.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) _ Today is an 8 _ You'll be most effective if you stick with the rules you've set. A confrontation could lead to a great breakthrough.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) _ Today is a 7 _ A person who disagrees with you may have a good point. Don't dismiss him or her too quickly. Hear what hasn't been said.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) _ Today is a 7 _ An older person could be threatening to talk your ear off. Don't complain. You'll eventually be rewarded for your patience.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) _ Today is a 7 _ You know that any dilemma can be resolved with a little research. Some jobs take longer than others. Keep at it; you'll find what you seek.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) _ Today is a 6 _ After you stop being embarrassed for having made mistakes, you can get down to business. That should happen soon.

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