Two months ago, I had the privilege of attending the 2007 Theta Xi President’s Academy. During my four days there, I had the pleasure of meeting chapter leaders from all over the country. My time there was quite well spent, not only on seminars but also in getting to know Theta Xi as a national organization—with its own range of diversity and viewpoints.

The half-week focused on communication and leadership styles. Almost every session included some combination of listening to talks and applying the skills learned in group exercises. For example, following the communication seminar we broke up into four smaller groups and attempted an Alpine rescue obstacle course up the hill. Instead of spending time listening to people tell us how we were supposed to do things, we were applying newly learned skills to tasks at hand.

While at Academy, Mike Pitcher, Grand Lodge president, presented the 2005-2006 chapter awards. I am proud to announce that the Delta Chapter brought home three awards: Best Website Content, Highest Campus GPA for Fall 2005, and the Benchmark Chapter Award. Benchmark Chapter Awards is given to the top 20 percent of the chapters, based on the accreditation report each chapter files at the end of each year. I am also pleased to announce that we received an award on behalf of our chapter adviser, Chris Williams, who was named Most Outstanding Chapter Adviser.

Undeniably, though, the best part of the Academy was getting to know all the other presidents from around the country. Over that short period of time, we bonded together as a group, and most of us are still in contact and help each other out with advice as needed.

On the chapter level: In early February, the house went on a retreat to New Hampshire, as has been the tradition for as long as I have known. This was a chance for our brothers to take a few days to relax and bond before the semester went into full swing. The weekend began with a nice night of relaxing and general foolishness. Activities ranged from cards to board games to just snacking and chatting around the dinner table. Everyone was glad to be have a break from MIT for a while.

The next morning began with our now-traditional game of Gnomes, Wizards, and Giants—a variation of Rock, Paper, Scissors. The chapter broke up into families and competed in a single-elimination bracket for the title.

The rest of the day was spent in smaller activities. One of the highlights for almost all the brothers was the annual snow football game. As always, it was a nice pseudo-touch game where no one kept score. Later that night, everyone had a large appetite for our annual dinner at the local brewery. Daniel Lopuch managed to finish a burger larger than his head while still leaving room to finish off other people’s dinners.

As always, it was a pleasure writing this article. I hope to see a few of you this year at 6294. Prepare for the softball game, for we will at some point be practicing.

YITB,
Anthony Kesich ’07, ∆1081

Brothers excel academically

This past fall, Theta Xi continued its strong academic tradition. As a house, we had a GPA of 4.2, with eight brothers receiving a 5.0.

While the freshmen were not included in the house GPA for the fall, they will no doubt be a very strong addition for the spring. The upperclassmen, for their part, made their presence known across campus by TA-ing for seven different classes in six departments.

On the engineering side of life, Kurt Stiehl ’07, ∆1054, and Alex Bagley ’08, ∆1064, were inducted into the Tau Beta Pi Engineering Honor Society this fall. This prestigious honor required them to be in the top fifth of their respective classes, while meeting other criteria.

(continued on page four)
Chapter benefits from Help Week

Help week occurred as usual at the end of IAP, and many improvements to the house were accomplished. Yet two big differences occurred this help week. First, each active member helped out at least six hours throughout the week. Second, this help week was much more about improving the little things around the house than doing one big thing.

The major projects accomplished throughout help week included: adding new light fixtures in the back staircases; adding new light fixtures in two bathrooms; adding a motion detector light in the back alley; new ductwork for the dryers; grouting the kitchen floor; adding new ceiling lights and fans in 66 Commons; re-doing the legs of the kitchen tables; painting the ceilings in commons; and touching up other paint around the house.

We also revamped Kems, the machine shop in the basement of 64. We also took out the old wood storage, which really opened the room up, and we added several pieces of machine equipment that we purchased from our IRDF grant. The room now has two workbenches, storage shelves, a 12-inch band saw, a belt/circular sander, a tap and die set, a file set, 19.2V impact driver and cordless drill, and other general-purpose tools.

Actives helping out at least six hours over the week allowed much more work to get done this past help week than in previous years. Not only were there many extra hands around to actually do more work, but since the upperclassmen are generally more knowledgeable on how to fix things than the freshmen, the freshmen were able to learn from the upperclassmen and more tasks got done faster.

Beyond Help Week, the usual house manager tasks are ongoing. The IRDF project grant items have all come in—including $31,000 worth of new wooden desks, $8,000 worth of electrical engineering equipment, $2,000 worth of mechanical engineering equipment, and $2,500 worth of a file server and new wireless routers.

