

# CONNECTION

chi alpha

VOLUME 01 ISSUE 01 SUMMER 2008

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BY PETE BULLETTE

# CREATING COMMUNITY ON CAMPUS: GOD'S GREAT IDEA

*"When I came to college, I honestly didn't know which way I was going to go."*

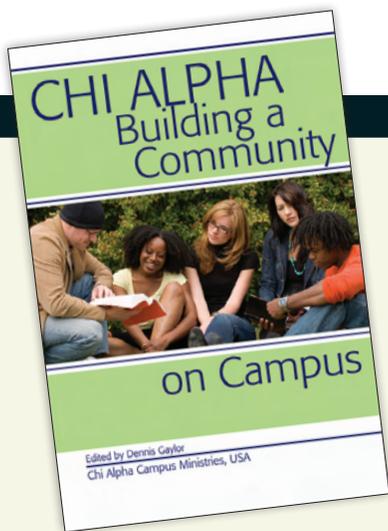
*"Chi Alpha was a family and safe haven for me during my time at U.Va."*

*"The best decision I made was to live with Chi Alpha guys. I decided to get involved with Chi Alpha because they were all going every Monday. The first semester was really about getting to know the community, but now God is changing me."*

Three students. Three stories. Three lives changed. These represent the kinds of stories we hear over and over.

Each shares one common thread. They all experienced the power of authentic, Jesus-centered community, and God used it to change their lives.

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## FREE BOOKLET

Call us and mention Chi Alpha Connections to receive one free copy of Dennis Gaylor's booklet, *Building a Community on Campus* — a comprehensive guide to the biblical framework and strategy for campus ministry.

417.862.2781 x1425



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## DIRECTOR'S DESK IT'S ALL ABOUT COMMUNITY

**Christian community on campus, when it is doing things right** — worshipping God, praying together, rejoicing with one another's company, teaching and studying God's Word, and telling others about Christ — is attractive. The community of faith on campus is the vehicle God uses to bring men and women to faith and maturity in Jesus Christ. True community is essential for effective witness.

Owning buildings and houses or renting them can facilitate community, but just as the church building is not the church, the Chi Alpha House is not Chi Alpha. The essence of the Church is people, not organization; it is a community, Greek "koinonia," not an institution.

We advertise Chi Alpha at the corner of First and College Streets because we have a location, a place; but in reality for Chi Alpha to be a real community that ministers to students within and attracts students to Christ it must be a force on campus of students equipped and ministering in Jesus' name.

Biblical relational community, not ownership or renting houses, is the foundation for life and ministry on campus. Chi Alpha must be at the forefront, demonstrating, incarnating, what a loving community is like to students crying for true intimacy, relationships and spiritual reality. The search for community and for the sacred will continue to characterize students today. This intimacy has a horizontal dimension in deep friendships and a vertical dimension in yearning for the sacred and experiencing God.

Community that can provide comfort, healing, direction — a place where students find themselves sustained spiritually and emotionally is vital. Chi Alpha offers this. Christian community is the most important component of all regarding our faith development and our witness. It is our apologetic to the world.

**Dennis Gaylor is national director of Chi Alpha Campus Ministries.**

### GOD'S GREAT IDEA

Before we launch into how to create an authentic Christian community on campus, we need to be reminded that the topic of community is profoundly theological. The story of Scripture is one of God redeeming a people for Himself — a people who will represent Him, bear His image and reflect His glory. Ultimately, we see that these people are people of the Spirit; a community which is empowered with, and united by, the Holy Spirit. Christian community is God's great idea. So Christian community isn't just because students need friends on campus, but because it is how the gospel is put on display. With this understanding, it should be no surprise that God uses the community of the Spirit as a primary context in which the Holy Spirit transforms students' lives.

So the question is, "How do you begin to build a healthy authentic Jesus-centered community on campus?" It's not an easy question to answer. But, I can share some things that we have learned over the past seven years that have been key for our health and growth. One thing you will notice is that you probably won't read anything that seems revolutionary on the surface, but the impact these things have on student's lives is nothing less than revolutionary.

### THE HOLINESS OF PRAYER

The first key is prayer. It may sound obvious, but the fact is we must remember that this is His goal for the university. We prayed that God would give us students with a vision for community, an ability to connect with other students, and a hunger for God. The year before we pioneered, Amy and I walked the campus often, praying for God to give us the "cream of the crop" students with which to pioneer the fellowship. God answered our prayers in ways that blew us away. He gave us about 15 great students who loved each other, loved God and loved others. Currently, as a ministry of around 250, I can tell you it is an extrapolation of who we were when we numbered 15-20. A culture of authentic community was created that has been maintained and modeled to new students ever since.

