



## ETA LAMBDA CHAPTER OF THETA CHI FRATERNITY

### 50TH ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN

#### *HONORING OUR PAST, BUILDING OUR FUTURE*

#### *RENOVATE THE RANCH, BURN THE NOTE*



Mike Irwin '84, President, Eta Lambda House Corporation

#### **OUR HISTORY**

Eta Lambda Chapter of Theta Chi Fraternity was installed in 1972. Prior to the colonization and installation, the chapter operated as a local fraternity known as Delta Theta Kappa, or DOKs at Virginia Tech.

Membership grew steadily from founding in the 1970s through the 1980s. By the 1990s, chapter membership exceeded 100 active undergraduates. However, membership dipped in the late 90s and early 2000s, partially due to the run down condition of the house. An early 2000's remodel helped address the immediate issues, almost 20 years on, The Ranch is again in rough shape. By remodeling The Ranch in 2021, we've experienced a resurgence of membership, in spite of COVID restrictions. Today, we count more than 1,100 initiates of Eta Lambda Chapter as we approach our 50th Anniversary in 2022.

#### **THE UNDERGRADUATE CHAPTER IS STRONG**

The undergraduate chapter has thrived over the years, and now boasts 90+ members. This spring we pledged 30 new members, in spite of Covid restrictions on rush and other social activities. Academically the chapter scored an impressive 3.34 grade point average last spring (2020). Last year's president of the Student Government Association and this year's IFC president, as well as the Philanthropy Chairman for IFC are brothers, and four Eta Lambdas have been admitted to the prestigious STEM Engineering program on campus.

#### **HISTORY OF THE RANCH**

The acquisition of the house in 1977 was a significant accomplishment by the chapter, as there were very few alumni and no other form of support for the down payment on the property.

The chapter learned to manage the house and service the heavy debt load. Construction of the property was actually not finished at the time of purchase. The Brotherhood contributed a considerable amount of sweat equity into completing the newly acquired house, and there remains substantial pride in The Ranch, particularly among our older alumni.

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Initially, the house occupancy was 23 brothers, which was more than 50% of the total chapter membership of 40 at the time of purchase. There was a waiting list to gain residency! Rent was only \$75.00 a month and an additional \$50.00 per month for the meal plan.

The original configuration had a kitchen upstairs for the preparation of weekday evening meals. The fraternity hired cooks to prepare those dinner meals. The pantry was stocked with staples for breakfast and lunch to be prepared and served in the downstairs kitchen.

Living in the house required regular clean-up duty for bathrooms, general house cleaning, and washing dishes after dinner. The rules also required regular quiet and study hours during the week.

Non-resident brothers and visitors had limited access to the residential portions of the house. There were numerous parties on the weekends to the extent that a bar manager was required

to keep the "inventory" and finances. All brothers—both in-house and out-of-house members were required for clean-up duties on the weekends.

The home became an icon for many alumni who took great pride in the young chapter's ability to acquire and transform the residence into a fraternity house.

The chapter has continually occupied The Ranch, serving more than 1,100 members of Eta Lambda Chapter of Theta Chi Fraternity over the last 45 years.

However, time, normal wear and tear has taken its toll. The roof, gutters, HVAC, appliances, water and electric systems wear out on any residential property. The Ranch was built as a private home, but it has been occupied by 18-to-22 year old fraternity men since its construction.

## THE CHALLENGE

We are pleased the chapter is doing well both socially and academically. We do, however, face challenges with the physical structure of the chapter house:

- Maximum occupancy is 12 brothers, according to the local Fire Marshall.
- City codes restrict increased occupancy, based on capacity of the well and septic systems.
- Even with careful attention and maintenance, the infrastructure, in many cases, is nearly 50 years old. Time has taken a toll on our beloved Ranch. A number of items have worn out, including the HVAC system, doors and doorframes, flooring, kitchen equipment, plumbing and drainage.
- The House Corporation could not charge market rates for rent due to the condition of the facility. The Ranch simply could not match the upgraded living conditions and amenities which new residence halls, apartments, and the local house rental market offered.
- In fact, the house was in such bad shape at the end of the last school year (2020), the undergraduates notified the House Corporation that they simply could not live there due to health and safety concerns.

*The challenge was clear:* to remain a competitive option in the Greek system, the chapter's housing required immediate attention before it materially impacted the health and safety of our members and our recruitment effectiveness.