In addition, the curved and flat windows in the front of 64 Bay State were installed, making 64 a much warmer and energy-efficient place to live. The fire escape was also fixed and re-certified for another five years.

Our next big projects slated include replacing the carpet on the stairs and buying new dining room chairs. Additionally, the house is still cleaned for several hours every Sunday by seven brothers.

The house is definitely old, and it seems like new things break every week. Thank you for all of your contributions to the IRDF and the house. The money is well spent on allowing us to live happily at 64 and 66 Bay State Rd.

Craig Rothman ’06, Δ1050
House Manager

Brother featured on reality TV series

Last June, I had the unique opportunity to be a contestant on the third season of CW’s hit reality TV show Beauty and the Geek, which premiered on January 3, 2007, and aired for eight weeks.

Beauty and the Geek pairs eight beautiful but “academically impaired” women with eight brilliant but slightly awkward men to compete for a grand prize of $250,000. Each week, both the beauties and geeks participate in challenges intended to push them beyond their comfort zones. In this season’s premiere, the guys had to perform a standup routine at the world famous comedy club The Laugh Factory, while the girls had to interview bestselling author Stephen Dubner on his book Freakonomics.

In the following episode, the geeks sketched a nude model while the beauties had to give a tour of an air and space exhibit at a local museum. The winners of the challenges each choose a team to send to that week’s elimination room, where those two teams answer questions relating to their study materials and the team that answers the least questions correctly gets sent home.

In the first episode, I was paired up with Andrea Ciliberti, a 23-year-old beauty pageant contestant who most recently was Miss Missouri 2005. While we didn’t get along as well as we would have liked at first, Andrea was an amazing partner. She was very bright and extremely well motivated.

The rest of the cast—including a Harvard graduate, tax accountant, Playboy cybergirl, and bikini model—was very diverse and very entertaining as well. Although Andrea and I did not win the grand prize, I think we still were able to learn a great deal from each other.

I got the idea to try out for the show back in August 2005, when they were casting for season two. Andrew Harlan ’07, Δ1058, forwarded an e-mail about the show that he received from a job postings list to the house after creatively changing the subject line to “I Nominate Matt Herman.”

Needless to say, the message caught my attention, and it made me watch the show a few times the following season. Then, last April, I was walking down the infinite corridor and saw flyers advertising an open casting call for the third season, which I decided to attend along with two members of my pledge class, Craig Brophy ’06, Δ1049, and Aaron Bell ’06, Δ1046. To make a long story short, the casting representatives “absolutely loved” me and I kept on getting called back for more and more auditions. It was a huge amount of fun and completely different from anything I had ever done before. I even got to meet the executive producer, Ashton Kutcher.

Overall, I truly enjoyed these 15 minutes of fame. I have always enjoyed TV, and it was great to experience the production of a show and the subsequent the publicity first hand. For example, it was flattering to be approached by random people on the street for pictures. It was also interesting to read blog and message board postings about the show—particularly the audience’s both positive and negative reactions to my character. Regardless, the best part of the new-found fame was getting back in touch with people who I have not seen in years but who heard about my role on the show.

The show will probably be airing in repeats on VH1 and MTV over the next few months, so check your local listings if you haven’t had a chance to watch Beauty and the Geek yet. Until then, thanks especially to everyone from Theta Xi—particularly my pledge class and the current undergraduates—for all of your support, patience, and encouragement throughout this very interesting and exciting endeavor.

YITB,
Matthew A. Herman ’06, Δ1047
Delta Chapter remains philanthropically strong

Fall 2006 continued to show improvements in the Delta Chapter’s commitment to community. This stems from a motion in April 2006, where the chapter decided to add a community service chair to our bylaws along with a requirement of five hours of community service per brother. We showed our commitment by actively participating in two large service events—along with a variety of individual opportunities.

Our first large event was the revitalization of an outdoor classroom at the Joseph Lee School and Academy in Dorchester, Massachusetts. The classroom is a small outdoor park, where the elementary school children learn about the natural world by planting flowers and vegetables and observing the niche of earthworms. When our 14 brothers arrived on the scene, the place was a mess. The entire area was overrun with weeds and trash. In a few short hours, the brothers of Theta Xi—with the help of students, teachers, and parents from the school—transmuted it into a paradise. The children were so pleased with the work that they even sent us thank-you letters in the mail.

Also this past fall, a group of about 20 brothers headed to the Greater Boston Food Bank (GBFB), a local organization that packages and distributes food to homeless shelters, relief agencies, and low-income families throughout the Boston area.

