



# The Phi Arrow

Winter 2021

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*The new initiates from the fall of 2021 pose on main for a group photo*

## Undergraduate President Update

Gaven Nelson

We currently have 56 active members going into the Spring 2022 semester, 26 of which live in the house. We had a great recruitment in the Fall semester, initiating 21 guys. These guys are super motivated and a great addition to the fraternity. We hope we can keep that recruitment momentum going into 2022. With a lift on COVID-19 restrictions and a large pledge class, the chapter's morale is incredibly high. We also have a great executive team this year with lots of qualified guys. All these things should lead to a fun and productive year.

Something we want to bring back strong in 2022 is our philanthropic efforts. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our philanthropic efforts dropped because of lack of opportunity and motivation. This year we have a philanthropy chairman who has lots of event planning skills. He has already given brothers lots of opportunities to get ourselves out there and help, the most recent being ringing bells for The Salvation Army. Some fundraisers we have lined up for this spring are a waffle feed, our Tacos N' Tunes event, and an Easter Egg hunt event.

Another thing the chapter is excited for this semester is becoming more social. We always talk about getting out there and becoming closer with other organizations or people on campus and we're finally taking the steps to get there. This fall we had lots of socials with other Greek organizations such as going to homecoming with Alpha Tau Omega and a ugly Christmas sweater social with Alpha Gamma Delta. We have a new Social Chair this year who is super excited to keep doing fun events to get us closer with these organizations. We also have events planned to get us acquainted with non-students, such as Monday Night meal, where in November we invited NDSU faculty over to have a nice meal and give them a chance to get to know the men of Theta Chi. We also have parents weekend coming back this spring where active members invite their parents over and show them what we do as an organization and the roles of our executive team.

Those are some of the biggest points of emphasis we have for this spring. Some other things we are excited for is that we moved the Scholarship Chair back to an executive position because we'd like to see a little more effort into improving our chapter GPA. Lastly, we increased the size of our recruitment committee so the recruitment chairman has more guys to work with. This was implemented last spring and this fall was the first semester with it. It really helped bring in and keep in touch with a large pledge class, we hope it continues to help us in this coming year. We have lots to look forward to and are super excited to see what our active members can do!

To all the brothers before us-Love and Respect!

# Holding Company Treasurer Update

Jason Gates '01



Hello Fellow Alumni!

I hope all of you have been staying healthy and enjoyed time with friends and family this past holiday season.

The big news this year is our Phi Now campaign has reached its conclusion with the final donations received. The total amount raised by the Phi Now campaign was \$1,502,864! What an impact this campaign has had on our chapter house and alumni network! Over 378 alumni donated to the campaign, and we are very thankful to these generous donors for their support.

With PhiNow wrapped up we will redirect our focus to the Theta Chi for Life campaign. The annual income from Theta Chi for Life allows us to pay for the long-term maintenance of our chapter house and helps keep the rent expense for our tenant, the active chapter, at a reasonable level. Currently we have 43 donors that have pledged a total of \$8,230/year and would like to increase this to \$20,000/year. If you are not already donating to Theta Chi for Life, I encourage you to make a pledge. Use this link to [sign up for Theta Chi for Life](#). A typical pledge is \$200/year. If you have any questions about the program, you can also send me an email at the address below.

On the topic of house maintenance, this past year has included some of the usual repairs a 95-year-old house requires with no big surprises. We have paid particular attention to the boiler system and keeping thermostats set appropriately this winter to ensure we don't have any pipe freeze ups like we had in the previous winter.

Looking forward we still have some projects to consider including adding insulation to our 4<sup>th</sup> floor ceiling to prevent snow melt on the roof (which causes ice dams) and installing a battery system or backup generator for our sump pumps. We would like to have more alumni involved in our Holding Corporation and the maintenance of our chapter house. If you are interested in helping, please reach out to me.

Currently the active chapter pays the holding corporation \$30,000/year for rent and the house capacity is 30 students. When I was treasurer of the active chapter in the year 2000 our rent was \$25,000/year and the capacity was 32 students. Despite significant increases in the cost of housing in the Fargo area over that time, the Theta Chi chapter house remains a very affordable place to live.

Take care everyone and I am looking forward to seeing you this year at Pig Banquet!

