



The Sig House

A Newsletter from the Board of Grand Trustees

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Bad News Syndrome

Late night phone calls. Loud pounding on the door. Certified letters. These events rarely bring good news. After a number of them, the phone, door and mail go unanswered. Who needs more bad news? Better not knowing than dealing with it.

Anyone that has served on a house corporation knows that a certain amount of bad news goes with the territory. This is entirely predictable because active brothers are men in training. Their quiver of life experiences is mostly empty and waiting to be filled.

Young brothers in this stage of life can get very creative when it comes to filling that quiver. A tour of most chapter houses reveals lofts built out of random lumber and nails, walls and doors installed where none existed before, padlocks on fire exits and flammable partitions hung randomly.

Housekeeping, of course, is seldom done other than to impress the alums and to give the illusion that it's regular. In between those times, dirty laundry is heaped next to portable heaters, shower mold grows to mutant proportions, floors go uncleaned and garbage cans overflow.

And the parties! Not satisfied with just beverages, food and good company, the addition of costumes, props and pyrotechnics can turn the chapter house into an full on firetrap along with obligatory eardrum crushing music guaranteed to bring out the worst in the neighbors and the local gendarmes.

This kind of behavior is beyond the pale! It's outrageous! It's immature! It's, well, pretty much the way *you* lived when you were that age. And it all seemed to be such great fun! But to

mature and serious directors of a house corporation, it's all now pretty much bad news because that's how the consequences of this lifestyle are delivered: noise complaints, arrests, fires and citations.

Before you know it, serving on the house corporation board seems like trying to ride herd on stampeding buffalo. Anyone with half a wit should get out of the way of the thundering herd, right? Sure, if you let the buffalo call the shots.

But most of the young brothers have good intentions. When they lived at home, they were given regular course corrections by their parents. But the folks don't live at the chapter house. That's where the caring and regular influence of mature brothers can go a long way.

Providing that mature influence is a tag team effort. The Chapter Advisor can't do it alone. The house corporation brothers can add their worthy influence by holding meetings at the chapter house. Alums can host special recognition events to present scholarships and certificates of achievement.

For greatest impact, schedule events at the chapter house once or twice a month. Several things will happen: The house will be cleaner. Alums will get to know the actives personally. And both of these happy events will help balance bad news.

Curiously, as a tighter bond is formed between actives and alumni, the less bad news happens. Why? True brotherhood promotes *accountability*. As active brothers better understand their responsibilities as Sigma Chis, the more they think about consequences of their actions.

So, rather than get into “the older I get, the better I was” mentality, remember that you are them, only older and wiser. You turned out pretty well and so will most of them, especially with your help. Don’t fear the bad news. It’s a call to action. **IHSV**

Making First Impressions

There is an old saying “You never get a second chance at a first impression”. This is never truer than at the beginning of the school year when major recruitment takes place. Besides organizing informative and fun events for the prospective members, the chapter house needs to be looking its absolute best. Effective cleaning and removal of excess furniture and too long stored goods is a must. Windows, doors, walls and floors should be repaired and spit shined. In a phrase, “Put on the Ritz!” You’ll make a good and lasting impression on potential members, their parents, alumni, university officials, the neighbors and the whole community.

Cleaning the Barn. Move in condition of the chapter facilities is often a wildcard. Some chapter houses are relatively well maintained while others “need work” (a lot of work). To attract the best pledges, the facilities should be clean and in good repair. Question: If the chapter house is a pig sty, what kind of pledges will you attract? (Answer: Pigs.) Strive for the best condition that your money and sweat equity can muster.

Rental Agreements. Part of moving back in the chapter house involves the business of landlording. House corporations which administrate owned facilities need to oversee signing of rental agreements and collection of rent and deposits. In chapter owned houses, sometimes rent collection is handled by active chapter and sometimes directly by the house corporation. For privately owned facilities where the landlord is a private investor or the university, the active chapter brothers sign a rental agreement with those entities. Yet, consider that most actives have little experience in Landlord Tenant law or the intricacies of real estate contracts. They usually appreciate the input from a caring and knowledgeable alumni brother who can assist in rental

agreement review. If your chapter house is rented from others, do the active brothers a big favor and lend a hand in the rental process.

