



# ALPHA GAMMA Alumni News

SPRING

ALPHA GAMMA RHO • ALPHA GAMMA CHAPTER • UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2021

## New Chapter House Construction Remains on Schedule for Fall Grand Opening

### *Campaign Donations Still Needed to Keep Alpha Gamma Financially Sound*



We know many of you have been counting down the days until Gator football returns to the gridiron, but that is far from the only thing we have to be excited about on campus this fall. We're excited to share that construction is still on track for Alpha Gamma's new chapter house and we're still preparing for a fall grand opening. The sheer strong foundation of our new home is an impeccable reflection of our brotherhood. **Our new chapter house is being built so that Alpha Gamma can make better men for years to come.**



We've made tremendous progress with construction. The exterior windows have been installed, the brick layering on the front of the house has begun, and most of the interior second-floor concrete masonry unit walls have been or are being completed. While we're confident with the trajectory of the construction, there is still a lot of work to be done to reach our \$3.5 million goal for *Honoring Our Past, Building Our Future: The Campaign for a New Chapter House*.



The 334 brothers and friends of Alpha Gamma who have collectively committed more than \$3.35 million to the campaign have shown what it truly means to live the promise of Alpha Gamma Rho through their generous gifts. They have repaid Alpha Gamma for everything our beloved fraternity has given them and what's more, they have helped make it possible for our active members and future brothers to reap the rewards of the AGP experience.



While we greatly appreciate their dedication to Alpha Gamma, we expect more from the nearly 800 alumni who have yet to contribute to the campaign. No matter the size of the gift, we need all brothers giving to the campaign so that Alpha Gamma will be financially sound following this chapter-altering project. Whether it's a one-time donation or a pledge that is

spread over the next five years, you can make an immense impact on AGP's future at Florida with a gift today!

We would also love to recognize your commitment to Alpha Gamma for all brothers to see at the new chapter house. A minimum contribution of \$2,500 will secure your spot on a donor plaque that will be prominently displayed in the chapter house. There are several naming opportunities still available that range from \$10,000 to \$150,000. These gift naming designation opportunities include stairwells (\$30,000 each), front and back columns (\$15,000 and \$10,000 each, respectively), and resident rooms (\$25,000 each). You can see a full list of naming opportunities on our website, [agruf.org](http://agruf.org). Please contact **Eddy Watkins '78** at [edjulwatkins@juno.com](mailto:edjulwatkins@juno.com) or (813) 842-2744 if you have any questions about this.

While you're visiting [agruf.org](http://agruf.org), you can make a gift online or increase your donation if you've already given to the campaign. **We need all hands on deck as we make this final push toward our \$3.5 million goal.** Thank you for your dedication to Alpha Gamma. We can't wait to share more updates about the construction progress and the grand opening of the new chapter house in the very near future.

Yours in the brotherhood,  
**W. Bernard Lester '58**  
Campaign Co-Chairman

**Edward Smoak '68**  
Campaign Co-Chairman

**Adam Putnam '92**  
Campaign Co-Chairman

**Dr. Jimmy G. Cheek '93**  
Honorary Campaign Chairman

# Thank You, Generous Donors

## Add Your Name to This List of Loyal Brothers and Friends of Alpha Gamma Today!

**T**hank you to all the dedicated alumni and friends who have contributed to *Honoring Our Past, Building Our Future: The Campaign for a New Chapter House*. Thanks to their generous commitments we have raised more than \$3.35 million toward our \$3.5 million goal. While the campaign has been successful to this point, we need your help to reach our goal. Donations of all sizes are welcomed and immensely appreciated when it comes to building for Alpha Gamma's future.

Each donor contributing \$2,500 or more will be recognized on a prominently displayed plaque, and all donors with gifts above \$1,000 will be recognized in campaign publications unless otherwise requested. If you feel an error has been made in recording your gift, we sincerely apologize. Please contact our campaign coordinator at (785) 843-1661 with any corrections. Thank you for your continued support!

