

AGR ACTION

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Check out the digital edition of our Fall 2014 Growth Report "Higher Futures"



You may have noticed a reduced amount of Foundation information in your Fall 2014 issue of SICKLE & SHEAF - that's because we have created the Fall 2014 Growth Report "Higher Futures."

Compiled in this comprehensive report is a wealth of Foundation information, which is aimed at providing a greater degree of transparency. When looking through the Growth Report, you'll have the opportunity to:

- **See** the 2014 Scholarship Winners
- **Learn** about the impact of Leadership Seminars on collegiate brothers
- **Read** about the new fund created by Delta Chapter in memory of Brother Ronald Hurt
- **Meet** Brother Donald De Jong and learn why he gives to the

Foundation

- **Review** the results of the 2014 Bid for Better Men Auction, held at National Convention
- **Analyze** the Investment Performance of Foundation funds

We would specifically like to point your attention to the article "In Memory of a

Hero," the progress we've made towards our \$3 million goal funding support for AGRconnect, and the "How We Compare" section. These are all great examples of "Living the Promise and Values" of Alpha Gamma Rho, illustrating our continued success as leaders in agriculture and the Greek community with our innovative training and Foundation performance.

We invite you to check out the Fall 2014 Growth Report "Higher Futures" by visiting:

www.alphagammarho.org/growth-report.

Please send your feedback to Brad Garrison, Director of Development, at brad@alphagammarho.org or 816-891-9200, ext. 21. We're looking forward to hearing what you think!

Peek into this issue...

Theta Brother born without forearm tests prosthetics technology in hopes of becoming police officer...



One December afternoon two years ago, Nathan West slumped in his car in a Walmart parking lot, feeling defeated. A police recruiter for a department in Missouri had just told him he was unlikely to become a law enforcement officer. The recruiter said West had little chance of passing a test that required him to shoot a gun both right- and left-handed.

Still learning at OSU with Alpha Gamma Rho reunion...

Ken Root, Pi (Oklahoma State) alumnus, attended an AGR reunion to find that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

AGRconnect Update...

Upcoming Events...



Theta Brother born without forearm tests prosthetics technology in hopes of becoming police officer



Nathan West poses for a portrait with his prosthetic arm in his home in Columbia. West had not worn the arm for a few days prior to the photo shoot because malfunctions with the arm can cause random uncontrolled hand movements.

Photos courtesy of Mark Kauzlarich and The Columbia Missourian

One December afternoon two years ago, Nathan West slumped in his car in a Walmart parking lot, feeling defeated.

A police recruiter for a department in Missouri had just told him he was unlikely to become a law enforcement officer. The recruiter said West had little chance of passing a test that required him to shoot a gun both right- and left-handed.

West, 21, was born without a left forearm, but it never set him back. He was an athlete in high school; he dominated the field in both baseball and football.

He has even learned skills that could be useful in police work; he's had almost a year of mixed-martial

arts training, and he's been deer hunting since he was 14.

This was his first roadblock. He had always dreamed of becoming a police officer and never considered the possibility of rejection.

"I almost wish I had a little more hardship so I could be more prepared," said West, an MU junior majoring in international studies. "It hit me like a ton of bricks."

What happened next, he said, was just plain dumb luck.

He flipped on a TV and began to watch an episode of "60 Minutes." A special segment was demonstrating a breakthrough in robotics engineering: With new prosthetics technology, a robotic arm could closely mimic a natural one through electrodes planted on either the patient's brain or nerve endings.

Patients could use their minds to control the movement of the fingers and even replicate the sensation of touch. By merely thinking about an action, a patient could use an artificial arm to accomplish it.

It hit West all at once: This was his chance to pass the test he needed

to enter the police academy. With the help of electrode technology, he could shoot left-handed.

He quickly scoured the Internet to locate one of the doctors quoted on "60 Minutes." He made a connection with Albert Chi, medical director for the Targeted Muscle Reinnervation program at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore.

Chi invited West to his clinic for an assessment.

"I wanted to be able to do this," West remembered thinking. "If I couldn't become a cop, I didn't know what I was going to do."

Court precedent

West was also banking on a recent federal court decision that sided with a 31-year-old Army veteran who wanted a position with the FBI. The soldier, Justin Slaby, lost his left hand in a grenade malfunction and had been dismissed from FBI training.

He had been removed from the FBI Academy in Quantico, Va., because of concerns about his ability to shoot a gun with his prosthetic left hand, The Washington Post reported.

Slaby filed a lawsuit and was awarded \$75,000 in a jury trial that ruled against the FBI on the basis of discrimination.

The agency appealed, and in November, a federal judge set a deadline for the FBI to re-admit Slaby into special agent training.

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The Post quoted one of Slaby's lawyers as saying, "It opens the doors to other veterans who have overcome wartime injuries so that they can serve us upon their return."

West concurred.

"(Slaby) set the precedent," he said. "Now you have some ground to stand on."

According to Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, an employer with 15 or more employees cannot refuse to hire a qualified individual based on a disability or need for a reasonable accommodation — such as an advanced prosthetic — to perform the job.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has conducted ongoing research about workplace discrimination and people with missing limbs. A 2005 report indicated that discrimination is more likely among men who are younger than 20 or older than 65 and are white or Native American.

