



Cal Delta Spotlight

USC House Corporation of Phi Delta Theta | Spring 2014 | University of Southern California

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USC House Corporation

A Word From Our President: A Message of Thanks



Why do we feel such a connection to Phi Delta Theta? Is it the memories of the best years of our youth? The life-long friendships? The

top-grade young men in the House today?

These days I'm focused on another reason: the generosity of so many who care about the house. Since the *Securing Our Legacy* fundraising campaign began a year ago, it has been humbling to see so many alumni step up to pay down the mortgage debt on the house. To these brothers, we sincerely say that everyone who cares about the house owes you our gratitude and admiration.

It was a wise man who said, "One man gives freely, yet gains even more." Abundance has a way of flowing to the generous giver, and we certainly wish a full measure of this sublime result for our generous alumni.

The campaign is scheduled to end soon, and we promise a strong closing push to bring every alum an opportunity to pay down our debt and put the house on a sustainable financial path over the long term.

There is good news as well about other aspects of our chapter. Spring rush concluded in January with an outstanding pledge class of 15 Phikeia. Going into this school year, we knew that the house would have a large graduating class of seniors. But thanks to the success of fall and spring rush, the chapter will start next year with more members than the 112 it had going into this year. And for a look at the quality of the actives, read the Chapter Spotlight article on page two about **Will Jameson**, who is running his own company

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Alumni Spotlight:



Michael J. McDonald '87

From the Editor: For this edition of the newsletter, we're shining the Cal Delta Spotlight on our brother Michael McDonald '87. From the hometown of Fullerton in Orange County, CA, Mike has made a career in acting, and as a comedian with specialties in sketch and stand-up comedy. He is also an accomplished writer, director, and producer. Mike's resume includes projects such as MADtv, Scrubs, Cougar Town, and 2013's second-highest-grossing comedy, The Heat. A one-time loan officer, Mike found his calling after visiting L.A.'s Groundling Theater with a friend. Starting off with the Groundling Improv Program from 1992 to 1997, Mike has gone on to work with some of the biggest names in the business. Read on to find out more!

What was being a part of Cal Delta like for you back in school?

Hazy - due to the fact that it was a million years ago and I drank a lot of beer.

What experience in improv convinced you that you had made the right career move?

Probably the time I got to improvise with Phil Hartman. I joined the Groundlings (an improv troupe in Los Angeles) where Phil had been a member several years before. I was asked to do a fundraiser with Phil and some other amazing Groundlings - Tim Stack, Jon Lovitz, Mindy Sterling. Dennis Miller (not a Groundling) performed too. I got to do scenes with all of these comedy idols of mine and, after the show, Phil Hartman said I was funny. To be validated by a hero... it was just the best.

How do you prepare for a role?

In the beginning, I'd go all out to study people in real life, even if I didn't have a role to prepare for. It was just in case I'd have to prepare for a role. It was a real slow start for me, so I had lots of spare time to walk around Venice Beach and observe people. I had a fascination with freaks and weirdos. Nowadays, I still prepare... but I wait for the job offer to come first.

Are your parts often meant to be scene stealers, or is that all you?

I've never set out to "steal a scene." I (like most actors) look for the part that strikes me as most interesting, or the one that I relate to the most. Whenever an actor does that, they tend to give their best performance.

What aspect of writing do you enjoy in comparison to acting?

A great thing about writing is, you always have

evidence of your work. A script may just be gathering dust on a shelf, but you can dust it off anytime and send it to people anytime. I had an instance where something I wrote ten years earlier got made. It was a drama pilot that didn't get picked up, but now I have a DVD as evidence... so there. With acting, you could have the most amazing moment on stage and it evaporates into the ether the minute the lights go out. Another good thing about writing is you can do it on your own, anytime, anywhere, whereas acting requires other actors, a venue and an audience willing to pay to see you.

Is it difficult to work in a creative group environment?

I prefer improvising with a group to any other form of creativity. It's the most collaborative thing there is. When you are working with a group you can trust, there is no better feeling. But improvising on stage pays zero dollars. So I have to supplement that with TV and Film work. Those are also



Mike and his co-star Sandra Bullock headed into a meeting in LA for their movie *The Heat*.

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CHAPTER NEWS

President's Message

As Spring break is upon us, we all begin to look forward: to finals, to summer internships, to graduation and to the jobs that lie beyond. I find Spring the best time to look at where we have been and examine where we are headed next.

I have been lucky enough in my first months as president of California Delta to witness the momentum those before worked so hard to create, continue. We could not be prouder of the 19 members of the Pi pledge class who joined us as active brothers last November. Four members of the pledge class immediately stepped into roles as officers in the house. Jack Ellis, Alex Budde, Will Jameson and Kyle McAllister took over as chairmen of Risk Management, Philanthropy, House Management and Athletics, respectively.

With a current Phikeia class of fifteen, we are excited to maintain our status as one of the larger fraternities on the row. However, with larger numbers come greater chances for members to slip through the cracks academically. As a result, I couldn't be prouder to announce that our chapter GPA is the highest it has been since I joined the house at 3.28. Our GPA places us



comfortably above the Greek male average as well as the all-school average.