### 1924 Founders Society (\$500,000 and above)

The Family of  
Mason G. Smoak '94  
In honor of and  
memory of  
Mason G. Smoak '94

Miller Family Gift  
Jeff Miller '83  
Clint White '96

John Smoak '92  
PJ Myers '95  
W. Greg Steube '96

Lundy Family Gift  
R. Donnie Lundy Jr. '71  
Scott E. Lundy '96

Martin J. McKenna '78  
Bryan L. Putnal '78  
Jack L. Townsend '78

Doug Purvis '92  
Charlie Hofer '93  
Tim McDuffie '95  
Roy O. Whitehurst III '95  
Justin G. Hood '98  
James C. Clinard Jr. '99

### 13th Street Society (\$25,000 to \$49,999)

Helena-Agri Enterprises  
George C. Butler Jr. '51

Polhill Family Gift

Frank Polhill '51  
John Polhill '86  
Myles Polhill '16  
John C. Norris '53  
John M. Douthat '63  
McLean Family Gift  
Susan and  
Benny McLean '64  
J. Wayne Beardsley '66  
E.B. "Van" Conoley II '68  
Peter W. Marovich '68  
John D. Hooker '69  
James C. Clinard Sr. '74  
Brian R. Beasley '77  
Randy Hanna '78  
Conrad Varnum '80  
David J. Duda '82  
Adam Putnam '92  
Tim Yaeger '92  
Steven Duda '12  
In memory of  
Walter Duda '56

### Crescent Society (\$10,000 to \$14,999)

Polly W. Johns

In memory of  
Frank C. Johns Jr. '71  
Williamson Cattle Company  
Eugene C. Badger '47  
Robert M. Davis '52  
William B. Fanelli '55  
Larry Mack '74  
Charles D. Miller '74  
William Davis '77  
Richard Stratton '77  
Charles W. Clemons '78  
Wayne H. Simmons '78  
Michael A. Milicevic '81  
Brent Sutton '81  
Robert W. Brown '82  
Robert B. Hunt '82  
Jeffrey L. Cusson '84  
In memory of  
William Musselwhite Sr. '24

### Gator Society (\$5,000 to \$9,999)

A. Duda and Sons  
Mercer Botanicals, Inc.

In honor of  
Maxwell Mercer '12  
Tracee Smoak  
The York Family  
In memory of  
Dr. E.T. York Jr. and  
his lifelong commitment to  
Alpha Gamma Rho  
Willis Family Gift  
John Y. Willis Sr. '50  
John Y. Willis Jr. '85  
Clyde Stephens '53  
Neil H. Morriss '54  
Charles Shackelford '55  
Dr. John Woeste, *Omicron* '56  
Jackson Sellards '57  
John T. Denmark '59  
Lennart E. Lindahl '63  
Charles W. Black '64  
Paul F. Mott '64  
Francis D. Akins '69  
Hall Family Gift  
Gregory L. Hall '70  
Steven Hall '01  
A. Duke Chadwell '71  
Wylie "Buzz" Hinton '71  
E. Larry Davis Jr. '72  
Daniel B. Williams '73  
Donald W. Clark Jr. '76  
J. Palmer Simmons '76  
James E. Browning '77  
V. Frankie Hall '77  
Edgar Watkins Jr. '78  
William L. Wolfram '78  
D. Michael Buckley '82

### Richard "Coach" Kelly Society (\$50,000 to \$99,999)

Smoak Groves, Inc.  
US Sugar  
Banack Family Gift  
Sidney Banack '52  
Rusty Banack '83  
Ernest A. Sellers '58  
The Sumner Family Gift  
Elder Sumner '61  
Dan Sumner '64  
Wayne Sumner '65  
Wade Sumner '89  
Jeff Sumner '90  
Michael Sumner '93  
Sid Sumner '04

Dale W. Zimmerman '63  
The Brown Family Gift  
Reggie L. Brown '68  
Roy R. Brown '73  
Miller Couse '68

### Alpha Gamma Heritage Society (\$15,000 to \$24,999)

Barry A. Bustillo '65  
Charles R. Thomas '67  
Bissett Family Gift  
Glenn A. Bissett '68  
Michael Pressley '68  
Michael W. Shiver '69

