

The Circle

OF ZETA PSI FRATERNITY



REWEAVING SOCIETY

From a Lehigh fraternity house to the national stage — Michael Smerconish, Tau Delta (Lehigh) '84, on what he learned about connection along the way.

The Circle

OF ZETA PSI FRATERNITY

The Circle is a publication of the Zeta Psi Fraternity.

International Headquarters

15 S Henry St.
Pearl River, NY 10965

(845) 735-1847

zeta psi.org

instagram.com/
zetapsi1847

facebook.com/
ZetaPsiFraternity

Editors

Joshua Muscat,
Gamma Psi (Guelph) '16

Kiera Green

Design & Layout

Tria Designs Inc.

Contributing Writers

Harper Crubel, Chi Tau
(Clemson) '27

Barth Gillan,
Alpha Psi (McGill) '85

Ben Libon, Zeta Tau
(Michigan State) '20

Hari Mohil, Iota Alpha
(Texas) '26

Michael Smerconish,
Tau Delta (Lehigh) '84

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SUMMER 2026 EDITION



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the Zeta Psi
Foundation.

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Premiere

Less than a year since its founding, Zeta Psi's Chi Tau Chapter (Clemson) is already making a meaningful impact across the Clemson community.



Headlines

CHAPTER ANNIVERSARIES



SIGMA EPSILON (BRITISH COLUMBIA)

100th

FOUNDING DATE:

January 9, 1926

Sigma Epsilon turned 100 in January — a century of Zeta Psi at the University of British Columbia. This fall, Elders will gather to mark the milestone, keeping the chapter's identity alive long after their undergraduate years ended. One hundred years in, Sigma Epsilon is a reminder that membership in Zeta Psi doesn't expire when you leave campus.



Zeta Psi brothers at the Pi Tau 50th Anniversary celebration.

PI TAU (WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE)

50th

FOUNDING DATE:

April 30, 1976

Pi Tau marked its 50th anniversary at Worcester Polytechnic Institute with a weekend that felt like a full accounting of the chapter's history. Among the attendees were two of its founding members, alongside Elders representing multiple decades. The celebration also welcomed Kappa Delta brothers from George Mason University, who traveled to be initiated during the weekend — a reminder that every fifty-year story has to start somewhere.

FINANCIALS

**You gave more.
We awarded more.
The Foundation is
stronger than ever.**



THE FOUNDATION FINISHED FY2025

stronger than ever — a reminder of what this brotherhood can build together. That strength matters as the Fraternity works through near-term financial challenges, with a clear plan to grow chapters, expand recruitment, and return to solid footing.



ALPHA PI (VIRGINIA TECH)

50th

FOUNDING DATE:

April 24, 1975

Alpha Pi celebrated its 50th Anniversary at Virginia Tech this year, bringing together members from across the chapter's history to mark a half-century in the Hokie community. With 44 active members, the chapter has a broad footprint on campus: brothers hold roles in academic organizations, service groups, athletic clubs, and student leadership. The chapter has clearly made itself at home at Virginia Tech, and shows no signs of slowing down.

ALPHA THETA (WATERLOO WILFRID LAURIER)

25th

FOUNDING DATE:

March 3, 2001

Alpha Theta marked its 25th anniversary at the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University this year, celebrating a quarter-century of Zeta Psi in Canada. Brothers from chapters across Ontario made the trip out — a reflection of the tight-knit network that has taken root across the province. At a time when Canadian chapters have faced their share of challenges, Alpha Theta's milestone is worth noting: twenty-five years in, the chapter is still here, still growing, and still pulling others in from across the province to prove it. ●



PHI EPSILON (MARYLAND)

50th

FOUNDING DATE:

March 19, 1976

Fifty years at the University of Maryland is no small feat. This year, Phi Epsilon marked the milestone with a banquet that brought together undergraduate members and Elders; that's five decades of the chapter's history in the same room. With 98 active members and a 3.38 GPA, the chapter is in good shape heading into its next fifty.

\$538,462

Awarded in Scholarships & Educational Grants — up 35% this year.

\$1,735, 811

Raised from our community — a 15% increase in contributions.

\$9.6M

Total Educational Foundation Assets.

FRATERNITY



FOUNDATION



Full audited financial statements for both entities are available at zetapsi.org. ●

Headlines



1847 WINNERS

Crowning Our 1847 Champions

The 1847 Pledge Challenge demonstrated the strength of our fraternity once again. This year, our chapters rallied together with 1,100 total transactions, raising an impressive \$92,877 and successfully unlocking the full \$18,470 matching gift.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S WINNING CHAPTERS:

- 112** Grand Champion
PHIEPSILON, MARYLAND
112 Donations
- 83** U.S. Champion
TAU, LAFAYETTE
83 Donations
- 50** Canadian Champion
THETA PSI, KINGSTON, ON
50 Donations
- 79** Young Champion
IOTA PI, TENNESSEE
79 Donations
- 6** Overseas Champion
KAPPA ALPHA, AMERICAN COLLEGE OF GREECE
6 Donations
- 40** Phoenix Champion
GAMMA, SYRACUSE
40 Donations

FINDINGS

We polled brothers on Instagram to find out where Zeta Psi has made the biggest impact in their life. **This is what we learned:**

72%

Lifelong Friendships & Belonging

16%

Leadership Skills & Confidence

8%

Experiences Beyond Campus

4%

Mentorship & Networking



CHARTERED

Chi Tau
Clemson

Iota Pi ▲
Tennessee,
Knoxville

Tau Omicron ◀
IE University,
Madrid



PROVISIONAL GROUPS

Nu Sigma ▲
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(F26)