### THE HOLINESS OF SMALL GROUPS

When you have your first Chi Alpha meeting, what do you speak about? I can tell you what I spoke on and what I have spoken on every year since at our first Chi Alpha meeting of the year. You guessed it: It is the power and importance of authentic Christian community. We find every way possible to talk about the importance of our small groups. I have even said at our first Chi Alpha meeting, that if they only have time for only one meeting, I would prefer them to go to a small group rather than our main meeting. Here is a secret: If they get connected with the people in their small group, I will see them at our main meetings because they will either come with their small group or come to see the people in their small group.

But if they don't get involved in a small group, I know that by the time they graduate they will probably not be coming to Chi Alpha; because they will never build the relationships that will keep them coming back even during mid-terms. Small groups give us a consistent environment for community.

### THE HOLINESS OF HOUSING

It was our third year, and I remember feeling prompted by the Holy Spirit that we needed to get our first Chi Alpha house. We didn't have the money to



## SMALL GROUPS ESSENTIAL STRUCTURE FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY

A small group of students meeting together informally in student housing or apartments or in the student center is the most effective structure for the communication of the gospel. Howard Snyder says, "Methodologically speaking, the small group offers the best hope for the discovery and use of the spiritual gifts and for renewal within the church."

The advantages of small-group structures are flexibility, mobility, inclusivity, personal intimacy, multiplication, evangelistic, require minimal training, and adaptable to the larger-group structure.

Small groups give us a consistent environment for community.

The beauty is, it doesn't cost the fellowship anything, but the dividends for the dynamic of the community are huge.



# THE THIRD PLACE

## CHI ALPHA HOUSES ARE IDEAL SPOT FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING

BY ASHLI O'CONNELL

Like the Victorian-style mansions and lodges that line Greek row, they have a common theme: To provide a gathering place for America's college students. Similar down to the Greek letters on the front of the building, the structures provide a home away from home for the searching college student. But this is no sorority or fraternity house.

In an era when many colleges and universities are shutting down the sorority and fraternity houses to curb drinking and partying, a different type of campus house is emerging. Chi Alpha chapters are increasingly buying homes on campuses to help foster a sense of community — providing housing for Chi Alpha students, a place for them to hang out, study, worship, minister and be ministered to.

It's the ideal "third place" for today's college student.

"The third place" is a term coined by influential author Ray Oldenburg in his book, *The Great, Good Place*. Oldenburg calls one's "first place" the home, the "second" place the workplace or school (wherever people spend most of their time). The "third place," then, is the anchor of community life, which facilitates broader, more creative interaction. Hallmarks of the third place, Oldenburg says, are food and drink, highly accessible location (walking distance) and "regulars" — those who habitually congregate there, making the site welcoming and comfortable for new friends and old.

Starbucks has used the concept of "third place" heavily in recent advertising. "Where's your third place?" today's marketers ask? Thousands of college students are finding their third place at a campus Chi Alpha house.

"The Lodge" sits just across campus from the University of Missouri in Columbia, nestled among the trees on the beautiful



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY RUSS CHAMBERS

The Chi Alpha house at Oregon State University.

wooded property. Campus pastors Tom and Missi Trask found it for sale by accident one day. Within 24 hours they had placed a contract on it.

Walk into the lodge and you'll find comfortable furniture and "family photos" of Chi Alpha students everywhere, creating the homey atmosphere the Trasks wanted to provide. "The purchase of this house has been an amazing addition to the ministry at Mizzou," says Tom Trask. "Students are always at the house now, and it's formed a sense of community and family unlike anything we've seen in the past."

The Trasks love spending time with students at the house. "Missi and I have been spending hours at the house playing games, watching movies, having great discussions about God and life, and sharing meals with our students," Tom says.

"Students have realized what a blessing a permanent building can bring. They always have somewhere that's not their dorm or classroom to go and get away for a while. They are really growing in Jesus as they sharpen each other."

Wright State campus pastors, Steve and Liz Brannan, purchased a five-unit apartment building, formerly known as "The Pit," because of the parties held there. Wright State administrators, supportive of putting an end to the party atmosphere of "The Pit" have been very accommodating to Chi Alpha, even donating 16 bunk bed frames, mattresses and chairs for student housing in the building.

"The [Wright State] Chi Alpha House is a lighthouse that shines bright on this dark campus," says senior electrical engineering major Dan Sundersingh, who has lived in the home for a year. "So many lives have been touched already by the love of Jesus through this house.

