



# ETA SURVEY

Eta Chapter of Kappa Delta Rho Fraternity | University of Illinois | [www.KDRillinois.org](http://www.KDRillinois.org) | Fall 2023

## A Letter from the Alumni President



*Brothers:*

We are just coming off a busy Homecoming weekend. I first want to thank the many brothers who took the time to return to campus. It was great to see everyone.

As I shared at the Homecoming meeting, we've had both success and setbacks this fall. Over the summer and the first weeks on campus, much was done in a flurry to order supplies and get the house re-opened. To those who participated and helped, thank you! The setback comes in the area of recruitment. The chapter, newly minted since they were recruited by our national consultant, struggled this fall. They have to take a step back and re-examine their structure and game plan. I have been in frequent contact with the national team and they are formulating a plan to review and re-engage by the end of this semester.

On our end, we are looking at creating an alumni advisory board to support the chapter in their efforts. If you have an interest in helping as an advisor, please let me know by emailing me at [michael.kolberg@gmail.com](mailto:michael.kolberg@gmail.com) or texting or calling me at: 312-238-0232.

To be clear, we are exploring all options, including posting the house for lease.

We continue to be dependent on the generous support of our alumni. A heartfelt thanks to every brother who has stepped up to chip in! We've got a lot of work yet to do and everyone's support is greatly appreciated.

Mike Kolberg '03  
President  
Eta Building Association of Kappa Delta Rho

## Scholarships

Congratulations to the scholarship award recipients.



Marco Atallah  
Thomas P. Burns Scholarship  
\$2,000



Ryan Pegler  
Guy Davis Scholarship  
\$1,380



James Stanley  
William J. Paris Scholarship  
\$1,380



Cian Mitchell  
Dale Schaffnacker Scholarship  
\$1,380



Evan Zakharchenko  
Michael Mueller Scholarship  
\$1,470

## START A SCHOLARSHIP

Interested in establishing a scholarship in your name or to memorialize a brother or class?

Contact Bill Paris '87 at [bparis@elevateims.com](mailto:bparis@elevateims.com) or by cell at 404-441-9630.



# Homecoming 2023



Fall '78 Orange Division KDP football championship team.  
Photo shared by Dan Burns '81.



## LEAVE A LEGACY

Consider a lasting gift that will support Kappa Delta Rho long after you are gone. By including Eta in your estate plans, you ensure the long-term health and success of our fraternity. Here's what you and/or your advisor might need to know: Most common ways to include Eta are through your will or life insurance. Sample language: I leave the sum of (\$xxxxxx.xx or xx% of my estate) to: Eta Building Association of Kappa Delta Rho tax id # (37-6048873) c/o the National fraternity of Kappa Delta Rho, P.O. Box 777, Latrobe, PA 15650, for their general purposes.\*

*\*This information is not presented as legal or tax advice. Always consult your advisors for questions you may have.*

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

**Volunteer!** We are looking for volunteers willing to help provide content for the website and newsletter, assist with the chapter, and provide mentoring and advice to the actives. Consider volunteering your time to make our chapter stronger.



## ALUMNI NEWS



*KDR's meet up in Istanbul. Left to right Al Tunkel '68, Joe Maloney '69, Don Russell '70 and their wives.*

### OFFICIAL WEBSITE

[www.kdrillinois.org](http://www.kdrillinois.org)

If you don't already have a login, please request one. Once logged in, you will have access to member-only content and contact information, including the ability to search for your classmates, suitemates, etc. The website also provides you with an opportunity to update your own contact information, so you don't miss any of the latest news from Eta Chapter.

### Update Your E-mail

We want you to be in the loop! Please confirm we have a good e-mail for you. We periodically send updates, reminders, and good wishes during the holidays electronically. This saves time and money and keeps you informed. To check your information, go to [kdrillinois.org](http://kdrillinois.org) and log in. You can view and update your contact information.

### RECRUITMENT REFERRAL

Do you have a son, grandson, nephew, or another relative who would make a great KAP? Have a neighbor or other friends who would be good contacts? Send any referrals to our recruitment consultant, John McGlennon at [jmcglennon@kdr.com](mailto:jmcglennon@kdr.com) or by cell or text: 724-884-6468.

### CHAPTER ETERNAL

Our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of the following Eta brother:

**Raymond Neisewander, Jr. '55**

October 25, 2013

**Jack Heckel '53**

May 22, 2022

**James W. Heilenbach '56**

March 24, 2023

## Alumni Spotlight:

## Thomas Kennedy '11

**How did you end up at Illinois and joining KAP?**

Prior to my senior year of high school, I was 100% sure that I wanted to go to one of the military academies. That summer, my parents took me on a whirlwind tour of the East Coast, driving to 10 colleges in nine days. On the last day, we were driving back to Springfield through Champaign at 2:00 a.m., and my mom said, "Wouldn't it be funny if we just drove a couple thousand miles looking at colleges and you ended up going to school 1.5 hours away from home?" That all but confirmed that I would be a Fighting Illini!

