

# Greater Interest in Government

*The purpose of the Greater Interest in Government Program, established in 1969 by Frederick A. Faville, Illinois Beta '19, is to stimulate interest in civic affairs and public-policy issues among student members of Tau Beta Pi. The Executive Council awards annual grants up to \$750 each for these activities from the investment earnings of the Greater Interest in Government Fund.*

 Maryland Beta 

## Shed for Compassion Center

THE 2005 Greater Interest in Government Grant was awarded to our chapter, Maryland Beta, to build an extension on an existing garden shed for the Compassion Center, which is located just minutes away from our campus in College Park, MD. The center is a non-profit organization that will provide a place for grieving individuals to find comfort after a loved one has died. The center is still in its building phase and needed storage space to prevent shovels, rakes, and other outdoor equipment from being ruined in the rain and snow.

Planning for the shed began soon after we received the grant in the summer of 2005. During this planning period, a number of design changes took place until the optimal solution was found. Early on, we decided that adding an extension to one of the existing sheds (as originally planned) would not provide enough space. A lean-to against another shed was considered, but we determined that this solution would not be structurally sound. Eventually, we decided that the best way to construct a solid, spacious storage space was to purchase a shed kit. The kit provided all the necessary materials for building the shed, which made purchasing easier. However, many of the materials still needed to be cut to the proper dimensions. This allowed our members and electees to gain experience in construction, and not merely assembly.

Under the guidance of the leaders at the center, construction began with a process of leveling and compacting the site. Then, we established a foundation for the shed, carefully laying cinderblocks and putting them in proper alignment. When the process was complete, members not only understood the principles involved in laying a founda-



Laying the large shed's foundation gave Tau Bates an opportunity to put familiar engineering principles into practice.

tion, but had gained first-hand experience using an earth compacting machine, masonry tools, and concrete blocks.

After that, the floor frame was cut and constructed, and plywood flooring was fastened into place. The frame of the shed was constructed next, with some deviations from the building plans so that the size of the shed could be increased. To finish the shed's frame, the pre-fabricated roof trusses were fastened to the wall frames. The center took care of roofing the shed. Finally, the walls were put up, and insulating sheathing and vinyl siding were fastened on the front of the shed. The back of the shed was painted to protect the wood from the elements.

In the process of carrying out this work, members of Tau Beta Pi gained valuable experience in the use of basic construction tools and methods. Our labor here may help us to understand better the difficulties that can occur in fabrication of a structure or product, from bridges and skyscrapers to MEMS sensors and pacemakers. Such hands-on knowledge will help the members of Maryland Beta to become more successful, useful, and insightful engineers. We will be better able to lead teams of builders and to anticipate design problems before they arise.

This project helped the center by providing a storage space for its outdoor equipment, while providing the members of Maryland Beta with useful building experience. The project was completed on April 30, 2006, with approximately 30 members and electees of Maryland Beta contributing 140 man-hours of building, planning, and preparation to the project.



Tau Bates were pleased to help the Compassion Center toward its mission of comforting those who have lost loved ones.

—Kristin A. Kirk, Maryland Beta '06