"ExtravaCANza!" took place on the Collonade at the Reitz Union. Organizations collected food cans then made them into sculptures for a contest Wednesday, Feb. 8. The cans will be donated to a food bank. The Multicultural Greek Council won for most cans and best sculpture. Above, David Galvez from the MGC finishes a sculpture. Top, Chi Omega showed their school spirit. At right, Kappa Alpha Theta’s Nadine Sfeir and Emily Eastmoore pose with their alligator sculture.

letter from the editors

With the New Year has come tremendous change and growth for the Greek Connection. As a publication whose goal is to unify UF’s Greek Community and celebrate its accomplishments and members, we have, in the year of our existence, taken few steps forward. Each monthly issue has been full of stories covering beneficial philanthropies, outstanding members and meaningful brother and sisterhood events – but from so few chapters of our large and diverse community. Every chapter from every council has stories to tell, and we would like to finally hear them all. Hence our goal for the future: a well-balanced publication that truly represents Greek life at UF as a whole that people read and look forward to monthly.

We hope to do this through distributing printed versions of the newsletter for the very first time, advertising more and utilizing the council PR chairs and the Office of Sorority and Fraternity affairs, which has been behind us every step of the way and is the motivation behind this recent surge of inspiration to finally make this publication live up to the wealth of potential we know it has. Please join us. Read the Greek Connection. Take photos of your events, write about them and send it all to us – the rest of the community and UF deserve to know how wonderful you are. We have even solicited the help of non-Greek journalism majors to serve as reporters and photographers, so if you would like an event covered, please let us know.

Because we are starting from the ground up, the sky is the limit – we have the potential to build the Greek Connection into the nation’s best Greek newsletter representing the nation’s best Greek community, and we know we can. Contact us with ideas, suggestions and questions. Contribute writing and photos. Be a part of something we can, as a unified group, be proud of.

We look forward to working with you. Go Greek and Go Gators,

Risa Polansky and Kate Storey
Co-editors, the Greek Connection
Undoubtedly everyone has noticed that the Tri Delt house on Sorority Row has been vacated for the 2005-2006 school year. Three years ago, the Alpha Psi Chapter of Delta Delta Delta at the University of Florida was chosen from all of the Tri Delt chapters in the country to undergo major housing renovations. The original house, located on East Panhellenic Drive, was built in 1947 and had simply worn down over many years of use and occupation. The new house, shown here, is projected to accommodate 72 girls, compared to the 65 who were able to live in the first house. It is expected to be a $6-million project.

During the construction of the new house, Tri Delt Nationals secured a temporary residence for the chapter, Georgia Seagle Hall on University Avenue, where the sisters currently reside. Not expecting Georgia Seagle to exist as much more than a transitional phase in their overall plan as the new house was being built, the women of Delta Delta Delta were surprised to realize just how much they embraced their new home.

“The Seagle is such a popular place that we are already over capacity for next year,” said House Manager Bridget Friedrich, observing the girls’ fondness for Georgia Seagle Hall. “We have made it our own and have all really bonded together during our time spent here.”

Currently, Tri Delta is in the process of obtaining the final approvals necessary to begin the demolition of the old house and the construction of the new one. There has been a series of unforeseen delays that have set the project back. One such obstacle in the way of construction is the result of Hurricane Katrina, however the chapter is still moving forward with the initial plans. Tri Delta Nationals has secured Georgia Seagle Hall again for the 2006-2007 school year, however it is certain that in the near future, Delta Delta Delta will again be back on the row.
Kappas crash fraternity row

By Elizabeth Oehl

Male-dominated Fraternity Row on the University of Florida campus has welcomed some new female neighbors to the area.

Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority has made a temporary change of address from 401 S.W. 13th St. to 5A Fraternity Row, temporarily occupying the Kappa Alpha Order house.

The Kappa Alpha house was vacant for the fall 2005 semester after the fraternity was put on probation for hazing charges.

The Kappa Kappa Gamma house will be undergoing renovations this semester. The renovations will expand the top and bottom floors of the house and will increase the size and quantity of the upstairs bedrooms.

In the meantime, 29 members of Kappa Kappa Gamma, or Kappa, are currently residing in the KA house.

