

# GIG Project-Grant Reports, 1997 & 1998

*The purpose of the Greater Interest in Government Program, established in 1969 by Frederick A. Faville, Illinois Beta '19, is to stimulate interest among student members of Tau Beta Pi in civic affairs and public-policy issues. The Executive Council awards annual grants up to \$750 each for these activities from the investment earnings of the Greater Interest in Government Fund. The reports of the third of three winning projects for 1996-97 and the only project in 1998 follow:*

## District of Columbia Alpha's 1997 Adopt-a-School Program

**T**HE Greater Interest in Government Chapter Project Grant that was awarded to the District of Columbia Alpha Chapter in June 1996 was the first sign of success for the adopt-a-school program. Students attending the Katie C. Lewis Elementary School, located just across the street from the campus of Howard University, were able to have a little fun with science during the school year with three different contests. Tau Bates, as well as other engineering students, also had chances to have one-on-one impacts with the younger students.

The adopt-a-school program is a spin-off of an earlier relationship between DC Alpha and Lewis Elementary. Three years ago DC Alpha mentored and tutored students at the school. There was positive feedback from teachers, parents, and students, and the tutors were gratified as well. This year, that same relationship was revived along with a poster contest, essay contest, and science fair. Each event occurred at separate times during the school year.

The first component of the program to begin was the tutorial service. Initially, there were five tutors, which grew to eight within a week and then to 14 by the next semester. Tau Bates and other engineering students enjoyed the freedom of choosing the days that they wanted to tutor. During the one-hour sessions the students received help in math and science, as well as in any other area that the teacher requested. Parents of students who did not have tutors requested them because of the progress that other students were making.

Once the tutoring component of the adopt-a-school program was functioning, the poster contest began. This is when the program met an obstacle. All teachers in the school did not

embrace the contest. Some couldn't find the time to incorporate it into their lesson plans. The decision was made to work with those who could participate. After the winners received their certificates and ribbons, attention to the contest was gained, and more teachers expressed an interest in participating in future contests. The school principal showed her enthusiasm for the program by framing the winning poster entries and hanging them in the interior school halls.

The essay contest included entries on topics such as volcanoes and vertebrates. More teachers participated by submitting the best entries from their individual classes. Just as with the poster contest, winning entries received certificates and ribbons, and non-winners received certificates of participation.

The science fair was a great success as well. Students participated in a school-wide science fair for fourth-through-sixth graders. DC Alpha awarded prizes to the top three projects. However, that was not the end for the fair participants. The school made plans to enter a city-wide science fair. DC Alpha members helped the students to refine their projects and went through practice question-and-answer sessions in preparation for the judging. Although none of the students won at the fair, attempts at their first competition were successful.

The adopt-a-school program is a fine example of the difference that younger and older students can make in each other's lives. The few obstacles that were experienced in the beginning did not lessen the satisfaction received at the end. Whether the students at Howard University realized it or not, we were setting an example for these young students every day.

— Ni Kal E. Stephens, 1996-97 President

## District of Columbia Alpha's '98 Adopt-a-School Program

**T**HE 1997-98 school year was a time of transition for our Adopt-a-School program. Previous activities had taken place at a school that was closed last summer, and our new program had two parts. Weekly science enrichment and one story/picture contest were held at Naylor Road School in southeastern DC, where third through sixth graders witnessed science experiments and participated in related discussions. Second graders participated in weekly tutoring of reading and phonics skills. The partnership, requested by the school, has been successful and will be suggested to the new DC Alpha Chapter officers as an ongoing project.

Tau Beta Pi funds were used to purchase story contest prizes, certificates, and experimentation materials for the students and to reimburse members who drove to the school. Science enrichment began on February 10 and continued into April. The contest was presented to the third-grade students on March 19; the stories were collected on April 2 and judged by Tau Beta Pi members Desma Alexander and Kathy Collins. With two winners and a tie for the third place, four students received \$25 gift certificates to an educational establishment. All students in the class received certificates of participation and a verbal commendation for excellent work.

The second portion of our Adopt-a-School program involved Tau Beta Pi members assisting two middle/junior high schools

in the regional future cities competition held annually at Howard University. The purpose of the contest, held during National Engineers Week, is to provide students with engineering and planning experience as they design a city, using SimCity software, and build a replica of one portion of that city, while considering environmental, communal, and economic constraints. Two Tau Bates participated in this effort, volunteering at Shaw Junior High School and St. Benedict the Moor School during the week before the competition on January 31, 1998; we helped them prepare their models and presentations for judging. The team of three eighth graders from St. Benedict won second place in their first year of participation and also counted this as a science fair project.

Association funds were used only to provide presentation materials for the St. Benedict students. The junior high school had been adequately prepared with the necessary materials prior to competition.

Pleased with the feedback from Tau Bates and teachers, the coordinator of the future cities program at the university has expressed an interest in continuing the participation of Tau Beta Pi students and involving the entire chapter next year. Students, school officials, and parents alike have developed an excellent image of Tau Beta Pi, and our St. Benedict volunteer was invited to the school's graduation. The Adopt-A-School program was a great success for the DC Alpha Chapter. Much gratitude and appreciation is given to Tau Beta Pi for the Greater Interest in Government Grant.

— Tori D. Rhoulac, DC A '98, 1997-98 President