We started a new philanthropy this semester, Phi Delt Puppies. We were lucky enough to have the humane society donate ten puppies for an afternoon in which members of every sorority came over for brunch and great photo ops with the dogs. Not only was it a great opportunity to continue our longstanding commitment to raising money in the fight against ALS, it also allowed us to show off our house, which continues to be the nicest fraternity house on the row.

Our social calendar has never been fuller. Ranging from casual dinners at the house with nearly every sorority to Hermosa Beach days to a large-scale country themed party off campus coming at the end of March, we have had quite the start of the semester. All of this is possible thanks to the outstanding work and commitment put in by our social chairmen, Tay Vaughn and Zak Kolkey.

On top of social events with sororities, our brotherhood chairman, Ryan Bernstein, has

been incredibly successful in finding new ways to bring us together as a house while raising morale. This includes our brotherhood retreat to Big Bear for a weekend of skiing at the start of the semester as well as many casual days enjoying the volleyball and basketball courts in the backyard.

As graduation becomes clearer and clearer on the horizon, we find ourselves facing many bittersweet moments. With every award our seniors win, such as Brenton Caldwell being named Mr. USC, and every amazing job opportunity those graduating earn, such as John Rising being hired to work on Virgin's domestic space shuttle, we know they are one step closer to leaving us. As excited as we are for all the success our seniors are finding in the post-grad world, we are never quite ready for them to leave our ranks as active brothers and join yours as alumni.

Thankfully, we know they have left a legacy and foundation that will allow us to continue to grow as a chapter both in number and brotherhood.

Yours in the Bond,

Calum Hayes



Chapter Spotlight:

William Jameson, Jr.

***Editor's Note:** Representing our chapter as Spotlight is Will Jameson Jr. A little about Will...he is our current House Manager, he is working towards his degree in Business Administration, and he is bilingual in Spanish. With six years of experience in landscaping, he is already ahead of the game as founder of his own company, WJ Landscape Maintenance, Inc. While home in Pasadena, CA, Will enjoys wake boarding at the lake with friends and family. And with a trip to Australia coming up soon with his class, he is sure to have a productive freshman year. Read on to find out more!*

What has your experience as a new member of Cal Delta been like this year?

After being initiated, I was immediately taken in with open arms by the brothers, entering a close-knit family that made a large university feel smaller. From attending basketball games to weekend trips to the beach or mountains, I have had some of the greatest experiences with my brothers both on and off campus. One of my favorite qualities of Cal Delta is the fact that everyone effortlessly switches gears from playing hard to studying hard, and I find great motivation surrounding myself with such exciting, driven people. I can't wait for the next three years in Cal Delta.

As our current House Manager, what needs does the chapter house typically have that alumni should know about?

There are a lot of opportunities to make the house better than when I began here. As a chapter, we have some pretty amazing ideas to put our mark on the house. After completing

our sand volleyball court, we look forward to redesigning the Egyptian room to a casual, relaxing lounge for brothers, as well as adding new exercise equipment and possibly a flagpole in the front yard. However, a lack of finances and knowledge limits our chapter from implementing great ideas like these. We look to our alumni for support in these areas.

How did your landscaping business become so successful?

From growing a one-man, weekend operation into a fulltime crew of eight,

I attribute most of my success to support from my first customers as well as commitment from the men that work for me. By taking the time to get to know all of my clients on a personal level, I gained their trust to take charge of managing their property, proving to them that my age had no relation to my company's capabilities. Similarly, the close bond I have with my team allows me to be a full time student, as they work on the front lines daily, continuing to perform at the level I expect of them.

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Will and the WJ Landscape Maintenance, Inc. crew.



Securing Our Legacy



Initiation Party - Spring 1981

Since our last *Cal Delta Spotlight*, the *Securing Our Future* campaign has seen a good number of Brothers make the commitment to take part in ensuring that we will always have a home on USC's campus!

Long-term chapter financial security is no easy feat, and we are thankful for the Brothers, and parents, that have stepped forward to support this endeavor. As a House Corporation Board, we work tirelessly to guarantee the safety and security of the House for our undergraduate members. By supporting the *Securing Our Future* campaign, you too have taken part in these efforts.

That being said, with \$390,000 raised, we have not

reached our \$500,000 goal. If you are a Brother who has yet to make a commitment, **we still need your support!** Please consider joining the other dedicated Brothers who have already done so. We know you too are invested in the future of Cal Delta.

On a final note, we must also express gratitude to our Brothers who have served as campaign volunteers over the past year. They have been an integral part of campaign outreach and the giving of their time and talents deserves to be acknowledged.



(From left to right) Brothers *Brandon Kisch*, *Bruce Buettell '82*, and *Bill Lieberg '80* enjoying the Homecoming booth.



(From left to right) Brothers *Blain Skinner '82*, *Lance Jensen '82* and *Mike Gundell '84*, at the Homecoming booth in November. We had a terrific turnout of over 80 alumni who visited the booth before our epic, upset win over Stanford that day.