Though KA's new residents have not encountered any major problems since their arrival, they have had to adjust to a different style of living than they experienced in the Kappa sorority house.

The beds in KA are lofted, and the bathrooms still include urinals.

“It’s been an experience,” said Shaine Melnick, a member of Kappa and a junior at the University of Florida. Melnick said that she has heard mice crawling in the walls at night and has heard that other girls in the house have discovered mice in their lofts.

Stephanie Weisbrod, another member of Kappa Kappa Gamma and resident in the KA house, is not bothered by the situation.

“It’s not really that different than living in a sorority house. It’s just a little more unfinished,” said Weisbrod, a senior at UF.

Weisbrod’s room, which overlooks the front porch of the house and Fraternity Row, includes a bar covered in orange and blue tiles and beds which she and her roommates refer to as “The Caves” because they are built into the wall.

Though Weisbrod and her roommates decorated their room with various advertisements and a mounted deer head, some other women have taken more traditional approaches to decorating by adding feminine touches to their rooms with photos and artwork.

The Kappa Alpha house is between the Phi Sigma Kappa and Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternities, and members of both fraternities have been very welcoming, said Nina DeJong, president of Kappa.

“We’re excited to have them here,” said Ryan Moseley, Sigma Phi Epsilon president. Phi Sigma Kappa members brought flowers, not only for the sorority women, but also for their “house mom” Yvonne Robinson.

Members of several fraternities have offered to assist the women in their move, DeJong said.

“The guys at the bus stop have been very helpful too. A lot of the girls aren’t used to having to take the bus to class,” DeJong said.

Though it is an inconvenience in some ways, overall, Kappa sisters think that living in KA for the semester will be a positive experience.

A KAring Bunch

By Latia Wade

The Ladies of the Iota Lambda Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. are striving to continue a legacy of outstanding service on the University of Florida’s campus and in the Gainesville community. In the 2005 Greek Awards Banquet, the ladies received awards for chapter of the year – for the third consecutive year – most service, graduate advisor of the year and had an average GPA of 3.418, the highest in the National Pan-Hellenic Council.

After an outstanding fall semester, the ladies are preparing to do bigger and better things for the spring semester of 2006. Alpha Kappa Alpha volunteers every Monday with the Williams Elementary Girl Scout Troop. For the month of February, the troop will explore Black history by focusing on a different aspect of history each week, completing the month with a cultural day performance.

Every Tuesday, the ladies hold their nationally-established Ivy Reading AKAdemy. The program works to increase the literary rates among elementary aged children by exposing them to stimulating literary lessons. Additionally, on the first Wednesday of every month, the ladies visit Al’z Place during a program called “A KAring Home.” The interactive program allows volunteers to work with Alzheimer’s patients on projects that reflect the theme of the month.

In addition to these ongoing service programs, there are opportunities to see Iota Lambda in a social setting. The ladies of Alpha Kappa Alpha invite readers to participate in the AKA Think Tank forums, a series of round table discussions on issues facing the black community. AKA Think Tank will be held every Tuesday in the month of February at 7:08 pm, in Turlington 2319.
His fraternity may be small, but Oscar Melendez sees the larger picture in being Greek - living up to his fraternity's principals.

Founded nationally on Dec. 10, 1985, the brothers of Lambda Alpha Upsilon Fraternity Inc., uphold their motto- "Venceremos Porque Nacimos Para Triunfar!," which translates to "we will overcome because we were born to triumph." The motto applies to Melendez, who juggles being a full time student and working 20-25 hours a week as an athletic trainer at P.K Yonge, all while trying to maintain the presence of his organization alive as the only member of LAU at UF.

Despite the challenges of running a fraternity by himself, Melendez puts his best foot forward and continues to "triumph." He participated in the Hispanic Student Association Mr. & Miss HSA Pageant, as well as the Few Good Men Scholarship Pageant. Additionally, he served as co-emcee of the Multicultural Greek Council Recruitment Showcase. His pride for his organization was so deep that he performed a stroll on the stage all by himself in front of the crowd of attendees.

With a 3.46 GPA, Melendez can boast that his organization has the highest GPA in the Multicultural Greek Council. Other accolades have also followed LAU, such as winning the 2004 Sigma Gamma Rho Step/Stroll Competition.

