

Coed service fraternity proud of brotherhood, tradition

By TOM TAGLIABUE
Reporter

The term fraternity has been taboo to many people in Aggieland, but to others, when teamed with the letters APO, the term becomes tolerable.

Those three letters represent a group of 150 Texas A&M students dedicated to the principles of leadership, friendship and service.

Alpha Phi Omega, a service fraternity, came to A&M in 1962. The A&M chapter, like the original APO chapter started at Lafayette College in Pennsylvania by Frank Reed Horton, was all male. It became coed here 15 years later in 1977.

Molly Malone, APO vice president of projects, says the fraternity is different from others for special reasons.

"Well, it's the brotherhood we have," Malone says. "We have rituals and traditions that are about as old as some of the Aggie traditions."

The brotherhood is first established during a rush period, which is



scheduled today and Wednesday.

The prospective members, called pledges, must work a minimum of 50 service hours and attend 10 active meetings, six pledge meetings and seven committee meetings, before they are made full brothers.

"No one is black-balled from APO," Malone explains. "If they pass their pledge minimum requirements, they are voted in."

Starting this spring, active members will have to participate in 20 hours of service a semester to stay in good standing, 10 of which must be completed by mid-term. This may make a difference in the number of members that participate.

"We don't know how that is going to work," Malone says, "but we felt that it was important that actives stay active."

APO has five standing projects that are continuous and three that are done only during football season. One of APO's projects that many students don't know about is what APO calls NACHO, their night shuttle service.

NACHO runs Sunday through Thursday evenings from 7 p.m. to 12:40 a.m. The shuttle starts from the Fish Lot, Parking Annex 61, and travels down Old Main Drive to the Coke Building. It passes the Fish Pond and turns onto Ross Street before

going on to the east entrance of the campus. The shuttle travels to the Commons and stops at the Sterling C. Evans library before ending its route at the Memorial Student Center. The shuttle route takes about 10 minutes from start to finish says Stacy Cook, APO publicity chairman.

APO will be selling Aggie mums all week long for the first home football game of the season Saturday. Another service it performs for every home game is raising the flags in front of the System Administration Building.

Three hours before kick-off, APO will open a ticket-mart in the MSC, Malone says. People can bring in their tickets and APO will try to sell them. The money will be mailed to the seller or if he wishes, it can be donated to APO.

Two major APO projects this year include the Aggie Blood Drive, tentatively scheduled for Nov. 11-14, and the Muscular Dystrophy Dance

cheduled for the spring.

Dr. Charles Powell, the coordinator for the handicapped and veterans services, says APO is entering its fourth year of volunteer work with his office.

With APO's help, Powell says his office can assist handicapped students writing papers and also work with the learning disabled. APO provides readers, testers and tutors for handicapped students.

"They (APO) have done everything in the world throughout the years since I've been here..." Powell says. "Most of the time, APO is extremely dedicated and very reliable."

APO does not restrict itself to only the University community. They have long been associated with the local Boy's Clubs, says Liz Walden, program director for the Boy's Clubs of Brazos County.

APO visits the Boy's Club on 25th Street in Bryan every Thursday from 5:15 p.m. to 7 p.m. It does ev-

erything from arts and crafts to playing sports with the children.

Walden says she thinks the biggest advantage of APO's presence is the personal attention the children receive.

"I think even more important than the activities they do with the kids is that they bring a large number of people down here... the kids love that," Walden says. "They like to have a one-on-one contact and personal attention with the kids."

Most projects are pledge projects because of the large number of people that pledge APO, Cook says.

APO has a difficult time doing projects for the fall because of football season, but they try to have at least one project every weekend during the spring, Cook says.

Why do so many people get involved with this group? Malone says she thinks a lot of people simply love the good feeling they get from serving others.

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