EXPANSION



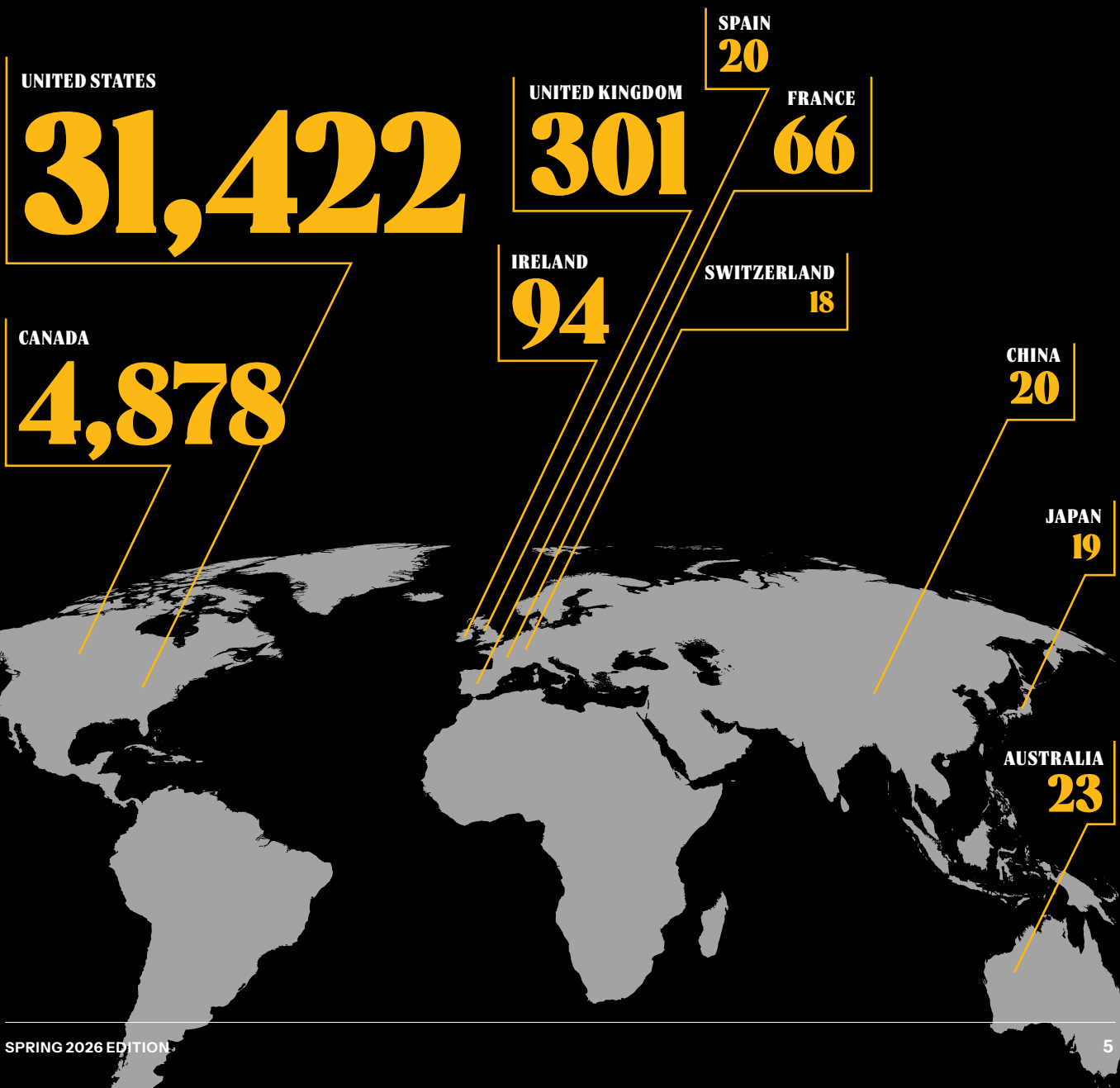
Growing the Map



Zeta Psi continues to expand. Over the past year, three new chapters have been chartered, with several more in development across the country and beyond. Supported in part by expansion-focused giving through the Foundation's Now & Forever Capital Campaign, Zeta Psi is taking root in new places and looking ahead to where it's headed next. ●

Where in the World is Zeta Psi?

Zeta Psi has always been more than a collection of campus chapters, but the past few years have made that clearer than ever. As the fraternity has continued to expand globally, so too has the footprint of its membership. Below are the **ten countries with the largest presence** of Zeta Psi members, spanning continents and time zones well beyond the places where Zeta Psi has a formal presence. The connections, it turns out, are bigger than the chapters. ●



#ZetaPsi

Check out some of our favorite posts from across Zeta Psi. Tag us wherever you post on social media for a chance to be featured next year!



zetapsirutgers
Delta, Rutgers



Zeta Psi is back for Zeta Tau Alpha's Big Man on Campus 2025! We're excited to announce that Jake Graziano is stepping up to represent us this year, looking to get us back to back wins. Join us in raising awareness — like, comment, repost, and share this post!

Mark your calendars for November 2nd and come show your support
 🐾 #bmoc2025 #zetapsi
 #supportthecause #zetataualpha

Follow us on social media



@zetapsi1847



@ZetaPsiFraternity



Zeta Psi Fraternity, Inc.



zetapsiucsb
Sigma Beta, UC Santa Barbara



Already missing our graduating class, wishing them the best of luck on their future endeavors 🍷



uwzetapsi
Phi Lambda, Washington



UW Zeta Psi is proud to build on our athletic tradition. Here at Zetes we compete hard in football, lacrosse, hockey, soccer, rugby, waterpolo, basketball, and tennis for our UW Husky varsity and club teams.
 #studentathletes



vtzetapsi
Alpha Pi, Virginia Tech



Fall break the Zete way.

Learning to Carry the Room

By Ben Libon,
Zeta Tau (Michigan State) '20



Have you ever sat through a lecture or a presentation and thought, “Wow, this person really knows how to carry a room?” Well, that was me. Not the one carrying the room. The one in the crowd, quietly wondering how anyone gets that comfortable up there.