Campaign Progress by the Numbers	
As of May 3, 2021	
\$3.5 Million Project	
\$3,357,960 Written Commitments	
334 Total Contributors	
1,109 Active Alumni	

Danielle and  
Dr. Mark Kistler '83  
James W. Cason '85  
Mark Bryan '86  
Robert "Angus" Williams '90  
Mark Clikas '91  
Randy Nychyk '92  
Andrew Bible '93  
Jimmy Cheek '93  
Matthew Walter '93  
Ray Hodge '95  
John W. Williamson '97  
Matthew E. Harrison '98  
Andrew B. Love '98  
James Spratt '99,  
Magnolia Strategies, LLC  
Baynard Ward '00  
William Dukes '01  
W. Grant Copeland '02  
In memory of  
William S. Copeland  
Bernard LeFils '07  
Paul Orsenigo '07  
Wayne R. Armstrong '10

**Green & Gold Society**  
(\$2,500 to \$4,999)

Gina and Alex Falletta  
In memory of  
Chris Falletta '03  
Veal Family Gift  
Inez P. Simmons  
Willie N. Veal '65  
In memory of  
James L. Simmons  
G. Fred Saunders Jr. '54

Charles F. Blair '55	J. Chris Bender '72	Jason Cloud '91	Charlie Hurst '12	Randall S. Robinson '82
Polly and Joel Smith '55	Ronnie D. Crawford '72	Gabe Hamlett '93	In honor of	Greg Ott '83
Don Fuqua '56	Richard W. Fulford '72	Duane A. Mathis '94	Alana Hurst,	Joey Williams '83
In memory of	Michael A. McCall '73	Russell A. Melendy '94	A&P Sweetheart	Chuck Brannan '84
Doyle Conner	Samuel B. Love Jr. '74	Keith Shiver '96	Mark Mangen '12	In memory of
Jack L. Houle '56	Hall Family Gift	Shane Barney '97	Sean Patrick '12	Kimberly Loughrie Brannan
Joseph E. Williams '56	Derek Hall '78	Darin M. Hood '97	Maxwell Mercer '13	Chris Neuhofer '87
William R. Holmes '57	Robert Hall '11	Matthew J. Melendy '98	Justin Fussell '14	Terry D. Sapp '87
Jay Boosinger '58	Matthew Hall '15	H. David Mathis III '99	Connor Brock '15	Tommy Laux '88
In honor of	Alberto E. Loret De Mola '82	Joshua K. Thomas '00	Daniel W. Butler '15	Gregory S. Reynolds '89
R. Kelly '58	Ronald M. Mahan Jr. '82	John D. Hooker II '01	David Wheeler '15	In memory of
Richard F. Kelly '58	Brian Cardin '83	Edward W. Osborne '01	Chris Tompkins '90	Chris Tompkins '90
John W. Peach '58	Kevin U. Hill '83	Jared Revell '01	Brent Howard '92	Wyatt Holmes '93
Michael Fields '63	R. Charles Mathis '83	Trey Soud '01	Daniel Raulerson '93	Stephen D. Hayden '94
In memory of	Andrew J. Neuhofer '83	Ronald A. Westover '01	Noah A. Handley '97	Ryan B. Thomas '97
Rollin McNutt '49	Carl B. Tillman '83	Matthew Yeomans '01	R. Ryan Walker '98	Clayton Archey '02
G. Timothy Hurner Jr. '64	Dailey Family Gift	Scott Johnson '03	Drew Jackson '03	James Modica '03
A. Lewis Ward '66	Pat Cockrell '68	Justin Sharpless '03	In memory of	Chris Falletta '03 and
In memory of	Sandra and Todd Dailey '86	Matthew Soud '03	Sam Tripson '05	Sam Tripson '05
Aubrey L. and	Austin Dailey '11	Rhett Smith '04	Jason Beutke '05	Ryan Burley '05
Juanita Ward	Howard Family Gift	Randall Johnson '05	Wayne E. Watkins '58	Justin Moore '07
W. O. Whittle '66	David F. Howard '85	Jason Cornman '07	Kenneth W. McGraw '62	Micah Scanga '08
David G. Cobb '67	Kevin M. Howard '85	Rusty Hartline '09	Wendell H. Taylor '63	In honor of
Kenneth K. Killingsworth '67	John B. Taylor Jr. '85	Andy Mason '09	Jim Wilcox Jr. '63	The Class of 2008
Gary E. Pepper '67	K. Mark Tumlin '85	Joshua C. Garrett '10	Louis "Skip" Lambert '66	Zachary Putnal '09
Douglas M. Weaver '67	V. Carter Williamson '86	Justin Belisle '11	William B. Burgess '68	Benjamin W. Collins '16
Ray L. Crawford '69	K. Dale Layfield '87	Jarrod Farmer '11	David B. Harrell '69	Zachary Hawkins '16
Steve McCormick '69	Grady Roberts '87	Hall Family Gift	John E. Melton Jr. '72	
Marion "Bud" Riviere '69	John Kruse '88	Robert Hall '11	Tom Umiker '73	
Wayne L. Warren '69	Brent Reeves '88	Rick Holland '11	Joseph "Barney" Cherry '74	
Thomas L. Curry '70	D. W. Daum '89	In honor of	Lawrence E. Barthle '78	
John R. Dressel '70	Wesley S. Davis '90	T. Buddy Miller '11		
William C. Phillips '70	In memory of	Theodore "T-Buddy" Miller '11		
In memory of	Samuel Tripson '05	Erick Bennett '12		
Sandra Smith Phillips	Jason D. Emerson '90			
Darrell W. Smith '70	Thomas Sturgis '90			
Frank C. Johns Jr. '71	Tracy A. Wood '90			