## OPTIONS

The Board of Directors of the House Corporation considered and evaluated several options which would address Eta Lambda's housing crisis:

- Option 1: Sell The Ranch.** Pay off the loan balance and operate Eta Lambda Chapter without a house. The House Corporation rejected this concept quickly, because we could not remain competitive with other fraternities without a physical structure. Furthermore, recent zoning laws would have prohibited us from purchasing another house in Christiansburg or Blacksburg.
- Option 2: Build a new house on Oak Lane.** The only place to build a completely new house would be on Oak Lane, where the majority of Greek houses are now located. The House Corporation saw both positive and negative aspects to building a completely new house in this location:
  1. *Positive:* We would have a house among many of the other Greek organizations at Virginia Tech.
  2. *Positive:* The quality of housing for our undergraduates would dramatically improve.
  3. *Positive:* The University would maintain the new facility.
  4. *Negative:* The university requires their approval for décor and decisions about the interior of the facility. The chapter would need approval from the university for all items hanging on the walls, such as composites, and the university would bill the House Corporation for all work completed.
  5. *Negative:* The chapter would be "under the thumb" of the University, in terms of chapter house operations and social events.

6. *Negative:* The university would legally own the facility. Eta Lambda would have no equity or ownership position, and no voice in how the house is used. If the chapter were to be suspended, the university could lease the house to another organization. There would be no guarantee Eta Lambda could return to the house once the term of the suspension was complete.
7. *Negative:* If there is a room vacancy, the chapter is responsible for paying the university the "lost rent" from its operating budget, and the university has the right to place non-members in the vacant rooms.
8. *Negative:* We would need to raise at least \$1.3 million to achieve University matching funds to build a competitive house.

## ***By unanimous vote, the House Corporation decided on... Option 3: Save The Ranch.***

The Eta Lambda House Corporation is launching a capital campaign to complete a multi-phased renovation on the chapter house and eliminate a small loan balance from an earlier renovation.

This effort would also include funding for two types of scholarships. These would be endowments to provide awards in perpetuity, named for the donor, or by the donor in another's honor for the benefit of our undergraduate brothers:

- **Need- and merit-based academic scholarships** – these awards will help with the ever-increasing cost of attending school at Virginia Tech.
- **Leadership scholarships** – these awards would help brothers attend programs hosted by Theta Chi National Fraternity, including Officers' Leadership Academies, the School of Fraternity Practices, and the National Convention.

***Join us in raising \$500,000 to Honor Our Past and Build our Future  
by the 50th Anniversary of Eta Lambda Chapter in March 2022.***

## **DECISION: RENOVATE THE RANCH, BURN THE NOTE**

### **LEADERSHIP GIVING**

We're asking alumni to step up and support the campaign. Contributions at all levels are appreciated. For those who have the means and inspiration, the following may be appropriate:

- You may make a gift and earn a room naming opportunity as listed below, or
- You may endow a scholarship in your name at \$25,000, or
- You may make a gift in the name of someone that you'd like to honor, or in "Memory Of" someone who has passed away, and
- All contributors will be recognized in the **Donor Recognition Clubs**.

### **ROOM NAMING OPPORTUNITIES**

Alumni who make top-tier gifts will be offered room-naming opportunities on a first contribution-in basis. Such opportunities for room naming at The Ranch will include:

\$50,000	TV Room	\$25,000	Backyard & Fire pit
\$50,000	Chapter Room	\$15,000	Kitchen
\$50,000	Basement/Party Room	\$10,000	Bedrooms (12)
\$25,000	Back Entry Foyer	\$5,000	Downstairs Hallway
\$25,000	Front Porch	\$5,000	Stairway
\$25,000	Front Yard	\$2,500	Bathrooms (4)

## **\$185,000 PLEDGED TO DATE!**

Every member of the House Corporation and every member of the Chapter Advisory Council has pledged to support the campaign. Pledges and contributions now total \$185,000 from just 14 alumni brothers.









The Ranch is undergoing a "studs-out" remodeling. The renovations include a new roof, gutters and drainpipes, electrical, plumbing, windows, floors, doors, bathrooms, and kitchen appliances. The old place never looked so good. We hope that you will visit us anytime that you are in the Blacksburg/Christiansburg area."

- 1. Before April 2019-old roof, gutters and drainpipes needed replacing
- 2. April 2021-with new roof, gutters and drainpipes
- 3. April 2021-Close up view, back side of house after remodeling
- 4. Before April 2019
- 5. Before April 2019
- 6. New Ply-Gem bay windows
- 7. Before April 2019-old electrical closet
- 8. After April 2021-new electrical wiring throughout house
- 9. Before April 2021
- 10. Newly remodeled bathroom
- 11. Before April 2019
- 12. After April 2021-refinished floors, new sheetrock and lighting
- 13. New double-pane windows at HLOX
- 14. New range and microwave at the Ranch
- 15. New refrigerator at the Ranch
- 16. New bay window at the Ranch
- 17. New ply-gem windows at the Ranch

**ETA LAMBDA OF THETA CHI FRATERNITY**

3751-C Westerre Parkway  
Richmond, VA 23233

Dear Brother,

It is a great time to be a member of Eta Lambda Chapter!

