

Sixty APO Brothers Are Pretty Special

AMHERST — Sixty out of 18,000 doesn't sound like a lot. But at the University of Massachusetts, the 60 brothers of Kappa Omicron chapter of Alpha Phi Omega — APO — are a pretty special group of guys.

Apo is a national service fraternity, which makes them a little different. They place more emphasis on service — to "the chapter, the community, the campus and the world," according to President James Giblein, a junior from 23 Frederika St., Dorchester.

The brothers of APO have three ideals: Leadership, fellowship and service, which are all held in equal importance. It is service that is perhaps the most evident in the everyday life of the Amherst campus.

Direct Traffic

For example, at the start of every semester, APO, jointly with Gamma Sigma Sigma sorority, sponsors a book exchange, where students can buy and sell used textbooks. In the fall, it is APO brothers who man traffic control points and direct traffic as students converge at Amherst for the start of the new school year. If a professor wants things passed out in classes, he can contact APO, who will see that the job is done. The brothers are also on hand to usher at the Small Schools Basketball Tournament, and at drama productions of the University Theatre and the Roister-Doisters.

Last spring a group of the brothers stayed on campus during the vacation and made up Easter baskets to take to patients at a local nursing home and to the children's ward at Cooley-Dickinson Hospital in Northampton.

Solve Problems

Each year, APO submits a bid to run the Amherst Fair on the town common. As the consistently low bidders, they make the arrangements for game and food booths, and set up the wood frames. During the fair, at least one of the brothers is on hand to solve any problems that might have arisen. Afterwards, they dismantle the booths and clean up the area.

Life isn't all work, however. Although their national organization rules forbid them to own a house as most other fraternities do, the APO brothers

still manage to get together for parties during the big weekends on campus — such as Homecoming and Winter Carnival — and they have a reunion at least once over the summer.

In a time when membership seems to be on the decline for many of the traditional Greek-letter organizations, APO hasn't had much trouble recruiting pledges. Giblein estimates that the size of a pledge class has about doubled in the three years since he pledged. In pledges, APO is looking for what Giblein called "a special kind of guy — the kind of guy who will break a date because one of the brothers is in trouble."

Famous Alumni

Since its founding in 1925, APO has grown to the largest fraternity in the world, with over 400 chapters in the United States and some famous alumni. James Lovell took his APO pin with him on his moon voyage, and on his return, presented it to the APO national organization. The pin rests on a plaque in their Kansas City, Mo., headquarters.

In addition to their service projects, some of the brothers are quite active on campus, serving on committees, as members of the Student Senate, or in residence governments.

Elections within the chapter are held every semester — twice a year. This means that more members have a chance to serve in an office, gain experience, and then contribute their knowledge in a higher capacity.

Al Baptista, a sophomore from Taunton, is service vice president, responsible for the planning and carrying out of the group's service projects. Herb Weiner, a junior from Newton, is membership vice president, and has the responsibility for the recruiting of new members and interaction between pledges and brothers. Vernie Hatch of Bedford, a sophomore, is fellowship vice president, planning social functions for the fraternity. Bill Vigneux, a junior from Holyoke, executive vice president, is responsible for coordinating the efforts of the other three vice presidents. W. Leo Edmunds, a sophomore from Melrose, is the recording secretary and Al Hunter, a sophomore from Framingham, is the fraternity's treasurer.