Today, I teach at the University of Georgia. I travel for conference presentations. Once in a while, I find myself in front of an 800-seat auditorium with a microphone in my hand, and eighteen-year-old me, watching from somewhere, is in absolute disbelief.

When I think about Zeta Psi, I don’t usually think about that. I think about the brotherhood, the stupid stories, the nights I’ll never put in writing. The “tools” the Fraternity gave me aren’t the first thing that comes to mind, but they’re probably the most valuable part.

I came to Michigan State as an international student. English was my second language, and I was painfully shy. The first time I spoke in front of any kind of group was giving the social chair’s report at chapter (to maybe 35 brothers). I remember the math I did before I stood up: if I say something stupid, it’s in front of people who love me. They’ll give me crap for a day or two. They won’t hold it against me.

That’s a powerful permission slip. Chapter became my low-stakes proving ground. The social chair report led to VP, where I butchered every other word of Old English in our ritual and got laughs I had not planned on getting. VP led to the president, where I had to lead a room of brothers through real decisions. None of it felt like training. It felt like just another chapter night.

There was no switch. It was gradual, repetitive, and surrounded by people who would



There was no switch. It was gradual, repetitive, and surrounded by people who would forgive me for being clumsy while I learned.

forgive me for being clumsy while I learned. By the time I stood in front of an 800-seat auditorium years later, my body already knew what to do.

To the undergrads reading this: the report you’re dreading giving at chapter tonight is the same skill someone is going to pay you for in ten years. Pay attention to the small reps. The brotherhood is the part you’ll remember. The competence is the part you’ll use.

I’m still not a perfect speaker. But I’m in the room, and Zeta Psi is the reason. ●

***Ben Libon** is an instructor at the University of Georgia and presents regularly at academic conferences. He previously served on staff at Zeta Psi International Headquarters and remains active as a local and international Fraternity volunteer.*



Ben Libon, pictured with the students of his class at the University of Georgia.

The Case for Belonging

What NIC research reveals about fraternity's measurable impact on belonging, wellbeing, leadership, and lifelong connection.

by Joshua Muscat, Gamma Psi (Guelph) '16

The first time I visited another Zeta Psi chapter, I expected to feel like an outsider.

It was my first time at a different university, walking into a house full of people I had never met, surrounded by friendships and traditions that already existed before I arrived. Instead, I was welcomed almost immediately. I was given a place to stay, included in what was happening, and treated not like a guest to be managed, but like a brother who belonged there.

That experience has stayed with me because it challenged what I thought I knew about fraternity. It was my first real understanding that belonging is not just something fraternities talk about; it is something members can create for one another.

The North American Interfraternity Conference's research helps put data behind something that many of us have experienced firsthand. Fraternity, when done well, gives young men a place where they are known, included, and supported. That matters on a college campus, where even students surrounded by classmates, roommates, and acquaintances can still feel uncertain or alone.

Belonging is often built in small ways. It is built when someone is invited along instead of left to figure things out alone. It is built when a chapter makes space for someone who is new, uncertain, or skeptical. It is built when brothers do the ordinary things that make someone feel included: checking in, saving a seat, offering a ride, making an introduction, or simply making sure someone knows they are wanted there.

When someone feels known, they are more likely to be noticed when something is wrong. When someone feels included, they are more likely to trust the people around them. And when trust exists, support becomes more than a buzzword in a recruitment pitch.

Fraternity members report a greater sense of belonging and a stronger feeling of being valued in their campus community than unaffiliated peers.

That may be one of the clearest explanations of why fraternity still matters. At its best, fraternity is not just a social experience or a student organization. It is a support system. It is a place where young men build the kind of trust that allows them to ask for help, accept accountability, and show up for one another when it matters most.

I have seen brothers drop everything to help another brother in need. I have seen members who were close to failing out of school be pulled back by brothers who studied with them, checked in on them, and helped them get their priorities back in order. I have seen brothers struggling financially receive part-time work from local alumni, or meals from fellow active members who wanted to make sure they didn't go hungry.





The author's experiences with Zeta Psi changed what he thought he knew about Fraternities. He found true belonging.



These are not abstract benefits. A study session when someone is falling behind is material. A meal when money is tight is material. A job opportunity, a check-in, an uncomfortable but necessary conversation, or a friend who refuses to let someone slip through the cracks can change the direction of a semester, a college experience, or a life.

Let's be clear, a fraternity cannot replace professional mental health care, nor should it. But it can create an environment where members are more likely to be noticed, supported, and reminded that they do not have to face challenges alone — and where tough conversations about relationships, family, mental health, and unspoken pressures can happen more naturally. I'd say that makes a difference.

Of course, not everyone joins a fraternity because they are searching for belonging or support. Some join because their friends are joining. Some join because they want to get more involved on campus. Some, perhaps more practically, wonder whether it might help them build a resume, find a job, do better in school, or meet people who can open doors later on. Fair enough. Fraternity can help with those things too.

Leadership confidence is one of those outcomes that makes sense when you look at what chapter life actually asks of students. Members plan events, manage budgets, recruit new members, communicate with alumni, resolve conflict, organize service, and represent something larger than themselves. That is not just involvement. It is practice.

83% of fraternity members say their confidence in their leadership skills increased because of their membership.

The same is true of career readiness and academic support. A brother who helps you study, introduces you to an Elder, offers advice before an interview, or pushes you to take your responsibilities seriously is contributing to your success in ways that are both personal and practical. Fraternity can help someone become more confident, more connected, and more prepared for life after college. But even those outcomes come back to the same foundation: relationships.

For me, one of the clearest signs of fraternity's lasting value is the people it has brought into my life. I have met brothers across chapters, cities, and career fields who have shaped my personal and professional path. Two of the groomsmen who will stand beside me at my wedding this summer are Zetes, and they were not even from my own chapter. Most importantly, I could list dozens of brothers I know I could call in a crisis, and they would be there for me.

At its best, fraternity is not just a social experience or a student organization. It is a support system.

I cannot think of many college experiences that could create that kind of outcome.