Hunger affects more than 24 million Americans, and almost 350,000 Massachusetts residents alone. Fortunately, organizations like the GBFB have seriously helped to combat hunger in our society. The GBFB coordinates the distribution of more than 24 million pounds of food a year, and the organization largely relies on the efforts of its weekly volunteers.

Volunteering at the food bank has been an especially rewarding experience, as it has enabled us to reach out to so many families in need. This year, we were able to package a total of over 6,864 meals and 11,169 pounds of food; about 203 pounds and 156 meals were attributed to each brother! This was our second visit to the food bank, and our work with the GBFB will certainly continue into the future.

Brothers also displayed their passion for serving the community in many other ways. Christopher Varenhorst ’09, Δ1083, spent his summer in China, teaching technology to young students. Daniel Lopuch ’08, Δ1075, spent time helping high school teachers develop a curriculum, and Ke Zhang ’10, Δ1094, spends time maintaining the website www.learningtoquestion.com. Andrew Harlan ’07, Δ1058, and Mike Blaisse ’10, Δ1085, lent their a capella talents to the Habitat For Humanity charity concert in Boston Commons.

When all was said and done, the Delta Chapter raked in over 200 hours of community service. Slowly but surely, community service is becoming a large part of the Delta experience.

As of this writing, with the spring semester now in full swing, we are getting ready for a number of new community service opportunities in the Boston area. In April, brothers of the Delta Chapter plan to travel to Newton to work with Ethos, an assistance program that aims to improve the standards of living for the elderly in Boston.

We plan to paint a new community room for some elderly residents in a small cluster of homes in Newton. The community room has been worn down for almost a decade now, and it is in dire need of a new look. This should be a fun event for all of us!

We also plan on participating in one of Theta Xi’s national philanthropy organizations, Habitat for Humanity. In early May, we plan to head to Merrimack Valley to assist in the construction of low-income housing. Habitat for Humanity has played a special role in our house for a number of years now. Sid Puram ’05, Δ1045, served as president of Habitat for Humanity for three years and really pushed the organization forward during his time at MIT. Jeff Borowitz ’07, Δ1057, has also served as president of MIT Habitat and has helped expand the group over the past few years.

Our strong relationship with Habitat for Humanity on campus and in the community is something that will hopefully continue for years to come.

Brothers of Theta Xi have also been heavily involved with a number of tutoring and teaching programs at MIT. The High School Studies Program (HSSP) and the Public Service Center’s SciPro tutoring program, for example, have been popular volunteer venues for brothers of the Delta Chapter. HSSP has provided brothers the opportunity to teach high school students cool and interesting topics in science, math, history, and political science.

Ross Goodwin ’09, Δ1078, for example, has taught a number of classes ranging from American foreign policy to global military doctrine. This program has enabled brothers to reach out to students that are interested in advanced topics that they are not generally exposed to in high school. Through the SciPro tutoring program, brothers have mentored academically challenged high school students from Boston public schools. This has provided our brothers with an opportunity to foster interest in math and science among younger students.

I look forward to another great semester of service and community outreach. Philanthropy has become a strength of our house, and I hope to foster community enthusiasm and dedication among brothers. Theta Xi will continue to expand its role in improving our community and helping those who need it most.

With three large events already planned and countless contacts in MIT’s service scene, this spring will prove to further the importance of our motto—Juncti Juvant: Together we serve.

YITB,
Rishi Puram ’08, Δ1068
Rob Warden ’09, Δ1077
**Wiki to pass house history, knowledge**

One of the problems the chapter has been struggling with for some time is how to best pass on knowledge from officer to officer and from year to year.

With an officer turn-around of half a year or a year, a new person takes over a position almost as soon as the existing officer just begins to understand how to perform his duties well. MIT being MIT, there is not always time to train the new officer well. Other times, it is experience rather than training that helps an officer perform his job, and other than oral stories, we have not had any effective means of passing on experience to future Theta Xis.

It was with these problems in mind that the chapter decided to create a house Wiki last semester. Many people are aware of the popular website Wikipedia—an encyclopedia that is open for any user on the Internet to edit and add information to. A Wiki is simply a web-based knowledge repository that makes it easy for anyone to add or edit information to the pages. You do not need to know how to make web pages in order to contribute to a Wiki.

The house Wiki is thus an easy-to-update central repository for just about anything. It was initially intended as a means for officers to write up their experiences and stories so that knowledge could easily be passed on to their successors, but since it went online, it has been popular with everyone in the active chapter. It is now envisioned as a full Theta Xi encyclopedia, complete with histories and stories of obscure and long ago events, in addition to useful knowledge and experiences.