As we at Eta Lambda enter our 50th year as a chapter in Theta Chi, I'm pleased to report that The Ranch is undergoing a complete renovation from the "studs out".

We've replaced the roof, gutters, windows, floors, doors, appliances, electrical and plumbing.

**Brother Tom "T" Tasselli '77** has performed an amazing job as the volunteer project manager for the renovation. T has spent countless hours soliciting and accepting bids from contractors on the project. We are completing a professional remodeling of our beloved Ranch. Also, "hats off" to **Brother Juan Cordero '12** who serves as Alumnus Advisor. Juan is well suited for his role as "our eyes on the ground" as an active member of the U.S. Marines! To our great benefit, Brother Cordero works at Virginia Tech as the Veterans Affairs Officer.

In spite of Covid-19, social and rush restrictions that have been placed on fraternities everywhere, including Virginia Tech; I'm pleased to report that our chapter pledged 33 new members this spring. We have a strong group of leaders in our chapter, including the SGA President and the IFC President at the university. You can be proud of our undergraduate men and how they represent us.

Finally, I want to invite you back to campus. Come by and visit The Ranch when you return to Blacksburg for a football game this fall. Finally, **SAVE THE DATE** for the **50th Anniversary of Eta Lambda Chapter on March 11-12, 2022.**

We will honor our Charter Members all of us who came afterward with the largest reunion in our history. 2021-2022 promises to be a great year for our brotherhood!

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Irwin".

Mike Irwin '84, President  
Eta Lambda House Corporation



**ETA LAMBDA OF THETA CHI FRATERNITY**  
3751-C Westerre Parkway  
Richmond, VA 23233

Dear Brother,

It's that time of year again as the Alumni Association awards scholarships to deserving high school seniors who will be attending Tech.

There are three scholarship currently awarded by the Eta Lambda Alumni Association:

- **The David "the Mole" Morey '72**, who passed away from ALS in July 2012. It has been given annually since his passing to a senior attending Tech from Brookville High School in Lynchburg, and is a joint effort between the Brookville Ruritans, David's friend Alex Hines, and the Eta Lambda Alumni Association. It is based on academic and community achievement.
- **The Bob "Wapid" Riggan '72**, who passed away from cancer in April 2017. It is an annual award given to a senior at Goochland High School who is attending Tech, and it is a need-based award.
- **The General Scholarship Fund** which can be used to make one-time awards in honor of an alumni brother, an undergraduate, or to establish new annual awards.

I want to challenge each brother to contribute something, no matter how big or small. Most of us got an unexpected government windfall with stimulus checks. Consider sharing some of that extra cash with some deserving high school seniors who want to become Hokies!

It is our goal to endow each of these scholarship funds, such that we invest your contributions and only award academic awards from the earnings each year. The corpus would remain for perpetuity. We need to raise a minimum of \$25,000 to award a \$1,000 scholarship on an annual basis.

Send your checks or money orders made to:

**"Eta Lambda Scholarship Fund"**

Jeff Wilberger, Alumni Treasurer  
5343 Glenview Court,  
Charlottesville, VA 22903.

Be sure to mark on your donation either Morey, Riggan or "General Scholarship Fund", so it is credited to the correct fund. I will report on the awards after they are presented to the recipients.

Thank you for supporting the campaign!

Fraternally,

*Frank T. Overbey*

Frank T. Overbey '73

## ALUMNI RECOGNITION

Alumni will be recognized by gift club level among their pledge brothers, former roommates and classmates. Contributors will be listed in e-news and printed newsletters. There will be a permanent Donor Recognition Wall installed at The Ranch at the end of the campaign.

\$100,000+	Frederick Freeman Society
\$75,000+	Arthur Chase Society
\$50,000+	The Land Grant Society
\$25,000+	The Ranch Society
\$10,000+	Hokie Stone Club
\$5,000+	DK Founders Club
\$2,500+	The 1976 Builders Club
\$1,000+	"Enter Sandman" Society
\$500-\$999	Maroon Society
Gifts to \$499	Burnt Orange Club

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS ETA LAMBDA HOUSE CORPORATION

The Eta Lambda House Corporation is the governing body and legal entity for Eta Lambda Chapter of Theta Chi Fraternity. The House Corporation owns the chapter house (The Ranch) and works with the undergraduate chapter in their development and operations. Should you have any questions about the chapter or the House Corporation, we invite you to contact a member of the Board:



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## CHAPTER ADVISORY BOARD (CAB)

The Chapter Advisory Board serves as advisors and mentors for the chapter and the undergraduate officers. The CAB also works with the university administration, should the chapter experience any conduct issues to insure a strong relationship between the fraternity and the university.



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**Connor Dorsey '22, Chapter President**  
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## MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

50th Anniversary Alumni Reunion

March 11-12, 2022

Blacksburg, VA