As for how I joined KAP, I owe that to meeting a couple of people on my floor from Jacksonville, Illinois: Jon Wardell, Scott Runyon, and Brian Jarzen. They had a friend from high school, Justin Gifford, who had joined KAP the year before. Justin invited all of us to join one Wednesday afternoon for "Logo Glass Day" at Murphy's. Over the second half of my first semester in college, I spent most Wednesday afternoons casually hanging out with the KAPs at Murphy's. The strange thing was that I had never even been to the KAP house. The first week back on campus that January, some people were going over to the house to hang out, and I received my bid to join the fraternity the first time I had ever stepped through the door of the house. Kevin Klemm and Chad Rushing, my roommates and friends from high school, received their bids, too. When I was talking to my parents about joining, one of their big concerns was how it would impact my grades, which were nothing to write home about my first semester. The major selling point for the house was the fact that the house was ranked sixth academically the semester before and filled with a lot of social but academically successful engineers who I said would be a great asset to improve my grades (which did actually happen).

**What was your engagement or officer role in the chapter? Any favorite memories?**

While I was in the house, I held three leadership positions. My first position was as centurion, which was the highest-ranking position I could run for without having lived in the house. This position then led to me running for and being elected to

the Interfraternity Council (IFC) Judicial Board, the group responsible for the discipline portion of IFC's governance of their fraternities. When I was older in the house, I served as the undergraduate representative on the alumni board, later transitioning to a director position on the board while I was in grad school and my first year out of school.

Out of all of the memories from KAP, my favorite was during the second semester of my sophomore year when we were paired up with Alpha Omicron Pi for the Atius Mom's Day Sing, a song and dance competition for Mom's Day. Out of all of the people from KAP that participated, I'm not sure a single one of us really had any decent dancing skills, but that didn't stop us from putting it all out there and embarrassing ourselves. That year, we won second place in the competition for our take on a Michael Jackson version of "West Side Story," but a second-place award wasn't what I remember most. I was somehow selected to be the lead from KAP with Jessica Lipski as the lead from AOII. In true storybook fashion, the two of us started dating halfway through the competition, and in August this year we celebrated 10 years of marriage together.

**What has your career path been? Would brothers know or be touched by any of your work?**

At the end of my undergraduate career, I had no job prospects and didn't really know what to do with my life. Thankfully, my advisor knew of an open graduate research position for John Deere. I decided that it was better than going back to live at my parent's house without a job, and who can argue with a free master's degree and another two years on campus hanging out at KAP?

After finishing my master's degree, I went to work for John Deere in Dubuque, Iowa, where I was both a design and test engineer for the construction and forestry division. After a couple of years working for Deere, I earned a spot on Deere's University of Illinois recruiting team. As part of that volunteer team, I attend the engineering career fairs in the fall and spring and represent the company at the Engineering Open House. Typically, I reach out to the house on the Facebook group a day or two before the career fair, and I'm always impressed to see one or two people come up to me at the career fair to let me know they are from KAP and would appreciate any opportunities or advice I can help out with. I feel like KAP has had a significant impact on the "pay it forward" perspective that I have developed over the years.

My current position at John Deere is as the thermal management architect for John Deere Electric Powertrain. The majority of my work is developing technical strategy for the company in my area and mentoring other engineers. Looking back, there are a lot of KAPs that I owe for helping get

me through fluid dynamics and thermodynamics classes with passing grades. Some of my proudest accomplishments at Deere include the design or test of the new Skid Steer, 4WD Loader, and Backhoe product lines; ten patent awards; and the redesign of our Engineering Explorer's program, a program that introduces high school students to engineering fields. John Deere also enabled me to complete an MBA at the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University. Even though I am also technically a Hoosier, I'll always be rooting for the Illini!

**Have you stayed in touch with any classmates or other KAP brothers?**

I have stayed in touch with a lot of classmates over the years, and when I got married, five of my KAP brothers stood up in my wedding (Chad Rushing, Zach Gooding, Josh Bates, Luke Durand, and Scott Runyon), and four of my wife's AOII sorority sisters accompanied her. Out of all of the KAP brothers that attended that event, two went above and beyond to be a part of it: Sean Martin, currently a Major in the Army, got out of field training early and booked a flight less than 24 hours before the wedding to be there, and Jon Whitney, currently a Lt. Commander in the Navy, traveled all the way from Japan to Chicago to be a part of the festivities. Over the years, some of us have drifted apart more than others, but when we do get together for a wedding, a bachelor party, or a baseball game, no time has passed, and we are still as good of friends as when we were in college. The only difference is there are now many spouses and kids added to the KAP family.

My wife and I have two children, Michael (age seven) and Andrew (age five). Having lived in Iowa for about 10 years, Jess and I have consistently battled the risk of our boys becoming Hawkeye fans. We do our best to dress them in orange and blue and expose them to as much Fighting Illini spirit as we can. With any hope, Michael and Andrew will be part of the University of Illinois Classes of 2037 and 2039. We are also hopeful that they will grow up to be KAP Gentlemen and that the house is still as strong as it was when I was there. As part of that hope, I encourage all alumni to consider a donation to either the KAP Annual Fund or the Securing Our Legacy Campaign.