## What Alpha Gamma Rho Means to Tom Curry '70

It was an interesting time during my years as an undergraduate at UF. The United States was fully engaged in the Vietnam War. Steve Spurrier played his last game at UF and won the Heisman Trophy my freshman year. We wore dress shirts and ties to football games and carried black umbrellas. By my junior year, students wore shorts and T-shirts to football games. There were many demonstrations and protests on campus, often at the Plaza of the Americas (often spurred on by outside groups). Hippies and "Flower Power" had become common terms. The lottery draft was instituted. Drug use was becoming a growing problem among students.

I was looking for some “normalcy” in those turbulent years. My career goal when I started at UF was dashed due to an unfortunate lost family opportunity. I lost my focus. At the end of one term, I received a letter from the

Dean stating that if I didn't greatly improve in my academic success, I would no longer be enrolled. Becoming an AGR allowed me to find some stability by having a home away from home, establishing lasting friendships, finding common ground in values, and helping me to refocus on being successful in my academic work. By the time I graduated, I had gotten another letter from the UF administration. I had made the President's list for my grades. **I'm not so sure I would have earned a degree at UF if I hadn't become a member of the Alpha Gamma Chapter of Alpha Gamma Rho.**

I would be remiss not mention the memorable times during my years in the "old" house. We were one of the last classes to reside in the original house. One night as new members, we stole all the downstairs furniture, tableware, silver ware, and many other items without getting caught in the act. Our class

started the "Little Sister" program. The camaraderie was a big part of the enjoyment of being an AGR. Getting to know AGRPs from other states was fun. We had a transfer from Purdue who came down to breakfast his first morning and noticed the grits Ethel had made that most of us were eating. He asked us what they were and we told him they came from a grit bush. We told him there were some behind the house. After class that day, he wandered around and found a Ligustrum in bloom he thought was the grit bush. After that he had the nickname of True Grit.

We all had to live elsewhere for a term because of some structural and safety problems. We really missed not having the daily interaction with different brothers and were glad to get back in the house after that time. **I am excited that a new house is coming and think that is a critical part of the AFP fabric.**

# For the Future of Agriculture

## *Joe Marlin Hilliard Discusses His Family's Gift to Alpha Gamma Chapter and His Hopes for Agriculture in Florida Moving Forward*

While Joe Marlin Hilliard, grandfather of **Jack Hilliard '19**, didn't attend the University of Florida and isn't a member of the Alpha Gamma Rho brotherhood, he is an avid supporter of the fraternity's mission. "I have been working in agriculture for my entire adult life and have many friends and associates who are members of AGR," Joe said. "I am happy that Jack decided to join the fraternity."