None of this means fraternity is perfect, but it does mean fraternity is important. It means the work of building healthy, inclusive, supportive chapters matters. It means the culture we create has consequences. It means the expectations we set around brotherhood, accountability, inclusion, and care can have a lasting impact on the lives of our members.

The NIC data gives us the numbers, but the numbers point to something deeply human: a student who feels less alone, a brother who asks for help, a member who finds confidence, an Elder who stays connected, or a young man who discovers a community he did not know he needed.

That is why fraternity matters. ●

The Research



The NIC has compiled research on fraternity's impact on belonging, wellbeing, leadership, and life after college. Scan the QR code to learn more about the data behind the fraternity experience.



Supporters of Zeta Psi



The strength and future of Zeta Psi are made possible by the continued generosity of our brothers, families, and friends. Their support helps sustain the programs, scholarships, leadership opportunities, chapter support, and lifelong bonds that define our Fraternity and Educational Foundation. We are grateful to each donor listed here for their commitment to Zeta Psi today and for generations to come.

This list reflects donor support recorded between June 1, 2024, and April 30, 2026. The 1847 Pledge Challenge data from March 2026 is not included at this time.

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★♦+⊙

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BLACK & GOLD SOCIETY: \$5,000

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Gary Older, Kappa

Karl Llewellyn, Kappa Phi

Don Rotunno, Kappa Phi

Joe Wall, Mu

Warner Luoma, Nu

GIVING PROGRAM

Heritage Society

The Heritage Society recognizes brothers and friends who have made a planned giving commitment to support the future of Zeta Psi. Through bequests, insurance gifts, trusts, securities, and other legacy commitments, Heritage Society members help ensure the Fraternity, its foundations, and its educational mission remain strong for generations to come.



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**FIVE POINTED
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GIVING PROGRAM

1847 Society

The 1847 Society recognizes donors who contribute \$1,847 or more during a fiscal year in support of Zeta Psi. Named in honor of the Fraternity's founding year, the Society celebrates generous annual support that strengthens Zeta Psi's programs, services, and long-term future.

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Chris Bond, Beta Tau +
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FOUNDATION

Zeta Psi Foundation of Canada

The Canadian Educational Foundation allows Canadian Zetes to make tax-deductible gifts in support of educational opportunities for Active members. Contributions help advance scholarships, leadership development, and educational programming that benefit Zetes across Canada.



Jason Hodes, Phi ★ ☉
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Scott Miller, Phi Epsilon + ☉
Mike Olert, Phi Epsilon ☉
Tom Parker, Phi Epsilon + ☉
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Timothy Schmidt,
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Lyle Sykora, Alpha Epsilon

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Robert Rando, Alpha Pi

Maxime Aubin, Alpha Psi ♦ +

Andre Boudreault, Alpha Psi

Sean Finnell, Alpha Psi ♦ +

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Will Evans, Alpha Theta ☉

Austin Carson, Beta Sigma +

Gene Krejci, Beta Tau ☉

Jordan LeJeune, Beta Tau +

Darion Stofira, Beta Tau + ☉

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 Caleb Stout, Delta Chi
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 Ken Knabe, Gamma
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 Iota Alpha ◎
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 Hamilton White, Iota Alpha +
 Gavin Whitlock, Iota Alpha +
 Hubert Shaw, Lambda
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 Pascal Visentin, Mu Theta ◎
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 Wright Nee, Nu
 Christopher Powers, Nu
 Steve Steffas, Nu
 Frank Todaro, Nu
 Larry Wiley, Nu
John Rodriguez, Nu Sigma ◎
 Richard Pumilia, Omega
Christopher Bush, Phi ◎
 Edgar Castillo, Phi ◎
PJ Cirella, Phi ◎
Mike Genett, Phi ◎
 Sergio Lira, Phi +
 Oscar Rodriguez, Phi
 Chip Birdsall, Phi Epsilon
 Steven Connelly,
 Phi Epsilon ◎
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 Phi Epsilon + ◎
 Andy Fox, Phi Epsilon ◎
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AJ Nguyen, Phi Epsilon ◎
 Dave Sackett, Phi Epsilon ◎
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 Carl Thompson, Phi Epsilon ◎
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 Rich Fairlamb, Pi
 Gary Harper, Pi ◎
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 Tony Deutsch, Pi Kappa
Chris Donohue, Pi Sigma ◎

GIVING PROGRAM

1847 Pledge Challenge

The 1847 Pledge Challenge is an annual campaign that encourages actives and elders to participate in support of Zeta Psi. Launched each year around March 27 in recognition of the Theta Xi Chapter's founding at the University of Toronto, the Challenge celebrates Zeta Psi's international heritage while raising funds for membership education.



William Tietjen, Pi Sigma
 Christopher Gallagher,
 Pi Tau +
 Bryan Hayes, Pi Tau ◎
 Gary Loeb, Pi Tau ◎
 Kyle Vander Poel, Pi Tau +
 John Carpenter, Psi
 George DeLorenzo, Psi
 Simon Krieger, Psi ◎
 Keith Langendorfer, Psi ◎
 John Sawchuk, Psi
 Mark Schmitt, Psi ◎
 Tom Oblak, Psi Epsilon
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 Albert Lingelbach, Sigma
 Stephen Bedalow,
 Sigma Phi +
 Leonard Greski, Sigma Phi ◎
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 Guy Gabrielson, Tau
 William Miller, Tau ◎
 David Morgan, Tau
 Bob Thurber, Tau
 Tony Jennings, Tau Gamma ◎
 Russ Bowen, Theta
 Mike Frechette, Theta +
 Steven Link, Theta
 Ronald Niederwerfer, Theta +
 Al Smith, Theta
 Tom Stevens, Theta
Chris Arnold, Theta Eta ◎
 Michael Anderson,
 Theta Phi ♦
 Craig Hannaford, Theta Phi ◎
 James Kay, Theta Phi ♦
 Derek Pattison, Theta Phi ◎
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 Robert Hoke, Theta Xi ◎
John Mio, Theta Xi ♦◎
Tom Vaivada, Theta Xi ◎
 James Baker, Upsilon ◎
 Brent Milgrom, Upsilon
 Alex Johnson, Xi
 Paul Skoglund, Xi
**Andrew Billington,
 Zeta Tau ◎**
Ben Libon, Zeta Tau ◎