Amputees are more likely to encounter discrimination when working in southern states, a company with 200 or fewer employees or in a workplace involving manufacturing, construction or transportation.

Breakthrough procedure

Last year, West and his father went to Baltimore for a week to meet with Chi, who works with the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab, which pioneered the innovative robotic limb.

Chi said he often consults with victims of traumatic injuries and amputees, but West was a special case. Un-

like patients whose missing limbs are the result of amputation, West didn't have "phantom limb," Chi said. He had never had the sensation of a hand attached to his left arm.

"We didn't know if it would work for some with congenital limb loss," Chi said. "We didn't know unless he came to visit."

During the week West spent at Johns Hopkins, Chi ran a series of tests to see how he would respond to the new prosthetics technology.

He put a rubber sweatband with electrodes on West's arm and prodded him to follow basic commands such as "open" and "close" to control a virtual hand on a computer screen.

West was then asked to mimic the muscle movements he made with his right arm so he would know what it felt like to move the left side. It wasn't easy at first, he said, and the first day was pretty frustrating.

But by the third day, West was ecstatic. At that point, he could move the individual fingers on the virtual hand. The doctor told him he was adapting to the pattern recognition faster than many amputees had.

"Nate blew us away," Chi said. "The brain has an amazing ability to adapt. He came up with intuitive strategies that were able to work for him."

Using pattern recognition software, electrodes were connected to the nerve endings where West's

arm ends. His brain can send a signal to the nerves, telling them how the muscles in his lower arm should move. The electrodes send messages to the prosthetic, which responds by moving however West directs it to.

Before visiting Johns Hopkins,



West puts on his prosthetic arm at his house in Columbia. West hopes to use the prosthetic, which will undergo upgrades thanks to a program at Johns Hopkins, to help him eventually join the police force.

West had a limited prosthetic arm with two electrodes and six contact points. At Johns Hopkins, he tried a system with eight electrodes and 16 contact points.

The new Bebionic prosthetic has the shape and weight of a natural arm and allows West to move individual fingers with ease. He said the system allows him to perform a number of grip patterns: pinching, pointing, gripping, and even pulling the trigger on a gun.

"The new one just has a more natural movement," he said.

West has had the newer prosthetic since April, and he is now waiting to have the new technology installed

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West works with his prosthetic arm on Sept. 18, adjusting to the movement of pulling the trigger on his unloaded handgun as a part of his training in hopes of becoming a police officer. He faces a learning curve with the arm and sometimes has to contend with unintentional movements of the hand, but with some effort he has learned to operate his handgun so he can pass the required police tests.

by doctors at Johns Hopkins. Chi projects the pattern recognition software will be available for West to test on the prosthetic by November.

Chi said this technology could change the way amputees view their ability to become law enforcement officers.

"This technology can potentially be reliable for activities like shooting a gun," he said.

Happy, small-town childhood

When West was a child, he wore a basic prosthetic arm until fifth grade. After that, he said, he just didn't feel the need to use it anymore.

"I got tired of it," West said. "It was slow."

Growing up in Gower, a town of

1,526 people in northwest Missouri, West said he never felt like his congenital limb loss was a disability. He was comfortable with who he was, and he never let anything slow him down.

"I started playing sports, and everyone thought it was normal," West said. "No one ever thought anything of it."

He made friends easily and never felt like an outsider.

"When you graduate with 56 kids, you're never going to get bullied," he said about his high school classmates.

Enrolling at MU gave him a wider perspective.

"Coming to Mizzou has been crazy," West said. "I was literally sitting in lecture halls with the same amount of students as my high school."

He said the transition of going to a large university was made easier after joining Alpha Gamma Rho's Theta Chapter. The men accepted him into their circle, and it's where he's made some of his closest friends.

West is the vice president of MU Stop Traffic, a club on campus that raises awareness about human trafficking. Working with the club has inspired him to work with special victims, he said.

He said he wants to finish college and plans to apply for graduate school if he can't find a job right away. He also wants to return to NubAbility, a sports camp for kids with missing limbs, where he worked as a counselor this summer.

"It was a head rush for me. I'm the only person I know who's missing an arm. I just walk in and I'm like, 'These are my people!'" West said, laughing.

"That's how it was for me at 21 years old. I can't imagine how it would be when I was 8 (like the campers)."

West doesn't worry much about the future.

"I don't buy green bananas. I don't look that far into the future. I just take it day by day," he said.

But the new technology at Johns Hopkins has given him a newfound hope that he will fulfill his dreams of law enforcement work.

"The thought of doing anything else has never crossed my mind. Even if it takes me 'til I'm 35, I'm going to do it ... although I really hope it doesn't take me that long," West chuckled.

*Article courtesy of Taylor Wanbaugh and
The Columbia Missourian*

Still learning at OSU with Alpha Gamma Rho reunion

I attended a college fraternity reunion to reacquaint myself with the boys, now retirement age men, from Pi Chapter at Oklahoma State University (OSU). It was a good event that I had fretted about quite a bit as I made plans to attend. I took a deep breath, walked in and was instantly glad I came.