"He has so much on his plate, yet he's always willing to help other organizations out," said Camille Quiles, president of Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc. "While others may have buckled under the pressure of trying to keep their organization alive, Oscar continues working hard to promote what his brothers stand for."

The Incendiary Iota Chapter of LAU was established at UF in April 2001 by Hanio Zuniga and Andy Ortiz. Since then, the chapter has always remained small, in an effort to create tighter bonds among its members.

"That was one of the initial things that attracted me to LAU," Melendez said. "The brothers that I met had created a family for each other here at UF."

When two of his brothers transferred from UF in Spring 2005, Melendez became the sole LAU on campus, but he knew that pledging an organization meant he was part of a national brotherhood. Melendez works as a member of the National Executive Committee, the Assistant Director of Internet Operations, for LAU's national website (www.lambdas.com) and can count on the support of his brothers from as far as New York and Wisconsin.

"That's the great part of being part of LAU, I get an incredible amount of support from my brothers from all over," Melendez said. "I can honestly say I pretty much know every brother who is part of my organization right now."

Though the Office of Sorority and Fraternity Affairs has told Melendez he has until the end of the semester to initiate at least four new members into his organization, Melendez continues moving forward in his recruitment efforts, attempting to meet the new guidelines. Never once shy, Melendez is quick to approach and befriend people. "We’re all on Oscar’s side," said Roberson Mejia, a brother of Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity. "We know that he is a hard worker. It would be a shame if others can’t recognize that it’s not about numbers, it’s about what people like Oscar and organizations like LAU contribute."
By Lauren Asher

On Dec 25, 2005 an American Flag was flown over Al Asad Airbase, Al Anbar Province, Iraq in recognition of Delta Delta Delta’s participation in the Stockings of Love program. Stockings of Love, is an organization that sends Christmas stockings filled with presents over to troops fighting in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Tri Delta took part in the program this past holiday season by sending 60 stockings to 2nd Lt. Andy Yi, a graduate of the University of Florida and alumnus of Kappa Sigma Fraternity, and his fellow Marines of the Support Equipment Division, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 26.

In gratitude of the holiday support Tri Delta gave to the Marines, they sent the chapter an authentic American Flag from the Iraqi combat zone along with an official letter from 2nd Lt. Yi stating the flag flew over their airbase.

Freshman Shelly Adler headed up this project by getting her sorority sisters in the spirit of giving to the troops. Adler found out about the stockings after being in contact with 2nd Lt. Yi and knew instantly that it would be a great program to get her sorority involved in.

The sisters of Tri Delta came together and filled the stockings with DVDs, magazines, Playstaton video games, candy bars, soeks, toiletries, and other small items.

In response to the overwhelming giving of the chapter, Lt. Yi sent a personal letter along with the flag that expressed his men’s appreciation. “When they found out that you all had taken the time and thoughtfulness to send the stockings, they were so excited,” Lt. Yi stated. “The best way for me to describe how they reacted is a kid on Christmas morning. Thank you so much for bringing Christmas to Iraq.”

Adler was grateful that Tri Delta had the opportunity to participate in a program like this and hopes to make this a yearly tradition for her chapter.

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What’s coming up...

2/24 Order of Omega Applications Distributed
3/1 Scholarship Chair Meeting, at Zeta Tau Alpha
3/2 Panhellenic Advisors meeting, at Delta Zeta at 7 p.m.
3/4 Housing Staff Appreciation Brunch, at Savannah Grande
3/8 Panhellenic Alcohol Awareness Program, at JW RU Colonnade
3/8 NPHC Advisors Meeting, at JW RU 318 at 8 p.m.
3/22 Florida Greek Joint Meeting, at CSE 121 at 7 p.m.
3/23 Service Chair Training, at Phi Mu at 7 p.m.
Sigma Lambda Beta celebrates seven years of success

By Brian Pico

On Jan. 30, 1999, three men, Jose Olguin, Cyrus Wyche, and Michael Ruiz brought Sigma Lambda Beta International Fraternity Inc. to the campus of UF. Since then, the organization has grown into the largest fraternity in the Multicultural Greek Council. Starting Jan. 30 and ending Feb. 6, Sigma Lambda Beta celebrated their seventh year at UF by hosting their annual Beta Week.

