

VENTURING MAGAZINE

An Introduction to Alpha Phi Omega

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For those Venturers heading off to college, an organization to consider joining is Alpha Phi Omega, National Service Fraternity. Also referred to as APO, the Fraternity is a co-ed service fraternity, which is different from the social/general, professional, or honorary fraternities/sororities. The Venturing program is built around ALPS- Adventure, Leadership, Personal Development, and Service. APO is built around its cardinal principles of Leadership, Friendship, and Service. So there are many similarities in their programs.

APO is sometimes referred to as the "scouting fraternity" because it was established in 1925 on the principles of the Scout Oath and Law and has had a long-term relationship with the BSA. Until 1967, you had to have a current or past membership in scouting, and the Fraternity has been formally approved by the BSA since 1931. The Fraternity went co-ed in 1976, so in addition to many former Boy Scouts, we have former Girl Scouts, Explorers and Venturers (of both genders) in the Fraternity. See the recent article on APO in the Fall 2015 issue of Eagles' Call, the NESA Magazine.



APO Chapters operate very similar to Venturing Crews. The active members of the chapter run things, deciding what service and fellowship events they will do. While each chapter is required to have a minimum number of advisors, advisors are selected by the chapters and serve at their discretion. Chapters built their own programs are built around those cardinal principles of Leadership, Friendship and Service.



Service for APO is diverse, and not centered around a particular charity or cause, but within four service fields: Nation, Community, Campus, Fraternity. Chapters decide what service they want to do. They can do canned food drives, road cleanup, build houses with Habitat for Humanity, book drives, Relay for Life, blood drives, campus ride programs, organize leadership training, and many more. Many chapters will have signature events they do each year. The first week of November is National Service Week, where chapters do service on their campus with other groups within that year's theme. The 2015 NSW theme is adult literacy. In April is Spring Youth Service Day, which is tied to Global Youth Service Day. SYSD can be any youth-oriented service performed in April. APO has National Partnerships with several organizations, including the BSA, GSUSA, Camp Fire, America's Promise, Youth Service America, and American Cancer Society.



Leadership is also important, as the chapters are run by the members and members plan out events. APO has created its only leadership development program called APO LEADS, made up of 5 courses, along with APO Impact, which provides both live and on-line training for officer roles and other topics.



As noted, APO has had a long-time scouting connection. This is shown in several ways. Each chapter is expected to have at least one "Scouting & Youth Services Advisor", who should be a member of a scouting (BSA, GSUSA, etc.) or youth-serving (Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Club, etc.) organization. Some chapters may have more than one scouting/youth services advisor, each involved with different organizations. These advisors help their chapters stay connected with the organization they are part of. And each chapter decides what kind of scouting service it does. Some help out

volunteering with their local scout councils with events. Several chapters run large annual Merit Badge Universities on their campuses, or they may run other events like Pinewood Derbies, training events, or even Camporees. A few will charter Venturing Crews, Cub Scout Packs or even Boy Scout Troops. They may go on camping retreats to their local council camp. At a National level, APO fields a service corps at National Scout Jamborees and has info booths at national events like NOAC. It also has an award that is recognized by the BSA as one of the Community Organization Awards: The Herbert G. Horton APO Service to Youth Award. Recently an alumni association was formed by Brothers who are Eagle Scouts, APO Eagles, which should soon become a recognized NESA Affiliate group.



90 years old, the Fraternity has over 360 active chapters around the country and more than 28,000 active members, making it the largest Greek Letter Organization in the country. Because of its principles, chapters may be found at a wide variety of schools: large state university, private universities of different sizes, church associated universities, and even some community colleges. You can visit their website at apo.org to see if a chapter is located at the school you plan on attending. Or if there isn't one, work to establish one. The Fraternity is actively working with several extension efforts around the country as it works toward its goal of 500 active chapters by its 100th Anniversary in 2025. Just this Fall we will add about 6 new or re-chartered chapters.