Oregon State Chi Alpha has experienced major growth in the

few years that Russ and Beth Chambers have been there. They dreamed about having a headquarters that would not only house students and provide much-needed office space for staff, but also an outreach facility. “We want to present this property like a community center, not a private club house.”

Several years ago, Timbo and Carolyn Anderson began praying that they would be able to buy a specific fraternity house across from campus. They prayed for three years. In January a Christian Realtor called to let them know a fraternity house was for sale — they were overwhelmed to learn it was the very house they had been prayer for. “Having the house has made us into a true community,” says Timbo. “Students come here when they’re confused, scared or need counsel. God has just opened the doors to these things.”

Having a permanent home raises the level of ministry for local Chi Alpha fellowships. “Without the Chi Alpha House, I wouldn’t be saved right now,” says Tete, a med student from Nigeria at Eastern Michigan University. “Because there was a place to go to have fun, play video games and have friends, I just hung around. Before I knew it, God had gotten a hold of my heart.”

The EMU “Student Center,” the Chi Alpha House where Tete was saved, came about after the University tore down the office building where Chi Alpha was housed in 1997. A student had a word from the Lord: “If the students give the first \$10,000, I will provide the rest.” Students rallied with bottle drives, side jobs and sacrificial giving and raised \$25,000 toward the project.

With students giving, it was easier raise funds from donors and the \$260,000 needed for the project was raised and the center is now a permanent, visible presence on campus where students are saved, delivered, and filled with the Spirit. There was even a water baptism in the bathtub.

While many Chi Alpha groups are experiencing firsthand the value of building ownership, the majority of groups continue to rent or lease properties. The continuity established with rented property also establishes a presence on campus and a setting for creating a sense of community.

“Chi Alpha is committed to being a community of Christ on campus where students live, study and play together,” says National Director Dennis Gaylor. “Students come to faith and grow in their faith when they are exposed to students committed to God, to one another, and to living responsibly in the world. Getting together in apartments and houses regularly as a worshipping, loving, discipling and missional community will model the kingdom of God and enculturate others in to it.”



**Ashli O’Connell is communications coordinator and managing editor for Chi Alpha Campus Ministries.**



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY SARAH KRAGE

Eastern Michigan University Chi Alpha bought this house on campus in 1998. Director Sarah Krage says the home had been used as a party house and known for demonic activity. The dining room table was a Ouija board and more than 85 percent of the crime on campus happened around this building. Chi Alpha came and anointed the home with oil, fixed it up with the help of Assemblies of God U.S. MAPS/RVers and began ministering to students. Today, crime has gone down to less than 35 percent and students regularly hold prayer meetings, Bible studies and fellowship events at the house.



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY MISSI TRASK

“The Lodge” at the University of Missouri sits just across campus nestled on beautifully wooded property. Students find comfort in the homey atmosphere, where they can hang out between classes. Campus pastors Tom and Missi Trask say owning the property has been a tremendous asset to their ministry.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY STEPHEN K. BARKE.

The Chi Alpha House at Washington State University.

# A SPIRIT-FILLED COMMUNITY ON CAMPUS EXHIBITS FIVE COMPONENTS

Worship, prayer, fellowship, discipleship and mission.

**1. WORSHIP.** Drawing away from self, near to God, joyful and loving response to our God to His acts of loving kindness toward us, gratitude. Without worship we are powerless and dry — we are observers not participants; we are performers not worshippers.

**2. PRAYER.** Intimacy with God, communion with God, personal relationship, prayer releases God's power and appropriates God's provision. Without prayer there is no communication with God — we rely on our own human ability and strengths; we rely on human reasoning.

**3. FELLOWSHIP.** Shared life in Christ, every member an important part, every member a minister; interdependent body, a family, we are related through Christ's death and resurrection. Without true Biblical fellowship there is no sense of family, relationships suffer, needs go unmet, there can be disunity, fragmentation is the opposite of community and unity.

**4. DISCIPLESHIP.** Reproducing followers of Christ, the process of maturing from spiritual birth to the fullness of the stature of Christ, discipleship is putting growing believers with hungry believers in the midst of unbelievers. Without discipleship there is no growth — we become stale, mediocre, spiritually dull, hearers but not doers.

**5. MISSION.** Completing the mission of Jesus, outreach and service, sharing Jesus Christ with the world. Without mission we become ingrown, sterile, self-serving, absorbed, inward and self-focused

▶ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

buy a Chi Alpha house, so we decided to get a group of guys together to lease a house close to campus. I can honestly say this was a turning point for our fellowship. It gave us a place to facilitate community.