GIVING PROGRAM

Zete4Life

Zete4Life provides a way for donors to support both their Elder Chapter and the International Fraternity. Eighty percent of each contribution goes to the Elder Chapter to help you support your Active Chapter, while the remaining 20% goes to Zeta Psi International Headquarters to help us support your chapter through resources, services, and broader Fraternity support. Together, every Zete4Life gift strengthens the connection between Elder Chapter leadership, Active Chapter success, and the International Fraternity.

Supporters of Zeta Psi



THETA (CONNECTICUT)

Wall Street John

How one brother's quiet fidelity to Zeta Psi became one of the most transformational gifts in the Fraternity's history.



John Stelmach, Theta (Connecticut) '75, was not a man who sought the spotlight. A member of the Theta Chapter at the University of Connecticut, he built a career as an auditor for NASDAQ, made his home in Brooklyn, and earned a nickname among his brothers: "Wall Street John."

He was, by most accounts, a private person. He found satisfaction in his work, in the markets he followed closely, and in the steady rhythm of his connection to Zeta Psi. He attended gatherings when he could, gave to the Annual Fund year after year, and rarely called attention to any of it. He lived modestly, gave generously, and kept his deepest commitments to himself.

Greg McElroy, Phi (NYU) '70, who administered Zeta Psi's Annual Fund for many years, noticed John's consistent giving and reached out to thank him. Their first meeting was meant to be simple. But John surprised him.

"He told me it was his intention to direct a bequest to Zeta Psi that would be an estimated million dollars," McElroy recalls. In 2013, John formalized that commitment by signing a Heritage Society

Registration and Pledge Form, quietly and without fanfare, as was his way.

The two men built a genuine friendship over the years. They shared lunches in the financial district, connected with fellow Zetes at Founder's Day Dinners in New York, and exchanged Christmas cards every year without fail. McElroy came to know John not just as a donor, but as a brother, one who was thoughtful, consistent, and genuinely proud of his connection to Zeta Psi. Their last in-person meeting was in 2019.

When the pandemic arrived in 2020, contact became harder to maintain, and when news of John's passing finally arrived, it came as a shock. He was only 71. But true to his word, a check for over \$1 million reached Zeta Psi's headquarters within weeks of his death. His total bequest came to approximately \$1.3 million.

In a final gesture that captured his personality, John donated his personal library, including hundreds of books on stocks and investing, to Zeta Psi's headquarters. "John wanted to donate these books as a kind of library for Zetes who wished to benefit from his knowledge and expertise," McElroy explains. "This was yet another indication of why 'Wall Street John' was his well-recognized nickname."

The scale of John's gift is hard to fully absorb. His bequest of more than \$1.1 million to the Zeta Psi Educational Foundation will generate nearly \$50,000 annually in perpetuity, a permanent and self-sustaining source of support. At our average scholarship amount from Spring 2026, that is the equivalent of more than 75 additional scholarships that can be awarded every single year. Alternatively, those funds can support grants that strengthen the educational experience at the Kirby Presidents

“

In a final gesture that captured his personality, John donated his personal library, including hundreds of books on stocks and investing.

\$1.3m

Total bequest to the
Zeta Psi Heritage
Society

Interested in the Heritage Society?

If you have ever considered including Zeta Psi in your estate plans, or are looking for a way to leave a legacy with Zeta Psi, we would welcome the opportunity to speak with you about the impact that a planned gift can have on future Zetes. Contact Barth Gillan (gillan@zetapsi.org) to learn more.

Conference and Zeta Psi's Annual Convention, investing directly in the development of undergraduate brothers across the country.

While a portion of the bequest has been designated for the Theta Chapter Fund, establishing scholarships for fellow UConn brothers, his unrestricted giving reflects a rare kind of trust. He didn't attach conditions or direct every dollar, instead, he trusted the Foundation to put his generosity where it would do the most good.

John's story is a powerful example of what the Zeta Psi Heritage Society makes possible. The Heritage Society recognizes brothers who have included Zeta Psi in their estate plans, whether through a bequest, a charitable trust, a beneficiary designation, or another planned giving vehicle. It is how a brother's commitment can outlast him, funding scholarships and leadership programs on a generational timeline rather than a single year's campaign. John signed his pledge form in 2013 and honored it quietly for over a decade. He never made a show of it. But when the time came, he followed through on his pledge without hesitation, and in doing so he showed what that kind of loyalty can mean for the brothers who come after us.

Zeta Psi will miss seeing John at Founder's Day Dinners, at the kinds of gatherings where brothers who haven't seen each other in years fall easily back into conversation. But his presence will continue to be felt in the lives of young men who receive scholarships they may never know were funded by a quiet man from Brooklyn who loved the markets, stayed loyal to his brothers, and kept his word across more than a decade. As McElroy put it simply: "His legacy and generosity will fund many programming initiatives for the Zeta Psi Educational Foundation for generations to come."

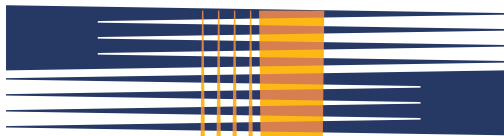
Tau Kappa Phi, John. You will be remembered. ●

From a Lehigh fraternity house to the national stage — Michael Smerconish, Tau Delta (Lehigh) '84, on what he learned about connection along the way.

A photograph of Michael Smerconish, a bald man with a grey beard and glasses, wearing a blue blazer over a light blue shirt and grey trousers. He is sitting in a grey armchair, leaning back with his hands resting on the armrests. The background is a dark blue wall with horizontal lines.

