

Fraternity creates scholarships based on principles

There hasn't been an Alpha Phi Omega chapter at Saint Mary's for approximately 15 years. But the alumni who still proudly call each other "brothers" are carrying forward the fraternity's mission of service — by raising money for scholarships.

Joe Hettinger '87 said the group, which was started in 1967 and boasts about 300 members, held two big anniversary events, a 45th in 2012, and a 50th in 2017 in Winona. "Each time we had between 70-85 alums attend, and the nice thing was we had attendees from the 1960s, '70s, '80s, and '90s," he said. "We spanned four decades."

Hettinger said being an APO member was a family tradition. "My older brother graduated in class of 1984 and I took his word when he said these are some nice guys who do some nice things for the community," he said. "My fraternity brothers are some of the best friends I've ever had or will ever have. They mean a lot to me."

A core group of APO brothers began dreaming about a way they could give back to their alma mater, which led to the establishment of the Alpha Phi Omega - Sigma Theta Chapter Leadership, Friendship, and Service Scholarship. The idea, and the individual scholarships, are based on the fraternity's three principles.

"Leadership" — This scholarship is in honor of the chapter's founding fathers of the late 1960s and the chapter presidents throughout history.

"Friendship" — These two scholarships are in memory of the late Don "Hollywood" Ivansek '83 and the late Grove Holman '85, both dedicated, hardworking, and well-loved members of the Saint Mary's community who were instrumental in the fraternity. Holman was Hettinger's roommate for one year who passed away suddenly at the age of 23. Hettinger fondly remembers him as "smart, energetic, and going 100 miles an hour." Ivansek, who died in 2018, was the person Hettinger said everyone gravitated toward. "He was the Pied Piper and his passing shook a

lot of us," he added. "He loved Winona, Saint Mary's, the people, and the fraternity."

"Service" — This one recognizes Scott "Sweet Music" Stelmok '91, a 20-year member of the New York City Police Department and a first responder in the attacks of Sept. 11. Stelmok rummaged through debris and emergency vehicles in order to recover any weapons inside and his death in 2014 was determined to be a result of his work at Ground Zero. Friends and family remember him as someone who had little concern for his own welfare; his goal was to save lives. "We wanted to honor him for his service," Hettinger said. "There's nothing more honorable than helping others, especially during something as monumental and life changing as 9/11."

With these scholarships, Hettinger said these men will not be forgotten. And, their legacy will live on in four deserving student recipients each year.

The group hopes to raise between \$100,000 to \$150,000, so that the scholarships can continue in perpetuity. Hettinger said sizeable gifts and pledges have already been secured. And he personally is leading the charge with a generous leadership pledge.

"If we can give out four scholarships annually, forever, to four worthy students, we think that's a pretty cool thing," he said. "I know a lot of alumni who are looking for a connection back to the school that's more personal to them. They still have a fondness for their time here and for the fraternity."

Other members of the APO Leadership-Friendship-Service Scholarship Committee: Tony Piscitiello '69, Tom Smat '77, Pat Smith '80, Mark Reczek '79, Jamie McKnight '92, Pat Hughes '81, John Sabados '73, Tom Battis '93, Bill Geheren '90.

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