The next year, we gathered a group of ladies and our second Chi Alpha house was started. A few short years later, we have six houses of Chi Alpha students. The beauty is, it doesn't cost the fellowship anything, but the dividends for the dynamic of the community are huge.

Every year we talk to our students about being very purposeful with where they live. Not everyone in our fellowship lives in a Chi Alpha house, nor should they. We want students scattered throughout campus, but having places around campus where people can come any time for fellowship is a huge asset for building a strong community.

## THE HOLINESS OF A PARTY

I remember when we first started Chi Alpha, telling a student that our fellowship was serious about discipleship and so parties were not our thing. That lasted about one month — until after our first party. After our first party, I realized how that was a false dichotomy and I started to realize how important it is to come together as God's people for a good, God-honoring party. Jesus said the Kingdom of heaven is like a party. When you look at the Old Testament, God commanded His people to take weeks off to celebrate. On campuses where "party" is seen as an unholy word, there should be no group of people with more joy and more celebration than Jesus' people. So we do our best to reclaim the word "party" on U.Va. ▶

There is something about spending a week together proclaiming God's Word and serving the poor that can reinvigorate a Christian community.



## HOLINESS OF SPRING BREAK

I would say the final key to the health of our community is our Spring Break trips. Spring Break not only is an opportunity for our fellowship to be extremely missional, but it is also an opportunity for the depth of relationships in our community to substantially deepen. There is something about spending a week together proclaiming God's Word, serving the poor, or pouring concrete that can deepen and reinvigorate a Christian community in its relationships and toward its mission. This past Spring Break, we sent out two international trips and three domestic trips, with more than 80 students participating in the trips. These trips have helped students form relationships with people from different areas of the fellowship creating one massive web of relationships community wide.

These are a few things that we have learned about creating community over the past seven years. Remember, that creating authentic, Jesus-centered community is the serious business of the Kingdom and the precursor for reaching the campus. ●



**PETE BULLETTE**  
is a campus pastor at the University of Virginia.

# chi alpha TESTIMONIES

**For my first two years of college I went to a community college and lived at home.**

Life really wasn't much different from high school. Last semester, I transferred to Texas State and now I really feel like I'm in college for the first time. Adjusting to college life and being away from home is hard, and being a Christian has really helped me through those hard times. I always know that the Lord is with me so I never feel alone.

Being a part of Chi Alpha at Texas State has been one of the best things that has happened in my life. I have met some of the most amazing people. When I first came to Texas State, I was not sure if it was the right school for me. A few weeks into the semester my roommate told me that Chi Alpha was having a BBQ and I thought I would check it out. After the BBQ I realized that being a part of a campus ministry was what I needed in my life. Being a part of Chi Alpha has made me feel like I really belong at



Texas State. The friendships and the people I have met have strengthened my faith and impacted the direction of my life.

**MARY ELISABETH MCIVER • TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY**



**Two friends invited me to Chi Alpha and I went just to get it over with. I had struggled with believing in God for a long time. My faith was eroded by my logic. It took me a long time to open up, but I have because of Chi Alpha. A big key was experiencing community and seeing the character of the people in Chi Alpha. It's often said that people need to feel they belong before they start to believe. I belonged in Chi Alpha.**

**I just felt at home. I am so thankful that I was introduced to this wonderful group of believers.**

**JESSICA CARLTON • UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA**

"It is hard to imagine a better story than the story of our missions work here and abroad. It is hard to imagine a more attractive and tailored telling of that story than the packaging of videos, reports, personal witness and sermons that the Chi Alpha guys and the missions leaders put together at The World Missions Summit. And it is hard to imagine an audience more gifted and prepared to do something significant with that message than the combination of Chi Alpha students and students from AG universities.

— **Dave Gable**

**Retired Southern California  
District Superintendent**

Assemblies of God World Missions &  
Chi Alpha Campus Ministries Presents

**THE WORLD MISSIONS SUMMIT2**  
December 30, 2008 – January 1, 2009  
Cincinnati, Ohio

**WWW.TWMS.ORG**

The poster features a central graphic of a globe with the text "The World Missions Summit" overlaid in a large, white, distressed font. A red cursive phrase "It's up to me." is written across the globe. The word "Cincinnati" is written in a white, distressed font at the top left of the globe. At the bottom right, the dates "12.30.08-1.01.09" are displayed in a white, distressed font.



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