REWEAVING SOCIETY

*by Joshua Muscat, Gamma Psi (Guelph) '16
& Barth Gillan, Alpha Psi (McGill) '85*



THE STORY MICHAEL SMERCONISH TELLS

about his freshman year at Lehigh starts with a failure. He had formed a club, Lehigh University Youth for Reagan-Bush, and was struggling to attract members. So, he did what any resourceful eighteen-year-old might do: he threw a keg party to lure the campus Republicans out of their rooms. "Literally no one attended," he recalled. The Phillies were in the World Series that night. He ended up hauling the untouched keg back to Taylor Hall and watching the game with everyone else.

What happened next is the part that makes the story worth telling. The club's existence had quietly made its way back to the Reagan-Bush campaign, which was planning a visit by then-Ambassador George H. W. Bush to nearby Bethlehem Steel. They needed students to carry bags and drive motorcade cars, and their call came through one of Taylor Hall's three communal phones, landing on Smerconish. He rounded up his freshman floor, and they showed up. Among the people he met that day was Dan Sullivan, who would later become Director of Advance for Vice President Bush and recruit Smerconish to work as an advance man for the Vice President's office. "It all stems from a kegger that went bust on the Lehigh campus," Smerconish said.

Smerconish tells the story with genuine pleasure, but it points to something worth sitting with. The advance work that followed was his first real lesson in a form of leadership that doesn't get much credit: preparation. Planning a Vice Presidential visit meant logistics, details, anticipating what others would need, making complex events run invisibly well. "It was very organization-focused, very methodical, very detail-oriented," he said. "I didn't realize at the time that I was acquiring a skill, but I was, and I think it's served me well in life." The bigger lesson, though, was about where opportunity comes from. It doesn't always arrive through the door you opened.

Smerconish arrived at Lehigh in 1980 with a specific goal already formed. When asked what he had hoped to do with a double major in government and journalism, his answer was direct: "To serve in Congress." He pursued a law degree at Penn with the same aim and, despite what he jokingly described as a classmate vote for "least likely to ever use the license," he did use it, practicing for ten years after serving in the Bush administration. But Philadelphia radio and television stations had begun calling on him for political commentary, and over time he found himself imagining a switch: not a lawyer who appeared in the media on the side, but a talk radio host who happened to be a lawyer. When the opportunity arose, he took it and, as he put it, "pretty much never looked back."



ABOVE: Smerconish and his fellow Tau Delta Zetes, posing on his Datsun B210, with the license plate "Zetes".
| BELOW: Michael Smerconish with his mentor, Professor David Amidon.

We're not joining in the way that our parents did. We don't have buy-in in our communities, and I think that when we're not connected with one another, democracy suffers."



He had been a Republican for all of it, enthusiastically and actively, right up through emceeing George W. Bush's final Pennsylvania rally, twenty thousand people in a cornfield. But the years after September 11 began to wear on him. He grew disenchanted with the direction of U.S. policy in the Middle East, and interviews with then-Senator Barack Obama during the 2008 campaign shifted his perspective further. That year he voted for a Democrat for president for the first time. In 2010, he changed his party affiliation to Independent in Pennsylvania and has remained there since. Today he is the lead plaintiff in a lawsuit seeking to open Pennsylvania's closed primaries to Independent voters. "We could have an interesting conversation as to whether I've changed, or whether the Republican Party, since the days that I was on that Lehigh campus, changed," he said. "Probably a combination of both."

That willingness to be changed by experience is, on reflection, one of the more underrated qualities Smerconish models as a leader. Not the certainty of someone who always knew where they were headed, but the honesty of someone willing to let what they encounter complicate what they assumed. He offered a version of this himself when asked what he would go back and fix. His answer pointed not to a single decision but to a habit: the tendency to stay too comfortably inside his own circle. During his undergraduate years, he was so consumed by Republican politics that it was nothing for him to drive an hour home in his Datsun B210 (license plate "ZETES") for a county party meeting and turn right back around. "I have a regret at not having been a more active participant in the house," he said of his time at Zeta Psi, "even though I lived there for three full years."

He joined Zeta Psi because his older brother, Walter Smerconish, Tau Delta '80, had been a member, graduating just as Smerconish arrived. Looking back at the composites from those

ABOVE: Smerconish interviews President Barack Obama in the Oval Office — the first journalist to interview Obama in the White House following his inauguration.

BELOW: Smerconish and his Zeta Psi "Big Brother", Chris Palazzi, Tau Delta '82

RIGHT TOP: Smerconish delivers the keynote address at NAILBA 40 in Orlando.

RIGHT BOTTOM: Lehigh vs. Lafayette #Rivalry150 football game, accompanied by his father, niece, and brother, Walter Smerconish.

years, what strikes him is how hard the house is to categorize. Every other house at Lehigh seemed to have an identity: the wrestlers, the football players, the nerds. "Zeta Psi defied that definition," he said. "It was a great mix, and I think there was value in that." Living with forty men from different backgrounds, learning to support and be shaped by people unlike yourself: "that was, in and of itself, as valuable as what you were learning in the classroom." A fraternity brother pointed him toward Professor David Curtis Amadon Jr., whose urban studies courses he took every single semester at Lehigh. The recommendation came from within the house. So did the relationship that followed.

Those experiences, Smerconish said, are worth more to him now than they were at the time. And the reason they matter more is partly the work he has thrown himself into over





the past several years. He calls it the Mingle Project: an effort carried across his radio and television work and his speaking engagements to reverse the social isolation he sees eroding American civic life. For years he framed that problem politically, pointing to gerrymandering, partisan media, and campaign finance. Then he read a Washington Post story that reframed everything. It reported that for the first time, more American schoolchildren were being driven to school in private vehicles than were riding the public school bus.

