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Gay and Greek at ASU

Advocate, The, August 30, 2005 by Kevin Hauswirth

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They may hang out with popular sororities and host drunken theme parties, but unlike other fraternities on Arizona State University's Tempe campus, the men of Sigma Phi Beta also hold drag-show fund-raisers, and the clothes they recently donated to a youth shelter were designer.

Known on campus as the Beta Boys, these fraternity brothers are members of the first gay-focused exclusively collegiate fraternity to go national. Founded in the fall of 2003, Sigma Phi Beta offers a sense of community that traditional fraternities do not, says founding member Carlos Galaz, 23. "We have our own rituals, our own traditions, and our own history."

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Indeed, for some members Sigma Phi Beta is more than a brotherhood. Aaron Blumenthal, 22, comes from a small town in Wyoming where he was rejected for being gay. He describes the fraternity as "the boys I call family."

ASU is one of very few campuses to have both a fraternity and sorority targeted at queer students. Gamma Rho Lambda, which also launched at ASU, is a lesbian sorority that now has chapters at Georgia Southern University and San Diego State University.

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But the two groups are not the first gay Greek organizations to go nationwide. While differing from Sigma Phi Beta by offering community chapters to nonstudents, Delta Lambda Phi is a longstanding gay fraternity with chapters in 17 states. "We started the ball rolling and have learned a lot over the past 19 years," says Dusty Garner, 29, vice president of outreach.

The Beta Boys and Gamma Rho Lambda are gaining unprecedented national attention. They will be subjects of a documentary set to air this fall on Viacom's newly launched all-gay Logo television network. "The members and pledges of SPB and GRL put a face to gay Greeks in a way that hasn't been done before," says Shane Windmeyer, coproducer of the movie and coeditor of the book *Out on Fraternity Row: Personal Accounts of Being Gay in a College Fraternity*.

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