Joe was reached out to by a few of his friends from Alpha Gamma Chapter about their efforts to build a new chapter house through *Honoring Our Past, Building Our Future: The Campaign for a New Chapter House*. "They asked if I wanted to be part of helping them establish a new home," Joe said. "Jack's dad and I decided to make a donation under the Hilliard Family Gift to honor Jack and our friends in the chapter." Joe hopes that Alpha Gamma remains a great place for young men interested in agriculture to get their start in the industry and to move their career forward. "We need young people to be interested in agriculture because it's a helluva commodity in the state of Florida," Joe said.

In 1962, Joe started working on the Hilliard Brothers Cattle Ranch, founded by his grandfather and uncle in the 1920s. Over the years, he implemented innovative practices to propel the family operation forward. When he first began managing the ranch, they had a little bit of sugarcane and a lot of cattle. Now, they still have sugarcane and cattle, but have also added oranges, green beans, peppers, and corn. They also own large packing houses that pack green beans and peppers in Immokalee, Florida and Lake Park, Georgia. "Our ranch has expanded two-fold and that is something we are proud of," Joe said. "My two sons and my daughter are now running the operations for the ranch!"

Joe's leadership skills provided for major advances in the cattle, citrus, and sugarcane industries. Outside of his work on the family ranch, Joe has served as an officer of the Florida Cattlemen's Association, a member of the Florida Citrus Commission, and a member of the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission. For all his accomplishments, Joe was inducted into the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2017. "It was such a great honor being inducted," Joe said. "Not many people get that, and I was honored that my friends and people I've worked with felt I deserved this."

Joe and his wife, Barbara, live in Naples, Florida, and can be reached at [jmh2041@aol.com](mailto:jmh2041@aol.com).



# THE

## Chapter Officers

Noble Ruler

**Robert Sistrunk Jr. '18**

Food and Resource Economics

Executive VNR

**Eli Collins '19**

Agricultural Education and Communication

VNR for Finance

**Joseph Nabors '19**

Mechanical Engineering

VNR of Scholarship

**Mason Atkinson '19**

Microbiology and Cell Science

VNR for Activities

**Andrew Priest '19**

Agricultural Operations Management

VNR of Operations and Management

**Jaxon Purvis '18**

Agricultural Operations Management

VNR for Alumni Relations

**Shea Booster '20**

Agricultural Education and Communication

VNR of Planning

**Cason Adams '18**

Food and Resource Economics



*Undergraduates and alumni sign the basement concrete walls in the new chapter house.*



*Brothers attend the new chapter house's ground breaking ceremony last August.*

# CRESCE



*The undergraduates display their fall 2020 Greek awards. This year, Alpha Gamma was recognized for their achievements in the areas of Community Service, Anti-Hazing, Philanthropy, Virtual Programming, Academic Excellence, and Living the Promise and Values!*

## An Abundance of Accolades for the Alpha Gamma Active Chapter

### *Undergraduate Brothers Earn Awards from UF and AΓΡ Nationals*

Throughout the past year, our chapter and its members thrived on campus and in the community. Our brothers have been a shining light when it comes to on-campus involvement. Men of Alpha Gamma are officers in Collegiate Farm Bureau, ALSCC, and the Gator Party fall campaign. We have seven brothers serving as CALS ambassadors, six brothers are active members in two cohorts of the CALS Leadership Institute, and five brothers are active members of Florida Blue Key.

During the fall semester, Alpha Gamma made quite a showing in both the AΓΡ National awards and the Florida Greek awards ceremonies. At the annual UF Greek awards, we were recognized for outstanding virtual program, outstanding community service program, and outstanding anti-hazing initiative. Alpha Gamma also had several individuals earn prestigious honors. Academic Advisor Dr. Charlotte Emerson won the Advisor of the Year award, **Kyle Garner '18** received the William E. Rion University Involvement award, and **Cameron Stake '17** was named the Buddy McKay Greek Person of the Year.

