

Baylor fraternity brothers serve God in the Ozarks

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On a spring break mission trip, 65 members of Baylor University fraternity Kappa Omega Tau enjoyed the serenity of the Arkansas Ozarks while rebuilding a stairway to an outdoor chapel.

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By **Barbara Bedrick**

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WACO—Armed with pick axes, drills, shovels, chainsaws, rakes and a mission-minded attitude, 65 Baylor University fraternity brothers traveled to Ponca Bible Camp in the Ozark Mountains over spring break to renovate the encampment.

Members of Kappa Omega Tau, a Baylor service-oriented fraternity, spent three days climbing 20-foot ladders up hills, restoring cabins, building retaining walls, burning leaves and improving the Christian camp. Mission Trip Chair Alex LaRue helped plan the spring break effort.

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"We're a group of guys who are blessed, and we realize that," LaRue said. "We want to share that with others so they can feel blessed as well."

The fraternity chose the Arkansas Christian camp after researching other options on the Internet, LaRue said. Ponca Bible Camp sounded like a "nice road trip," and it seemed "like this camp would benefit the most" from their efforts, he noted. The camp typically budgets \$1,000 every year for improvements, and only four or five volunteers help, he added.

When camp directors let sponsoring churches know the Baylor students wanted to help revitalize the camp over spring break, churches in Arkansas, Kansas and Missouri raised more than \$8,000 for building supplies.

Much of the volunteer work meant stretching and reaching new heights. The students built a new roof on the main dining hall, ripped up old railroad ties that had formed a stairway to an outdoor chapel, poured concrete and added rocks to form a new 31-step staircase.

Dallas sophomore Tim Springer, a member of Park Cities Baptist Church, found "battening" the cabins proved to be a somewhat precarious but rewarding mission.

"It seems simple, but it took two full days 20-feet up on a ladder on a hill to fill cracks in the cabins," Springer said.

The Baylor students spent hours building 19 retaining walls, using power washers to clean cabins before staining, clearing brush, conducting controlled burns and building a new hillside bleacher section for the basketball court, but they say it was worth it.

"Knowing the experiences I had growing up at a summer camp and knowing what a special time in my spiritual development that was, it was incredible for me to go back and help the camp shape young lives,"

Springer said.

Shaping lives is an important part of the fraternity's efforts to help others year around. Every other Saturday, members gather to help Habitat for Humanity, other community organizations and individuals who are in need.

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