Fraternally,

Jason Gates "1563"

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701-367-0471

# Phi Now!

Theta Chi Fraternity  
North Dakota State University

## Campaign Summary

Total Amount Pledged

**\$1,513,124**

Total Amount Collected

**\$1,502,864**

Collection Rate

**99.3%**

Total Contributors

**378**

Participation Rate

**31.1%**

## Thank You!

# Pig Banquet Schedule

- Friday, March 25
  - 1 – 4 pm House tours
  - 7:00 pm Social @ Ramada
- Saturday, March 26
  - 10:00 am House tours
  - 12:00 pm Pig Roast Lunch
  - 2:00 pm Alumni Meeting – Anishinaabe Theatre, NDSU Memorial Union
  - 4:30 pm Social @ the Ramada
  - 6:30 pm Banquet at Ramada, Evening Program Featuring Mr. Joe Wiegand as “Teddy Roosevelt”



# Alumni Council President Update

Rob Neubauer '13

The past couple of years have impacted the way we have been able to spend time together and share stories with our brothers. We are all pleased to announce we will be having a Pig Banquet in 2022 and look forward to seeing everyone who will be able to attend!

Pig Banquet '22 will be held on Saturday, March 26<sup>th</sup> at the Ramada by Wyndham Fargo ( 701-235-3333). A block of rooms has been set aside for March 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> under the name NDSU Theta Chi Fraternity Alumni. The special room rate is \$89/per room/per night.

We will have a special guest at the evening program this year: Mr. Joe Wiegand “Teddy Roosevelt”! You may have seen him performing in Medora. Mr. Wiegand is guaranteed to bring the 26<sup>th</sup> President to life- you will not want to miss this!

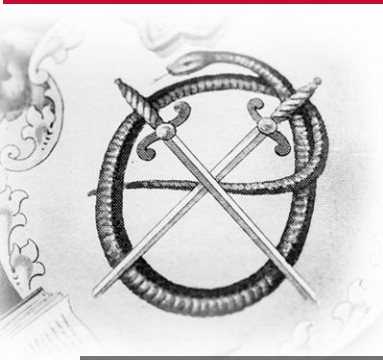
The cost per person for the banquet will be \$50. Please visit this link to RSVP.

If you have any questions about Pig Banquet, please feel free to contact me!

Fraternally,

Rob Neubauer “1785”  
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701-201-0133





Pictured above, L to R:

Derek Mann ('90), with son Ethan;  
Kelly Linster ('91), with son Alex;  
Tyler Specht, with father Jerry ('99);  
Nick Antonoplos, with father Joe ('95)

## Continuing the Tradition

### Several legacies initiated into the fraternity this fall give an opportunity for a special bond

Cory Loveless '12



Alex Linster signs the roster book with his newly assigned "pin", 2109, shortly after initiation. His father, Kelly, has roster number 1341.

Many of us remember our initiation into Theta Chi very well: the anticipation, the excitement, and the ensuing joy. This fall, that feeling was present again for many alumnus brothers as they witnessed the initiation of their son or nephew.

I had the opportunity to connect with several of the newly-initiated legacies as well as current undergraduate members who are also legacies. For many of them, their first experience with Theta Chi happened long before they were students at NDSU. Several recalled attending tailgates before football games with their fathers where they were introduced to many brothers. Xavier Homelvig, current recruitment chairman and legacy to Adam Homelvig ('96), discussed how he was surrounded by fraternity brothers growing up. "My dad's best friends are all Theta Chis. I remember going on annual hunting and skiing trips with them, and so I got to know them pretty well."

I asked the brothers whether there was any pressure to join the fraternity. While many of the legacies attested that while their family was open to their decision, a majority felt a little pressure to become Theta Chis. Some joked that they almost told their father they were going to join Delta Tau Delta to see their reaction.

Joking aside, I then wanted to know whether the brothers had had a chance to speak with their father or uncle about the initiation experience and the ritual they now share. Many echoed that they felt a deeper and richer connection to their family members. Jacob Link, roster #2089 and legacy to father Jason ('95) and uncle Steve ('99) said it was important to understand more fully his dad's side of things and why Theta Chi was so important to him.



Tyler Specht poses with his father, Jerry, and uncle Joey Specht ('07) on main.



*A few of the current undergraduate legacies*

*L to R: Derek Mann, Xavier Homelvig, Tyler Specht, Alex Linster, Nick Antonoplos, and Jacob Link*

One of the last questions I posed to the legacies asked what they are looking forward to as undergraduate and new initiates into the fraternity. Many of them indicated they were excited to get more involved and take leadership positions. Others were looking forward to the events and fun experiences planned in the next year, such as term and homecoming. Homelvig had set his sights for success in his newly-elected role of recruitment chair. "My dad talks about when the chapter had over 100 members. . . I guess there's a little bit of a "chip-on-the-shoulder" attitude to get back there."

It's a special connection we share among fraternity brothers. Many times, Theta Chis are the first to show up to help us during difficult times. Brothers are the first people we usually call for advice or consolation. Often, we celebrate our victories (football or otherwise) with Theta Chis. I believe it is safe to call our fraternity a family. These legacies are part of a special group where the family they were born into also became the family they chose.