I would like to invite all of our alumni to register for the Wiki and contribute whatever is deemed missing—be it an anecdote of your times at the Delta Chapter, the history of Blacklight as you remember it, or what being house manager entailed when you did it. Please feel free to send us pictures of any of those events as well.

You can access the Wiki by visiting http://theta-xi.mit.edu/tiki/tiki-index.php (note that the software we are using is called Tiki-Wiki, so the address is /tiki, not /wiki). Currently the Wiki is closed to all but Theta Xi members, so you will have to create an account to access it. When creating a new account, you will be asked to enter a passcode to verify that you are a Theta Xi. The passcode is the key to our cipher alphabet, without any spaces. There is currently some debate as to whether to make the Wiki open to all to see or to make it private to our fraternity. You can add your thoughts on this discussion once you register.

If you have any issues, I encourage you to e-mail me at dlupuch@mit.edu. Otherwise, I look forward to you adding to our collective knowledge.

Dan Lupuch '08, Δ1075

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**Brothers enjoy successful walkout**

Last October, our 10 associate members kept to tradition by embarking on the annual walkout trip.

With the help of Membership Educator Jack Styczynski, the AMs planned a weekend trip to New York City without the rest of the brothers catching on to their secret until they were already gone. The group rented a van and navigated its way through the busy streets of Manhattan. They stayed at the Hampton Inn near Madison Square Garden. Needless to say, the men didn’t spend much time at the hotel, as they were anxious to hit the town.

The AMs bought subway passes for the weekend and explored as many of the city’s sites as they could—including the Empire State Building, the Museum of Natural History, Central Park, the Apple store, and more. In the evening, the men shared a pledge class dinner at Tony’s DiNapoli restaurant before enjoying the night at a comedy club and hanging out in Times Square.

Not only was the experience fun and memorable, but it was a great opportunity for the AMs to get to know each other better and become closer as a pledge class. On Sunday, the men returned to the house wearing “I Love NY” t-shirts and were eager to share the stories from their weekend.

Once again, the walkout experience proved to be a unique and favorite part of the associate member process.

YITB, Michael Blaisse ’10, Δ1085

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**An update on our mentoring program**

Our mentoring program is off to a good start. First, I would like to recognize the efforts of Chris Williams, Δ965, and his committee for getting this program up and running.

The mentoring program is a way to give something back, foster personal growth, help make the actives and the house more successful, and have a lasting positive impact. The bonds of brotherhood truly stretch across both time and space. This is not hard: listen, share your experience, be a sounding board, provide feedback, and share more good times. The commitment is a few hours a month for an academic term or year. Mentors should meet face to face if possible and share at least one social excursion.

I want to thank our current mentors and ask that you recognize them for their outstanding contribution to Theta Xi: Matt Bachmann, Δ979; Steve Baker, Δ814; Chris Hansen, Δ1683; and Chris Williams, Δ965.

Please get involved if you can. Contact Jim Janosky ’87, Δ851, at jjanosky@alum.mit.edu for more information on the program.

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Brothers excel academically, cont. (continued from page one)

Lest the school of humanities be deprived of Theta Xi influence, Ross Goodwin, Δ1078, became a Burchard Scholar. This honor is given to students who “demonstrate unusual abilities and academic excellence” in the humanities. As a Burchard Scholar, Ross participates in a series of discussions with MIT faculty and visiting scholars about a variety of topics.

Within the house, we continue to work to improve our academics. Physics Night was started last year by John Gardner, Δ1055, as a way of giving freshmen a social atmosphere to complete physics problem sets. Various upperclassmen physics majors have attended each week to answer questions.

Since then, Physics Night, despite retaining its name, has expanded to include math and computer science. Each subject is represented by a brother who either currently is or recently has TA-ed for the class.

The IRDF money this year went to quite a few very useful items. Every room in the house got a set of new desks. The library was refurnished. And we have a new printer. In summary, we now have first-class study locations.

For the 6.1 majors, the library now also features an electrical engineering lab, complete with multimeter, soldering iron, and oscilloscope. For the Course 2 buffs, Kerns has been transformed into a usable wood shop. Adam Schwartz, Δ1093, spent most of Help Week fixing Kerns, turning it into a well-organized work space. With IRDF funds, it was outfitted with a bandsaw, drill press, belt sander, and a tap and dye set.

With all these improvements and the solid support provided by the brothers to each other, I have no doubt that this spring will again result in a solid academic showing by the house.

In closing, thank you to everyone who donated to the IRDF fund. As you can hopefully tell from this article, it really does make a big difference, and we greatly appreciate it.

YFSC, Jeremy Hurwitz, Δ1074