

Homelessness hits home at N.C. Central

Contributed by Mark Scott - Black College Wire
Thursday, 27 March 2008

Fraternity members bring issue to the yard

With the exception of cell phones, they had no technology whatsoever.

They weren't permitted to shower or change their clothes and had to sleep outside the Alfonso Elder Student Union March 18-20.

But they weren't being punished. It was an initiative to raise awareness about homelessness.

"We couldn't shower unless someone offered their shower to us. We couldn't eat unless food was donated and we could only go inside for class," said Lyle Burnham, criminal justice senior.

Burnham was one of about 15 members of the Gamma Beta chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. who spent two nights and three days in the bitter cold.

The "homeless" participants had to follow a few guidelines.

"Sleeping out gave me a look at what homeless people go through for months, even years," said education junior Bre'ylon Smith.

"I just wish that the people that support us will do the same for real homeless people in the world," said Smith.

But the organization wasn't only raising awareness.

The group also collected food, clothes and money for the Durham Rescue Mission.

The fraternity raised more than \$1,000 in the three days.

According to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, more than 774 N.C. families have no shelter.

Still these numbers do not include the 10,904 homeless people across the state.

The N.C. Central University chapter of the fraternity followed in the footsteps of other chapters at universities across the country, including Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York and the University of Florida.

"I got the idea for the program when I saw [other Alpha chapters] on Youtube put on theirs," said Burnham.

Burnham said homelessness should be addressed on campus because it's a growing problem in Durham.

Biology and chemistry senior and Gamma Beta president Kevin Allen said he wishes to make this an annual program with more organizations involved, and more media coverage.

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Mark Scott writes for Campus Echo, the N.C. Central University student newspaper, which originally published this article.

Posted March 28, 2008