

# It's All Greek to Us: Beta Theta Pi Serves

**By Zach Wetzel**  
For the Plain Talk

Beta Theta Pi is a fraternity that focuses less on partying and more on serving others.

"Beta Theta Pi is a not a frat, it is a fraternity," proclaims the Beta Theta Pi website.

Jacob Munger, President of Theta Pi, explained that the fraternity tries to participate in activities that will help make Vermillion better. The recently passed Strollers event was a great opportunity to serve.

"Strollers is an organization where Greek members from each house are paired up with another house," said Munger. "Fraternities and sororities are paired up on campus and they get together and form an idea for a fifteen-minute show to present."

There are usually four different casts for each of the four sororities.

According to Munger, a non-Greek group has participated before but that will not be the case this year.

"All of the participants come together and perform a show," said Munger. "All of the money then goes to charity."

Amanda Severson, who is in charge of publicity for Greek events, explained that the Strollers show will be held in Aalfs Auditorium at 7 p.m. on February 27 and 28.

"Strollers is an

entertaining variety show that the Greek community participates in every year," said Severson. "This year will be the 89th Annual Strollers Show."

There are different shows for each group, according to Munger.

"The themes of the shows are going to be a surprise," said Munger.

Members of Theta Pi and other Greek organizations also have the opportunity to participate in leadership conferences.

Munger recently attended the National Leadership Conference, where he learned how to be a better leader in his fraternity and in the community.

At the conference, Munger participated in various workshops that taught him valuable leadership skills.

"The workshops help leaders learn how to deal with potential problems that may arise and how to help others become better individuals," said Munger.

There are many exciting events that help USD Greek students improve as leaders.

"The 2015 Emerging Leaders Institute is an excellent learning experience for any USD student who is eager to learn more about leadership skills and who plans to hold a leadership position, or who is interested in becoming involved on campus or within the community,"



Beta Theta Pi fraternity on the University of South Dakota campus enjoys getting involved and finding new ways to serve.

COURTESY PHOTO

said Severson.

According to Munger, Theta Pi's next big activity will be an Easter egg hunt. This activity is mostly for the kids of Vermillion, and is an annual Theta Pi tradition.

"The kids enjoy the Easter egg hunt and it is a lot of fun," said Munger.

For this event Theta Pi usually teams up with a local sorority and gathers Easter eggs. Some of the

eggs are donated from businesses in Vermillion, but most of the eggs are purchased by the fraternity.

Theta Pi then fills the eggs with candy and scatters them throughout Prentis Park. Kids then visit the park and try to find all of the hidden eggs.

"We have other activities as well, including a volleyball tournament in the fall," said Munger. "We

also try to support local events in the community."

If an organization is participating in a food drive or fundraiser, Theta Pi will be there.

"This past fall we helped out with a trunk-or-treat at the Trinity Lutheran Church," said Munger.

The purpose of the trunk-or-treat was to provide a fun and safe atmosphere for kids who

wanted to go trick-or-treating without having to go door-to-door.

Theta Pi is a unique fraternity with a diverse band of brothers. The fraternity genuinely cares about helping others and making a difference.

"We have a variety of different members in our fraternity," said Munger. "This strong sense of brotherhood and unity makes us unique."

# Local Past: The Faces Behind the Cases

**By Anne La Brake**  
For the Plain Talk

Here in Vermillion, many believe in leaving behind a mark for future generations to be touched by.

Some leave that mark through the buildings having been built through time.

Others? They come through the words put down on paper or in a computer.

Then there are those individuals, such as the donors of the National Music Museum, who leave their mark through the history they preserve.

Often times, there are names listed beside each instrument case within the museum, sharing the original history, as well as the donation that made the acquisition of the instrument possible.

These instruments have often been on quite a journey to reach this final destination, but so have the people who have brought them here.

Take the Joe and Joella Utley collection.

"Joe Utley was a heart surgeon, and I believe he was one of the first people to perform heart surgery in the United States. He was a trumpet player his whole life, so he systematically collected trumpets and other brass instruments, mostly trumpets and coronets," shares Dr. Deborah Check Reeves, curator of Education and Woodwinds. "The collection was more than 600 pieces. He unfortunately had cancer, however, and so he was looking for a permanent home for the collection. He ended up giving us the entire

collection."

Then there is the Alan G. Bates harmonica collection.

This contains over 2,500 instruments, display cases, and harmonica related ephemera.

"These harmonicas were all collected by Alan G. Bates," highlights Reeves as she points out the collection that lines the corridor of the second floor of the museum. "He was retiring and moving into a smaller space, so he was looking for a museum to give them too."

"There are some harmonica pins that are just decorative," She allows. "But anything with holes in it is a harmonica. There are, at least, six harmonicas that have only two notes."

Interestingly enough, the passion Bates had for harmonicas did not end with the donation of his collection.

"He actually still collects harmonicas, but he sends them to us as gifts," Reeves shares. "So it's really neat the way that it all works. He literally keeps the original box and instructions too."

"And yes, he collects fun harmonicas like banana ones, but, also, take this very early 1829 symphonium we have. It's one of the earliest known instruments like this to survive, and it was made by a

company known as Wheatstone that then went on to making English concertinas."

The word collection can often sound like such a singular word that you might be tempted to hardly think about some of the details of such an endeavor.

When a collection is donated, a large portion of an individual's life is, actually, what's truly being donated.

Not only, of course, is the National Music Museum home to a variety of musical pieces that have now become a part of Vermillion's past indirectly, but Vermillion natives, as well, leave their names within the National Music Museum fittingly in a variety of direct ways.

You can see this within the guitar donated by Shawn Colvin, a Vermillion native as well as a country singer.

"In 1998, she won song of year with 'Sunny came Home,'" informs Reeves as she studies the case that holds the donated guitar within the Lillibridge gallery. "It was in 2005, though, that she

contributed it as that was when this particular gallery first opened up."

Marge Rawlins is, also, another Vermillion native whose signature is engrained forever in the National Music Museum, as well as even the University of South Dakota's history.

"The Rawlins' family was extremely important to the museum," Reeves specifies. "Marge Rawlins, in fact, was a Vermillion native. Her house was just down on University Street."

"She had a music major as well as a piano major at the university and has always had high regard for the university."

"The university even has a Rawlins scholarship," she continues. "There's, also, the Rawlins piano trio over in the music department. They are all sponsored by an

endowment that Rawlins gave. She passed away several years ago, and her husband had preceded her by several years. We really have a lot to be thankful for with that particular family."

Of course the generosity and dedication offered by the founders of our National Music Museum are too vast to be able to list each and every name here, but their names should not be forgotten.

While the loots with their unusual appearance are stunning, the old harpsichords with their wooden keys fascinating, the harmonicas and trumpets fun; there is nothing that is quite as fascinating as the lives of the donors who were willing to share their passion and life-long searches with the people of the Vermillion community.

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• Monday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm •  
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Award-winning and nationally-recognized author Ben Mikaelson will present "Finding the Heart of the Story".

His visit is sponsored by the Siegrist Fund, the Vermillion Public Schools, and the Edith B. Siegrist Vermillion Public Library.



Ben Mikaelson is winner of the International Reading Association Award and the Western Writer's Golden Spur Award. His novels have been nominated to and have won many State readers Choice awards. These novels include *Rescue Josh McGuire*, *Sparrow Hawk Red*, *Stranded*, *Countdown*, *Petey*, *Touching Spirit Bear*, *Red Midnight*, *Tree Girl* and *Ghost of the Spirit Bear*.



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