That detail sent him back to Bus #5, the yellow-and-black that had carried him and his neighbors to elementary school. He remembered the repartee in the back seats, the ribbing, the social acclimation that happened before anyone reached a classroom. He remembered Mr. Larlick, the driver, who would pull over and shake up anyone who misbehaved. Then he went and found Larlick's obituary. A World War II veteran, married for more than fifty years, active in the Notre Dame Society, the Moose Lodge, the VFW, and the American Legion. "The bus driver got the connection that was necessary to lead a full life," Smerconish said. Then, making the link explicit: "You could say the same thing about a fraternity."

What the bus story crystallized for him was that the political causes he'd been pointing to were symptoms of something deeper. "It's only more recently that I realized that these are all sort of facets of something that stems from the lack of social capital," he said, crediting the term to Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*. "We're not joining in the way that our parents did. We don't have buy-in in our communities, and I think that when we're not connected with one another,



The bus driver got the connection that was necessary to lead a full life."

Tune in to Michael Smerconish weekday mornings on SiriusXM's POTUS Channel 124, or catch him Saturdays at 9:00 am ET on CNN.

democracy suffers." He saw the cost of this firsthand during COVID, when one of his sons, then serving as his fraternity president, watched his final semester evaporate. When that son later applied to law school, uncertain whether to disclose the presidency in a climate skeptical of Greek life, he owned it: writing an essay about what the role actually required. Smerconish's view was simple: why would you hide from the responsibility and the good things that came from it?

Asked what separates those who succeed from those who do not, Smerconish pushed back on the simplest version of the answer. Work and discipline matter, of course. "But luck." Thirty years ago, he might have said hard work could overcome any obstacle. He still believes it matters, but not unconditionally. "There are plenty of people who work awfully hard and just don't catch the break." He has worked hard and also caught breaks, and he knows the difference. The Amadon relationship. The phone call in Taylor Hall. "I am more proud of the fact that I got here despite the setbacks along the way," he said, than of any platform the work eventually produced.

His advice to a younger person, or to an undergraduate Zete today, comes from all of this. "Get involved in a political campaign of your choosing at an early age," he said. Not because the politics are the point, but because campaign work puts you in contact with networks and communities you might never encounter otherwise. More broadly, the counsel is simply to join something. A campaign, a church, a mosque, a synagogue, a local newspaper, a volunteer effort, national service. "Have some skin in the game," he said. "Have ownership." We live in difficult times, he added, but he is not waiting for the government to solve them.

That is what leadership looks like, in his telling: not standing apart, but stepping in. Into the room, the relationship, the community, the difficult conversation. The keg party that failed. The phone call he picked up anyway. The bus driver who went home every night to his community. The message Smerconish returns to now is older and simpler than any platform he has built. Connection is not a soft idea. It is, as he sees it, the precondition for everything else. ●

Zetes!

Brother Filip Piorko, Theta '28 recognized with the Grace Orzechowski Award for achieving the highest individual fundraising total for Huskython 2026.

THETA (CONNECTICUT)

Dance For A Change

Brothers at the University of Connecticut participated in Huskython, an annual 18-hour Dance Marathon that raises funds for Connecticut Children's Hospital. Brother Filip Piorko, Theta '28 raised an impressive \$31,465 individually, marking the second consecutive year he has raised more than \$30,000 for Connecticut Children's Hospital. Collectively, the brothers of Theta Chapter raised \$42,716 for the cause, standing alongside fellow students in support of children and families receiving care.

\$42,716

was raised for
Connecticut Children's Hospital



CHI TAU (CLEMSON)

A Place For Everyone

By Harper Crubel, Chi Tau (Clemson) '27

Brothers enjoying a night of energy, dancing, and excitement at the ClemsonLIFE formal

“I love hanging out with the brothers, when we have movie nights, and when I get dinner and ice cream with some brothers,” shared Brother Austin Greenman, Chi Tau '26, a student in the ClemsonLIFE program. ClemsonLIFE is a program that supports students with intellectual disabilities, helping ensure they enjoy a full and enriching college life. For the Chi Tau Chapter, integrating these students into Zeta Psi has been one of the most meaningful fraternity experiences.

Bringing these brothers into our fraternity has gone far beyond the typical chapter experience — we've formed genuine friendships that have strengthened our bond. ClemsonLIFE has provided the chapter with a deeper understanding of what true brotherhood, inclusion, and connection really mean.

What makes the experience so special is how natural it has become. These friendships have grown beyond chapter events and activities to now playing an important role in our daily lives. Brothers look forward to our weekly ClemsonLIFE events, which often include movie nights, basketball, dinners, and trips out for ice cream. Brother Ben Marsella described it best

“ClemsonLIFE has provided the chapter with a deeper understanding of what true brotherhood, inclusion, and connection really mean.”

when he said, “The weekly ClemsonLIFE events are something to look forward to outside of my regular schedule.”

This semester, ClemsonLIFE brothers were integrated into the recruitment process through participation in the second round of rush. It was a crucial step in continuing to build a chapter where everyone feels welcomed and valued. I'm also thrilled to say we will be welcoming more ClemsonLIFE students into our fraternity this fall.

Beyond organized events, many brothers spend time with ClemsonLIFE students on their own. Personally, I have grown especially close to one of our ClemsonLIFE brothers, Walker Ryan, Chi Tau '28. Every Thursday, Walker and I attend a Christian ministry group on campus. Friendships like this are what make the ClemsonLIFE experience so meaningful.

Having ClemsonLIFE students in our fraternity has improved our chapter for the better. It has made us more connected, compassionate, and grateful for the brotherhood we share. Above all, it reminds us that even though we each have different individual experiences, it's the relationships we build that truly make a brotherhood.

Zetes!



Zeta Psi brothers after the annual SickKids Foundation charity hockey game.

ONTARIO

Zetes on Ice

Few things feel more Canadian than a hockey game, and this year, Zetes across Ontario hit the ice to support causes close to home.