Condition of Premises. Whatever condition the facilities are in, a written Condition of Premises should be prepared by an experienced brother or property manager. That list should include a separate list for each bedroom and one for the common areas. A Condition of Premises specific to the bedroom occupied should be provided to each resident. The Condition of Premises for the common areas can be delivered to the Consul. Each one of these documents establishes a benchmark for measuring normal wear and tear which excludes broken windows, holes in the walls and doors and other damage not caused by normal wear and tear. It also documents if there are existing damages so that the tenant won’t get blamed for something he didn’t do. Upon move out, the Condition of Premises is used to compare move out with move in condition. If warranted, money can be retained from the security deposit.

Security Deposit. A reasonable amount of money should be collected from each tenant to secure payment of the rent and damage to the premises. This should be at least \$200 and more if you can get it. The security deposit may be inadequate to cover what is owed but at least it will help. You can press for formal collection of the balance if necessary.

Rules. A list of reasonable rules should be included in the rental agreement and clearly posted in the House including prohibitions on in-room appliances, smoking, candles, etc.

Fire & Life Safety. Evacuation routes and emergency procedures should be clearly posted and reviewed at the first active chapter meeting and again at the beginning of each semester. For owned chapter houses, the house corporation should perform at least quarterly inspections accompanied by the House Manager and Consul. Review the fire alarm system, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, exit signs and emergency lights for proper function. Hallways,

stairwells and exits should be clear of obstructions.

Cleaning & Maintenance Inspection. At least every two months, the house corporation should inspect the facilities for cleanliness and repair. In particular, review the kitchen and bathrooms where unclean conditions are a health hazard. Take appropriate action.

Fundraising. With rising cost of operations, many chapters fall way short in rent revenue to address ongoing maintenance and repairs. Fundraising should be part of every house corporation’s purpose. Even universities are constantly fundraising. Where do you think all those new dormitories and buildings come from? Fraternities are no exception. Fundraising has many benefits:

- ▶ Provides the money necessary to effect repairs.
- ▶ Provides a sense of higher purpose for the house corporation. Long range planning and execution is much more satisfying than short term crisis management.
- ▶ Creates a volunteer “magnet”. Successful brothers like being part of a successful and visionary purpose.
- ▶ Rallies the alumni. Even though many alums don’t make it to Homecoming every year, newsletters showing them the good work their donations have facilitated do make a big impact and reinforce the staying power of Sigma Chi.

As you enter the new school year, rally your house corporation to handle the business of effective chapter house management. Making a great first impression is worth its weight in gold and success breeds success. **IHSV**

Out Damn Spot!

One of a house corporation's important tasks is to perform various types of repair and maintenance on the chapter house. Painting, carpeting and roof replacement fall in this category. One critical task that is often left up to Active Chapter is cleaning. The theory is if you rent a house, you are responsible to keep it clean. Great theory.

Older alums remember the days when regular house cleaning was mandatory and often a team building event for actives and pledges. While the results of these exercises weren't always stellar, when performed weekly (not weakly), the results were tolerable.

But as most of today's house corporations can attest to, the standards of cleanliness at chapter houses often leaves something to be desired. In some cases, the level of sanitation borders on toxic. One chapter house actually had an incidence of the highly infectious ebola virus. There may have been dire consequences if the house corporation had not taken immediate and intensive remediation measures.

But plague conditions aside, overflowing garbage cans, unswept floors, unvacuumed carpets and unwashed windows are common. The condition of kitchens and bathrooms often gives rise to mold and bacterial conditions that cause real health problems.

When it comes to cleaning, some things are more important than others. Keeping the kitchen and bathroom germ and mold free is at the top of the priority list. But knowing how to clean these areas is of critical importance:

Use Commercial Cleaning Products & Equipment. Treat chapter houses like commercial space and shop at janitorial supply outlets. Not only will the distributor be able to give expert advice on proper technique and products, the products come in large quantity containers that will save money. Many of these products are designed for janitorial professionals so having proper equipment (rubber gloves, rags, mops, etc.) is important.

Establish a Regular Schedule. Kitchens and bathrooms need thorough cleaning at least weekly, no exceptions. Bathrooms need tubs, shower walls, sinks, toilets and urinals to receive a proper cleaning with bacterial and mold killing products.