Of course these people look differently than they did in their lean college years. The thick hair and thin waistlines have traded places for most of us. A few are in really good physical shape. A few were thinner than in their college years, but most of us have lost the battle of the bulge and wear our clothes a bit more comfortably than back in the tight, high-water Levi jeans period. After 47 years of life, how could you be identical to how you were as a fresh-faced college sophomore?

The thing I noticed, as soon as I figured out a classmate's name, was just about everyone had the same spirit and demeanor that I remembered. If we could have had that reunion in the dark and just spoken to each other, rather than making visual contact, I think the only change would be the timber of the voices. Several brothers brought their wives and the physical change was obvious, but the bubbly and excited young women I met many moons ago were still in there.

Reunions begin just about as soon as high school or college ends but I think they get better as we age. In the

early years, you tend to go back to see how much better you are doing than those were supposed to be more successful. You check out the girls, now women, and see if they have gotten better looking or lost their figure when the first child was born. But as we become senior in age, we mellow and look for that twinkle in the eye and lilt in the voice of people we bonded with in earlier life.

I have always been pleased that I was able to join AGR. It was a happenstance, at best, that my FFA background, combined with a friend a couple of years older getting into the house, resulted in telephone calls and visits by the fraternity rush chairman in the summer of 1967 to invite me to pledge as an incoming freshman. Much of that time is as vivid as when it happened and means a lot to those who have squeezed through this passage and into the larger world. I was almost overpowered by the change from a high school of 80 to a university of 17,000. I had to be civilized and socialized by the older guys and the house mother, but I was not demoralized by the seven months we spent as pledges (peons) in the house. Some of us have great memories of that time, and others who did not stay likely remember it as one of their most difficult periods. Once I attained membership, I tried to apply my mother's teachings on the "golden rule" and treat the incoming classes with a level of respect.

For those of you who think a fraternity is a group of cronies who take care of each other to the detriment of others, that is not accurate from my experience. It is a group of men who all had a shared experience that bonds them together for life. It can be replicated by those who served in the military, seminary or other institution. When I meet another man who shares the same background, I tend to trust him because of the fraternal kinship. There have been many times in my career as a reporter when I wanted to break through with an elected official or an association president. If the conversation turned to background in agriculture and university, we often asked one more question about fraternal affiliation and that often allowed us to parallel our experiences and have more confidence in the person sitting across the table.

This was a self-selecting crowd of about 80 that was assembled by some brothers who campaigned to get us all together. We spoke of a few who were only in our memories as they had passed from this world to their reward over the last half century. Others may have had busy lives or conflict and could not be at the reunion this year. Some may harbor feelings they can't address and are not yet ready to return to the fold.

When I asked, "What have you done in life?" there were many answers. Some have followed their

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college training and are just retiring from a long career as scientists, educators, bankers, corporate executives and doctors. Others veered off into unpredictable ventures from oil well drilling to mortician to communications. Some are rich in money, some are rich in spirit but all who came back together paid homage to that young man who wanted to make his mark in the world and chose this pathway to do so. Some of us joke he is still inside us screaming, "What the hell happened?"

We had a few moments to talk about the coming generations who may choose to go through the AGR house at OSU. We have had several alums who were willing to put in the seed money to build a new house that is almost completed and beyond our wildest dreams as the living quarters for college students. AGR has changed the pledge program to meet society's expectations and the young men only have a brief three days of preparation before they at-

tain equal status with all the rest of us. We shook our heads at the behavior of those immature college children and how it was going to be tough for them to make it in this world. Then we reflected on who we were back then and remembered the old guys who stood in front of us during college and talked about the depression they had endured and how soft we were. I realized we are now on the other side of the divide between young and old. Upon further reflection, we also determined that this generation is worth our investment of time and money to bring through our university system and into the business world.

I looked at those farm boys who endured the 1980s and now run major corporations and farms. It became clear we have to believe in those who will fill our jobs tomorrow and help them as long as we have resources to do so.

Article courtesy of Ken Root

Alumni Engagement course available

The full Alumni Engagement course is now available in AGRconnect! Login and review the two modules, which cover ways alumni can support their collegiate chapters and ways collegiates can involve alumni brothers.

For a chance to win your choice of several AGR prizes, sign into AGRconnect and complete one of two Alumni Engagement mod-

ules between now and the next issue of AGR Action. Send a comment about your experience to AGRconnect@alphagammarho.org to be entered.

If you experience any problems using AGRconnect or have questions about logging in, call the Home Office at 816-891-9200.

We look forward to hearing your feedback!

Upcoming events...

Nov. 6-7, 2014

Board Meetings

Madison, Wisconsin

Feb. 13-14, 2015

Leadership Seminar

Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas

Feb. 20-21, 2015

Leadership Seminar

Chicago, Illinois

Feb. 27-28, 2015

Leadership Seminar

Reno, Nevada

March 6-7, 2015

Leadership Seminar

Baltimore, Maryland

April 17-18, 2015

AGR National BBQ

Lebanon, Tennessee