Beta Week 2006 included events such as a step show honoring the founders, a forum entitled Afro-Latinos: A Fusion of Cultures, an investment forum, a study night, game night in the Reitz Union, community service at the Humane Society, and a Super Bowl Party co-sponsored by Gamma Sigma Sigma Service Sorority. These events not only reached out to every aspect of the university but also reflected the four pillars in which Sigma Lambda Beta stands for: Brotherhood, Scholarship, Community Service and Cultural Awareness.

On Monday night, the Afro-Latinos forum featured Helen Safa and Faye Harrison, two renowned researchers on the subject of African and Latino cultures.

On Wednesday night, scholarship was demonstrated in a study session that was held in a study room at Murphree Commons. Refreshments were provided as more than 20 students showed up eager to study.

Keeping the tradition of Sigma Lambda Beta strong, the Brothers participated in a community service event at the Human Society. There, UF students took care of animals and improved the landscape around the property to better the community.

It was another outstanding year for the brothers of the Zeta Beta Chapter of Sigma Lambda Beta International Fraternity Inc. Their week encouraged students at UF to participate in more cultural awareness events, community service projects and school. Hopefully the vision that three men carried to this university can reach more people next year.

Kappa Alpha Theta celebrates 136th Founders’ Day

By Susan Malove

The ladies of Kappa Alpha Theta commemorated the 136th anniversary of their Founders’ Day on January 29. This year’s annual luncheon event was extra special for collegiate members and the approximately 15 alumni in attendance.

In addition to the presentation of sisterhood awards given annually at the event, this year the sisters honored Delta Theta/UF alumna Debbie Allen, who has served on Kappa Alpha Theta’s Grand Council for the past four years. Allen has acted as a personal liaison between the Delta Theta Chapter and Grand Council and has worked hard to advocate on behalf of the collegiate women well beyond her call of duty.

For Allen, the most exciting part of the Founders’ Day celebration was presenting the Gainesville Alumni Chapter with its official charter. The chapter of about 20 members has been working toward the granting of its official charter since spring of 2005.

The Founders’ Day festivities were organized by Theta’s alumni relations chair Katie Mickel and Vice-President of External Relations Amanda Chazal.

Service through song

By Libby Andrews

Ashley Orynich, a sister of Zeta Tau Alpha, is the founding president of UF’s S.O.N.G; Singing Organization for Newer Gatorship.

“We are giving back to the community through the gift of song,” Orynich said.

She has been singing her whole life, and when she got to UF she realized there weren’t many ways to keep doing what she loved except through classes that didn’t fit her busy schedule.

After a year and a half of being a part of other clubs on campus, Orynich decided that she could start her own.

“I thought it was a great idea for people who enjoy singing, community service or both,” she said.

In the fall of 2004, Orynich and the founding vice president and also a sister of Zeta Tau Alpha, Nicki Mohr, began recruiting members and found an adviser through the music college.

S.O.N.G’s first meeting was one year ago this month, and since then they have been singing around Gainesville at hospitals, rehab centers, nursing homes and homeless shelters. They are looking into having their first concert this year.

“It is as much enjoyment for me to sing to people as it is for them to listen,” Orynich said.

Orynich will be graduating this spring and attending to Harvard School of Dental Medicine. She has plans to start a version of S.O.N.G there as well.
Christy Jones

Phi Mu hit one out of the park for Children’s Miracle Network (CMN) with its Home Run Derby philanthropy on Feb. 12.

About 350 people came to Lake Alice field Sunday afternoon to support Phi Mu’s second annual philanthropy with Home Run Derby. The women raised about $1,000 from registration fees, t-shirt orders and penny-voting.

Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity won the overall award after two team members went 14-for-14 in home runs during the second round.

Delta Upsilon placed second, while Pi Kappa Phi placed third overall. Most teams were fraternity members, but Pi Beta Phi sorority also joined in, along with players like Josh Trulock, who won the individual competition.

“Everyone gets really excited about this philanthropy because it’s interactive,” said Phi Mu’s philanthropy chair Sara Barbara.

The sorority women got involved by coaching the teams, catching the balls in the field and providing Domino’s pizza for all the players.

Barbara said Phi Mu’s goal is to increase awareness and get even more people out for next year’s Home Run Derby.

