



Tyler Sizemore/Colegian

Students clean mats for the Bryce Jordan Center as part of the Fresh START Day of Service on Saturday. Fresh START is Penn State's largest day of service, intended for incoming freshmen and students who transfer to campus.

Students sacrifice day for service

By Alyssa Sweeney
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

While the rest of State College slept soundly, 800 freshmen gathered in the HUB-Robeson Center at 8 a.m. Saturday for the annual Fresh START Day of Service.

Students lined up for free bagels, doughnuts and coffee while music blasted through a packed Alumni Hall, sacrificing their sleep to complete community service project sites around the Centre Region.

"Since I would only be sleeping anyway, I might as well get up and do something good," Lauren Barrett (freshman division of undergraduate studies) said. "Plus, it's a good way to meet people."

The idea behind the event is to instill in freshmen a lifelong commitment to community service, executive director Carolyn Higgins said.

"It's important to learn about the community and environment you're in, and it's a great introduction to what they'll be a part of for the next four years," Higgins (junior-nursing) said.

Students were organized into groups and taken by six fleet busses and several vans to places like the Arboretum,

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Carolyn Higgins
junior - nursing

Shavers Creek and assisted living facilities. They were brought back at 3 p.m. for a free lunch and for a period of reflection, Higgins said.

State College Mayor Elizabeth Goreham and Robert Reason, associate professor in the College Student Affairs and Higher Education programs, spoke about the importance of service and what the participants would learn from it.

"I'm just amazed," Goreham said. "To me, seeing college students learning and sharing what they learn on campus and this involvement in the community — that's what makes this Happy Valley."

The task of organizing 800 students, finding transportation, assigning locations, recruiting sponsors and advertising the event began last November for 17 students and one adviser.

And on the day of the event, organizers were up extra early.

"My day started at 6:30 a.m. We had to be here extra early to set everything up," committee member Cassie Hom (junior-broadcast journalism) said. "It's stressful, but so rewarding."

Higgins attended the event as a freshman in 2008.

"I was hooked immediately," she said.

Ever since, she's been working to make Penn State's largest day of community service what it is.

"It's kind of like a 'pay it forward' thing. We keep it going for all the students in the coming years, like they did for us," Higgins said.

"A lot of times, we forget that there's a whole community around us beyond the boundaries of campus that could use our help. We have our own zip code, but that doesn't mean we're not part of something bigger than ourselves."

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Fraternity breaks mold, stereotypes

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first in a five part series offering a closer look at the rushing process.



By Vera Greene
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

At Penn State, a fraternity can usually be defined by its house, its strictly male membership and the notion that its members are part of a single brotherhood for life.

But Phi Sigma Pi members say they are defined by the exact opposite.

As a co-ed national honors fraternity, Phi Sigma Pi is by no means "typical," rush chairman Kyle Rice said.

As a melting pot for different majors, backgrounds and sexes, Phi Sigma Pi isn't considered "mainstream," and Rice (junior-political science and history) is content with that. In fact, he prefers it.

Rice said his fraternity offers more than mainstream greek life in many ways. "I feel we are a lot more well rounded," he said. "We're also very motivated to do well in school."

Some members even started off in an Interfraternity Council-recognized fraternity and switched over to Phi Sigma Pi after realizing other fraternities weren't for them, Rice said.

But he said sometimes people stay in both an IFC fraternity and the honors fraternity.

"It's absolutely fine," Rice said. "We don't discriminate, and it brings a lot of diversity to the group."

Tara Lepelletier, rush chairwoman and a brother at Phi

Sigma Pi, said that though it's an honors fraternity, Phi Sigma Pi isn't just focused on school. Its members do things regular fraternities do, like participate in intramural sports, have socials and get involved with Homecoming.

"We go to lectures on campus together, and sometimes grill out," she said.

Phi Sigma Pi doesn't have a house, but Lepelletier said it doesn't matter because many of the members live together around campus.

Unlike the formal IFC rush, the rush process for Phi Sigma Pi includes two business casual meet-and-greets, a pizza social and other events designed to help new recruits meet the fraternity brothers.

Dues mainly go to coordinating the rush process and entering different philanthropic events such as Relay for Life, Rice said.

Chapter president Paul Imbarlina said that as a nervous and homesick freshman, rushing Phi Sigma Pi was the best decision he has ever made.

"I've made my best friends and it just really forced me to get involved in different things," Imbarlina (junior-accounting) said.

Imbarlina said he made the right decision in choosing his fraternity, which he sees as having "less politics" over an IFC fraternity.

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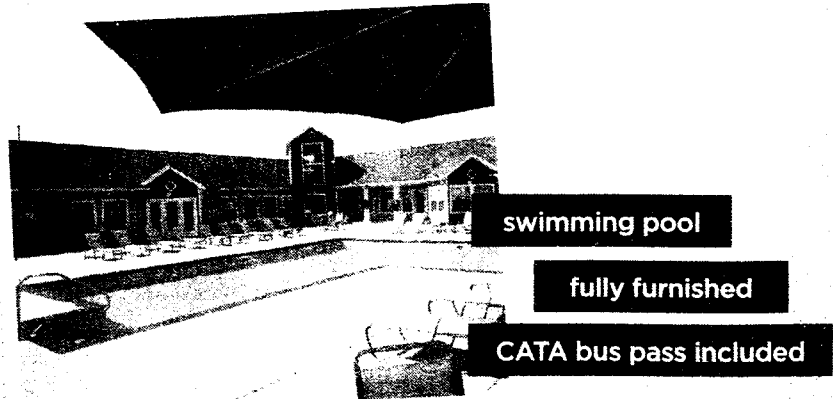
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