Andy Fong '82 - I was able to visit the house before last fall's USC-UCLA game. Upon arrival I was treated like royalty! I was given a tour by one of the current Rush Chairman, **Kevin Fohrer**. The house looked great, and it brought back many memories.

Nice to hear that the house is doing so well in all areas.

Jeff Griffith '91 - 2012 Sales Manager of the year at Baxter BioScience. 2012 Philanthropic Volunteer of the Year - San Diego. Congrats Jeff!

Have Alumni News?

We want to hear from you! Send your personal updates, accomplishments, adventures, and photos to our Account Manager **Kasey Breedlove** at kbreedlove@thelaurusgroup.net, or simply fill out the tear-away form at the bottom of your cover letter and return it in the mail. We want to share it in the next issue of *The Cal Delta Spotlight!*



Phi Delta Theta Brothers maintaining up-keep of volley ball court.

Special thanks to **Dan Niemann '81** for helping us with the construction our new sand volleyball court completed in the house's backyard at the beginning of the fall semester. The court is beautiful and puts the Phi Delt House among only three fraternities at USC that have a volleyball court. Sorority girls love to come by and play, and it has been a nice rush tool as well. Dan made a huge contribution in constructing the court, giving generously of his time and expertise. The project had languished for years as the active chapter tried to raise enough money

to cover the construction bid they had from a contractor. Then Dan got involved. He is a very successful developer who knows construction and led a team of actives that built the court themselves for half of the contractor's bid. There is no doubt that the without Dan the court wouldn't be there today.





Mike McDonald '87 joined the MADtv cast during its fourth season in 1998, and became the longest-tenured cast member until the end of the thirteenth and penultimate season. He was also a contributing writer and director.

creative group environments, and they can be very frustrating - usually due to the interference of the network or studio folks. Luckily, they pay.

How do you push through to be heard?

Make what you say count. Find your moment,

make your point, and then shut up.

What do you enjoy doing for fun outside of work?

Food, travel, wine. Preferably combining all three. In a word...Italy.

How do you define success?

Finding love, making your parents laugh, maintaining as many old friendships as possible, and avoiding debt and tattoos.

What advice can you give our alumni and young actives about making a drastic career change and following their dreams?

I went to school for business. Got a degree. Got a job as a banker. Hated it. Realized I wanted to work in comedy and switched. Then had to work as a waiter and serve pasta to many former business schoolmates and

banking friends who seemed sad for me. Worried I made a mistake. Hung in for years. In the end it worked out. If you know in your gut that you want a different life from the one you're living...make the change early because it might take a while.



Mike (standing) with Phi Delt Brothers back in school at a house rented with three Delta Gammas (pictured). Photo provided by Gary Paskwitz '88 (right, red sweatshirt).

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while pursuing his degree at USC. It's a remarkable story.

Another big step forward comes in the person of Kevin Sweeney, our Phi Delt brother from DePauw University in Indiana, who is the new property manager of our chapter house. With over 10,000 square feet and 40 men living in, it's a huge job keeping up with rent payments, maintenance, repairs and move-out room inspections, just for starters. It had become clear to the House Corporation that professional property management was a key to taking care of the house in the most organized manner, and Kevin's firm has a stellar 20 year track record as a property manager in Southern California.

As an example of the benefits we have already seen, after a recent rain we had a roof leak in a second-floor bathroom. House Corporation on its own would have been scrambling trying to get this fixed since we had no relationship with a roofer. But Kevin's company routinely deals with every type of vendor a property

needs and knows who the quality people are. He had a roofer at the house within three days to fix the leak, which is much faster than we could have lined up the repair on our own.

The cost for this service will be the same as we were previously paying Greek Bill (an online site where live-ins could pay their rent) for far less value.

If you have any questions or comments about the house or its finances, I'm always fired up to talk Phi Delt. Please contact me at brucebuettell@yahoo.com or 714-686-7186.

Bruce Buettell '82
President
USC Phi Delt House Corporation



Jameson (Continued from Page 2)



Will at a Phi Delt tailgate for the game against Utah State with pledge brother Paul Samaha, and friend Sharada Rayan.

Why does real estate development appeal to you as a career choice?

After working in the landscape construction industry for five years, I have witnessed how enhancing a property both physically and aesthetically not only transforms the space, but also the entire culture that surrounds it. While the landscape industry has been incredibly rewarding, I see my next step to be real estate development, as it incorporates many of the same principles of landscape construction, but on a much larger scale. Knowing my enjoyment of working with a client to create or improve a space, I believe that real estate development will offer me an exciting and satisfying career.

What are you looking forward to during your trip to Australia?

After both learning and experiencing business operations in the U.S., I am excited to see firsthand how it compares to commerce in Australia. Specifically, I will be interested to see how the Australian government is involved in business, if at all. In my opinion, it seems as though I never hear much about Australia in the media, so I'm excited to see and experience a culture I do not know that much about. An added bonus will be seeing kangaroos and koalas up close!

Chapter Grand

We are saddened to learn of the passing of the following Cal Delta brothers.

Thomas Wickstrom '53

Gayle Post '53

Victor Matloff '50

Save-the-Date! 2014 Blue Chip Dinner



Friday evening, September 12, 2014
Location: TBD