List of Supplies. Have the right products and tools makes the job easy and more effective:

- **Dusting:** Cleaning Cloths, Dust Mop, Furniture Polish
- **Trash Supplies:** Trash Cans, Trash Can Liners, Baking Soda (Odor Control), Recycling Bins
- **General Surface Supplies:** All-Purpose Cleaner, Kitchen/Bathroom Wipes, Sponges, Paper Towels, Rubber Gloves
- **Special Surface Supplies:** Liquid Hand Soap, Automatic Dishwasher Detergent, Oven Cleaner, Wood Polish, Toilet Bowl Cleaners, Soft Scrub Cleaner, Air Freshener, Window Cleaner
- **Floor Cleaning Supplies:** Broom, Dustpan, Vacuum Cleaner, Mop & Bucket, Floor Wax/Polish

Assign Responsibility. A statement like "All the brothers are required to clean the house" translates into "Nobody lifts a finger to clean". The House Manager needs to be held accountable for the results.

Spot Checks. Regular inspections by the house corporation is essential to good results. Set up a schedule and keep it. If the cleaning is not getting done, have it done professionally and charge the cost to the chapter. If it does get done, recognize the effort.

Maintaining a clean chapter house is more than just a healthy thing to do. It demonstrates pride and helps in recruiting brothers with high standards. Help the brothers help themselves and all of Sigma Chi wins. **IHSV**

HCOTS 2013

Every year, the Board of Grand Trustees hosts House Corporation Officers Training Seminar (HCOTS) in conjunction with Balfour Leadership Training Workshop. This year, the dates are July 31 - August 4 and the event will take place at Purdue University in West Lafayette Indiana.

HCOTS attendees will learn the nuts and bolts of running an effective house corporation and rekindle brotherhood with undergrads and alums from across the nation.

To qualify for HCOTS, your house corporation must have submitted a 2013

Annual Report, you must be a first time attendee and a board officer (President, Vice President, Treasurer or Secretary). Sigma Chi pays for travel, housing and food. There is still space available. Contact rich.thompson@sigmachi.com for an HCOTS Application.

House Corporation Resource Directory

ARCHITECTURAL & PLANNING SERVICES

Aynesworth Architects & Consultants 512.328.2272
G. Tim Aynesworth tim@aynesworth.com
PO Box 161434, Austin TX 78716 www.aynesworth.com
Architectural design and construction management. Texas Registered Architect, Certified by National Council of Architectural Registration Board.

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Specializing in the design and renovation of fraternity housing.

Reid Studio Architecture LLC 217.390.7403
Rod Reid rod.reid@comcast.net
Chapter house renovation and construction design; collects data, analyzes project requirements, develops cost estimates; assists locating design and construction team members.

CHAPTER HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Pierce Education Properties, L.P. 619.297.0400
Matt Maruccia, VP for Acquisitions
www.PierceEducationProperties.com National developers, buyers, owners and operators of student housing with specific expertise in Greek Housing acquisition, disposition, development, finance, etc.

CHAPTER HOUSE FINANCING

Constantine Capital, Inc. 816.300.0604
Tom Burton tom.burton@abrealty.com
Bob Schock robert.schock.zo@sigmachi.com
Affordable financing to Sigma Chi house corporations for chapter house purchase, life & safety upgrades, new construction, renovation and loan guaranty

CHAPTER HOUSE RENOVATION & DESIGN

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launch@starstream.net www.launchinteriordesign.com
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OmegaFi www.omegafi.com 800.276.6342
Chapter and alumni management tools to bill and collect dues and rent, manage rosters and records, pay bills and employees and file tax returns.

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 Patrick Alderdice palderdice@penningtonco.com
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770.903.3987
 Bill Paris bparis@thelaurusgroup.net C 404.441.9630
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HOUSE DIRECTOR SEARCH & SCREENING

Greek House Resource 512.836.7176
greekhs@gmail.com www.greekhouse.net
 Screen, interview and placement for chapter house directors.

INCORPORATION ASSISTANCE

Grand Trustee Harvey Silverman 703.319.8806
harveyas@aol.com

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Here to Serve

The Board of Grand Trustees is available to assist house corporations in a myriad of ways. The eighteen Grand Trustees have over 700 years of combined professional expertise in areas like property management, project administration, politics, maintenance, renovation, insurance, tax planning, accounting, construction, fund raising, legal, education, housing, risk management and more.

Contact information is listed on Page 1 and www.TheSigHouse.org. Give us a try.