Theta Phi Chapter brothers after their win at Benji's Impact charity hockey game.



Brothers from **Alpha Theta** (Wilfred Laurier & Waterloo), **Theta Xi** (Toronto), **Gamma Psi** (Guelph), and **Theta Eta** (St. Catherine's) came together for an annual charity hockey game benefiting the SickKids Foundation, the fundraising arm of The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. The foundation supports world-class pediatric care and groundbreaking research that impacts children and families around the world.



Theta Phi (Western) chapter collaborated with the campus organization Benji's Impact to organize a fraternity charity hockey game in support of food allergy and anaphylaxis awareness. Benji's Impact was founded following the tragic passing of a 17-year-old student due to an anaphylactic reaction. The event drew strong support from across the Western community, with more than 200 tickets sold and over \$4,000 raised for Benji's Impact.



DELTA (RUTGERS)

Invictus Foundation

Brother Stephen Toth, Delta (Rutgers) '27 founded the Invictus Foundation in honor of his uncle Lou Gerona and held his first Charity Golf Outing in April. Nearly 50 attendees from across Greek life joined the event, helping raise more than \$5,000 for the Rutgers Cancer Institute. Stephen led the effort with strong support from Delta Chapter brothers, whose donations and participation helped him surpass his fundraising goal and bring a year-long vision to life. ●



IN MEMORIAM

May 1, 2025 through
April 30, 2026.

Bob Patha, Alpha Epsilon '66

Edward Rushton, Chi '58

**Brian McCready,
Chi Gamma '99**

Mark Vitale, Delta '75

John Huss, Eta '59

Jack Grant, Iota '57

Donald Peter, Mu '60

Frank White, Phi '50

Jon Momberger, Pi '59

Don Lindsay, Pi Tau '84

Carlos Diligenti,
Sigma Epsilon '66

Jeffrey Andrus, Tau '96

James Grace, Tau '54

Dan Flynn, Theta Omicron '15

David Knight, Theta Phi '35

Garry Palmateer, Theta Xi '74

John Schenck, Upsilon '57

Chad Sulkala, Upsilon Mu '93

Fred Allen, Xi '54

Lawrence Bohner, Xi '67

***Bold italic indicates
Heritage Society***

Brother Stephen Toth, Delta '27 (left) and his fellow chapter brothers at Invictus Foundation first annual golf outing.

Brother for Life

Iota Alpha (Texas)

Hari Mohil

We sat down with Hari Mohil, Iota Alpha '26 and 2025-2026 IFC President of the Year at the University of Texas at Austin, before he heads to Korea later this year to begin his service in the U.S. Army.

Q: Why did you choose the University of Texas at Austin? **A:** UT was the highest ranked university I got into, and I was honestly shocked they accepted me because the out-of-state acceptance rate is very low. My parents encouraged me to go far from home to grow and develop as a person, and I was drawn to the school spirit and sports culture at UT. I was apprehensive about leaving Chicagoland for Austin, but in retrospect, it was great for my growth as a person and as a leader.

Q: What did you want to be when you grew up? **A:** Growing up, I always wanted to be a business owner. After seeing my dad run his own business, five gas stations throughout Chicagoland, I wanted to do the same. It took time to figure out what skill I wanted to use, but I decided I want to learn a trade within construction. Once I figure out which trade I want to master, I plan to complete trade school and start a business.

Q: If you could have dinner with anyone, living or dead, who would it be and why?

A: I would have dinner with Henry Ford II, Eta '40. I would choose him because he was the CEO of Ford Motor Company for a long time and I would love to hear his advice on how to run a large company and stories from his time as a Zeta at Yale. I was introduced to him as a person actually by watching Ford vs Ferrari, and then when I learned he was a Zeta during pledging, I was intrigued.

Q: What's the best lesson Zeta Psi has taught you?

A: Zeta Psi taught me to make the best of a situation, even if it's undesirable. In December 2024, I declined a nomination for president and ran for vice president instead because I did not think I would have the time. Four months later, my predecessor stepped down, and I was in the very position I had tried to avoid. Despite my initial fears, I managed my time between the presidency, academics, Army ROTC, and rugby at UT. I even used those commitments to aid my presidency through events like the Veterans Day philanthropy event and a collaboration with the rugby team. The experience showed me I am capable of far more than I had thought, and that I should have believed in myself more.

Q: Where do you see yourself in ten years? **A:** I see myself owning my own construction company, being my own boss, and a homeowner. I plan to remain involved with Zeta Psi events such as the annual conventions. I see myself applying the lessons I learned as president of the Iota Alpha Chapter to the business I want to build. Any associates I've met, especially all the Zetes, are more than welcome to be a part of that.

I would love that. ●



I decided I want to learn a trade within the realm of construction.

Best book you've ever read?

The Outsiders
by S. E. Hinton

Iced Coffee or Hot Coffee?



Favorite TV show right now?

Stranger Things

Spotify or Apple Music?



Worst job you've ever had?

Cadet First Sergeant for my ROTC Battalion. I was responsible for writing physical training plans and having to coordinate endless supply and accountability measures, mostly at short notice by people who were above me. Most importantly, I did not get paid for it, so that was by far the worst job I have ever had.

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\$88.00



lululemon Steady State Crew
\$128.00

International Headquarters

15 South Henry St.
Pearl River, NY 10965

(845) 735-1847

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Archives



IN CLOCKWISE ORDER:
1970s: Former Phi Alpha
Louis R. Bruce and Pete
Bonnectt pose with four
other Zetes, 1970s **1980s:**
Zetes at a picnic, 1980
2000s: Omicron Epsilon
Chapter Elders-Actives
Reunion, June 2001 **1960s:**
Zetes attending leadership
school, September 1965
1990s: Phi Lambda Chapter,
August 1995



The styles changed.
The photos got clearer.
But Zetes getting
together never gets old.

WHICH ZETE DECADE WOULD YOU
HAVE WANTED TO EXPERIENCE?

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