A CMN employee also came out to the event and talked to the sisters and supporters about Sal DiPrazza, who had a bone marrow transplant funded in part by CMN.

CMN is a non-profit organization dedicated to saving and improving the lives of children by raising funds for children’s hospitals across North America, according to www.cmn.org.

“It was a great turnout, and we can’t wait until next year,” Barbara said.

Another Greek Miss Florida?

By Kendall Sharp

The ladies of Alpha Delta Pi could not have been more thrilled to learn that one of their sisters will compete in the 2006 Miss Florida Pageant, a preliminary to the Miss America Pageant.

Erica Raulerson, an active member of Alpha Delta Pi sorority and a University of Florida varsity cheerleader, won a spot in the 2006 Miss Florida Pageant when she was crowned Miss Orange Blossom in Dade City in January.

Raulerson competed in several categories including evening wear, swimsuit, talent, interview and on-stage question against 12 competitors, four of whom were returning competitors who competed in last year’s Miss Florida Pageant. Raulerson’s prizes included an official Miss America Crown, flowers and a $500 scholarship.

The MacClenny, Fla., native is a sophomore nursing major at UF and is proud to be involved in the Miss America Organization (MAO). As the largest women’s scholarship organization in the world, the MAO encourages excellence in all areas.

Raulerson would not be the first talented Greek to participate in the MOA. Mari Wilensky, a 2005 UF graduate and a member of Kappa Delta, was crowned Miss Florida 2005 and competed in the 2006 Miss America Pageant just a few weeks ago.

Raulerson is anticipating the Miss Florida Pageant that will take place in Miami this July.

“The opportunity to go to Miss Florida and represent my title is such an honor and has been a dream of mine for a while,” Raulerson said. “Just to win a local title is a privilege to me”.

Raulerson is not only a remarkable member of the Greek and campus communities, but she also finds time to act as a national spokesperson for American Championships Cheer Company and owns her own private summer cheer camp company.

Several other outstanding women are still hoping for the opportunity to compete along with Raulerson in the 2006 Miss Florida Pageant. The 2006 Miss University of Florida and Miss Florida Gator Pageant, which will take place on the evening of Feb. 20, will determine who will advance to the Miss Florida Pageant to represent UF.
Delta Phi Omega Hosts
Third Annual Literacy through Unity Week

By Suja John

Delta Phi Omega Sorority, Inc. has been established at the University of Florida for only a few short years, but in that span of time, this sorority has established itself as an active contributor to the UF and Gainesville community.

This year, the UF colony will be hosting its philanthropy week on Feb. 19 – Feb. 25 and is proud to announce this year’s new beneficiary: Asha for Education. UF’s chapter will also be working toward aiding the Alachua County Boys and Girls Club.

Literacy through Unity Week is as follows:

MONDAY FEB. 20: CURRY FUNDRAISER: Enjoy the taste of traditional Indian food from 5-9 p.m.

TUESDAY FEB. 21 – 2: Annual BOOKDRIVE CELEBRATION: Idylwild Elementary at 4 p.m., spend some time with the kids in the after school program and celebrate their success in collecting books for kids who are less fortunate.

WEDNESDAY FEB. 22: BEN AND JERRY’S SOCIAL: Come join the lovely ladies of DPhiO as we indulge in the delicious flavors Ben and Jerry’s has to offer. B&J on University Ave. at 7 p.m.

THURSDAY FEB. 23: THIRD ANNUAL BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT: At SW Rec from 5-9 p.m., come sweat for a good cause! You may register your team at http://plaza.ufl.edu/lanosing/DPO%202006%20BBALL%20TOURNAMENT%20Reg%20Form.pdf or contact anyone of the DPhiO sisters.

SATURDAY FEB. 25: CHARITY BASH: FUS Restaurant and Lounge between 10 p.m.– 2 a.m.

For more information, please feel free to contact Suja John @ sujajohn85@yahoo.com

Hats off to Sigma Chi

Teams of women came ready in their running shoes to gather Derby hats from Sigma Chi fraternity members for their annual Derby Days philanthropy hat hunt Friday, Feb. 10. A line dance for the philanthropy took place the next day.

photos by Jacqueline Kennedy Cox