In the Alpha Gamma Rho National awards, Alpha Gamma was recognized for academic

excellence, outstanding community service and philanthropic efforts, living the promise and values, and was named a gold chapter. None of these accolades would have been possible without the hard work of all the active brothers and our advisors and supporters. However, a special thanks must be given to the 2020 executive team, most notably past Noble Ruler **Cameron Stake '17**, whose leadership throughout the pandemic and the transition between houses has been an inspiration to us all.

Despite the challenges we've faced, our chapter's annual philanthropic efforts have carried on. As you may remember from the announcement at Founder's Day, the 2020 AΓΡ Buck Off raised \$17,200 to benefit the American Cancer Society. Buck Off is a proud tradition of our chapter that truly shows the dedication of our organization to helping those in need. Speaking of upholding tradition, we banded together during this trying time to maintain one of our chapter's most precious traditions in its truest form by holding fall initiation in person at the First United Methodist Church of Williston. I can say with certainty that the new executive team is just as committed to upholding all our chapter's time-honored traditions as we move forward.

One of the biggest obstacles we have faced during the pandemic is maintaining a sense of brotherhood, given the inability to gather in person every day. However, I know that our bond of brotherhood is one of the few on campus that could withstand such obstacles and still find ways to improve, excel, and live out our purpose of Making Better Men.

In closing, I must note that as a new era in our chapter's history quickly approaches with the completion of our new chapter house, it is a time for excitement, anticipation, and reflection. Now is the time to reflect on our past, look deep within ourselves, and decide what kind of organization we are going to be as we take these tremendous strides.

On behalf of the executive team and the active chapter, I know that if all of us, whether your stud number is 900 or 1,800, band together as one brotherhood, we can and will foster the culture of excellence that has come to define Alpha Gamma Rho at the University of Florida.

Fraternally,  
**Robbie Sistrunk '18**  
Noble Ruler

# Save the Date ΑΓΡ Brotherhood Roundup

on

Saturday, June 12

11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

at

34226 Harris Hill Road  
Dade City

All ΑΓΡ brothers and their families are invited to a lunch gathering at the farm of Brother **Steve "The Rail" Melton '70** in Dade City from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on June 12. Steve has one of the largest privately owned antique farm equipment museums in the southeast and plans to demonstrate some of these antiques at this interactive event.

The real purpose of the event, however, is to bring brothers together, share the latest news on the new ΑΓΡ house, and have some fun reminiscing and getting acquainted with brothers we don't already know. Lunch will be catered and the cost will be \$25 per plate for adults. Children under 12 will eat free. You won't want to miss this opportunity for fellowship, so save the date now. RSVP to **Eddy Watkins '78** at [edjulwatkins@juno.com](mailto:edjulwatkins@juno.com) or (813) 842-2744.

## Stay Connected with Alpha Gamma Online!

 [agruf.org](http://agruf.org)

 [Alpha Gamma Chapter Alumni  
of Alpha Gamma Rho](#)

 [Alpha Gamma Rho at  
the University of Florida](#)

 [uf\\_agr](#)



# ΑΛΦΑ ΓΑΜΜΑ Alumni News

## ΑΛΦΑ ΓΑΜΜΑ ΡΗΟ

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University of Florida  
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*The members of the 2021 Executive Board.*

## Welcome, Spring New Members!

### Wesley Clark

*Lake Placid, Fla.*

Agricultural Operations  
Management

### Jozef Heijkoop

*Webster, Fla.*

Agricultural Operations  
Management

### Joshua Jantz

*Avon Park, Fla.*

Agricultural Operations  
Management and Animal Science

### Justus Jones\*

*Trenton, Fla.*

Environmental Management in  
Agriculture and Natural Resources

### Alec Sebring

*Sebring, Fla.*

Agricultural Operations  
Management

### Joseph Sistrunk\*

*Williston, Fla.*

Agricultural Education and  
Communication

### Mason Warren

*Lakeland, Fla.*

Agricultural Operations  
Management

\*Legacy