# Summer Gathering 2021

In response to our inability to host a Pig Banquet or other programming in the last few years, the Alumni Council planned a summer gathering for brothers to socialize and enjoy the summer weather. Below are some photos from that event. We are hopeful to continue hosting these gatherings to bridge the gap between Homecoming and Pig Banquet!



## The Saved Steinway

A few years ago, a group of alumni made it their mission to restore our Steinway baby grand piano on main floor. A concerted effort ensued and \$20,000 was raised for the cause.

After several years of COVID-19 related delays, we are happy to report that the Steinway has returned fully restored and refinished. Below is a write-up about the piano from Alumni Council Member Gary Hendrickson:

“This beautiful pre-WWII Steinway Grand Model S piano has called Phi Chapter home since 1939.

Although some of its history has been lost to time, it was purchased from Deveau Music here in Fargo, ND. Alumni from as far back as 1947 remember the piano during their college days and speculate it was donated by a wealthy, yet unknown, alumnus.

Phi Chapter has always had a heritage of outstanding Alumni support and through their many generous donations over \$20,000 was raised to restore this classic instrument. The full restoration was completed in 2021 and the piano is now valued in excess of \$30,000.

Please treat this precious Phi Chapter artifact with the respect it deserves and enjoy utilizing it to once again fill the Halls of Theta Chi with it's wonderful sound.”



*Above: the Steinway is pictured as it was being disassembled in 2019*

*Below: the Steinway is fully rebuilt, restrung, refinished and ready to be played.*



## Producing Master Chief and Tomato Town

Phi alumnus details work in video games and lessons learned from Theta Chi



*Halo*—you’ve probably heard of it. In fact, there’s a good chance you may have played the sci-fi military game in one of its many iterations since its conception in 2001. The Microsoft epic has been at the forefront of gaming culture and even popular culture. Fast forward to 2021 and *Halo Infinite*, the sixth main installment of the *Halo* story, hit store shelves and digital marketplaces on November 15, 2021, commemorating the 20th anniversary of the series and the original XBOX video game console—all with the help of Joel Gifford (Phi/North Dakota State 2008), a producer at the Microsoft-owned 343 Industries.

“I think Theta Chi helped me really establish those early skills needed as a producer,” says Gifford, recollecting his collegiate experience in his chapter. “Knowing how to communicate, setting up those effective communication structures, knowing when to bring an ‘expert...’ – these are all skills I learned early on in the Fraternity.”

For Gifford, he continues to contribute the soft skills he uses today back to Theta Chi. “I had to learn to get along with everyone—every type of person—including all personality types,” Gifford explains. “Think of those philanthropy events our chapters do. At a blood drive we ran at Phi, we’d coordinate with hospitals, figure out how to market the event, and learn to find our gaps quickly so we could delegate and tackle head on to fill them.”

Those soft skills came in handy for Gifford in his journey through multiple *Halo* games. Starting with QA (quality assurance), Gifford began work on *Halo: Reach*, followed by *Halo 4* and *Halo 5* with more QA, then jumping to the producer seat for *Halo Infinite*. Gifford spent his three years on *Infinite* working with the sandbox portion of the title beginning with pre-production, working to get the weapons, abilities, vehicles and even movement fine-tuned. “This included sticking to a strict time-schedule, working out dependencies for our artists, allotting the necessary resources for our programmers, and even working with a team to get the sounds just right,” Gifford says. Later in production, Gifford spent six months with the character team, then a final six months on the narrative team.

After completing his work on *Infinite*, Gifford started a new role at EPIC Games, where he leads the performance and memory team on *Fortnite*, a free-to-play battle royale. His work primarily deals with engineers, ensuring the pop-culture phenomenon runs smoothly and efficiently for gamers in and around “Tomato Town” on everything from a smart phone, Nintendo Switch, and even high-end gaming-PCs. Gifford’s team helped bring an Ariana Grande concert to the game, implementing UFOs and the popular “gravity gun,” and, new on December 4, *Fortnite*’s Chapter 2 Finale, The End.

For brothers interested in breaking through and working in the gaming industry, Gifford’s advice ultimately boils down to hard work. “You really need to get your foot in the door and just show them what you’ve got,” he advises. “Think about those hard skills and take classes on them if you want to be an engineer, artist, or animator. If you’re looking to get into production or QA, it will be much easier with some hard skills, though you’ll also want to have demonstrable soft skills. QA is a great way to get started.”

Looking back, there’s a main ideal at Phi Chapter Gifford tries to live by each day and even instill in others. “We always said, ‘You earn your Badge every day,’” tells Gifford. “There’s always a chance to do that. Whether it’s helping someone who is frustrated, helping my young daughter, or helping those younger colleagues who haven’t had enough time to hone their experience.” Truly, Gifford extends a Helping Hand both in and out of work.