

## 100 YEARS OF AEPHI-LANTHROPY

*Philanthropy derives from Ancient Greek meaning, "to love people." Philanthropy is the act of donating money, goods, services, time and/or effort to support a socially beneficial cause, with a defined objective and with no financial or material reward to the donor. In a more general sense, philanthropy may encompass any altruistic activity intended to promote good or improve human quality of life.*

From the earliest of times, Alpha Epsilon Phi has been interested in philanthropic projects. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, they revolved around raising money for people affected by war, those needing scholarships and help in learning endeavors, and other philanthropies where we could provide monetary support through collegiate fundraising efforts. Eventually, AEPi introduced philanthropies that allowed for hands on community service, allowing members the ability to not only raise funds, but to volunteer and give of themselves. But no matter what the project or organization, AEPi was and continues to be committed to helping the cause and teaching its members the benefits of supporting these organizations. As we reflect back on one hundred years of sorority, it's only fitting we recognize the commitment our sisters have had to philanthropy from the beginning.

From 1916 – 1918 Alpha Epsilon Phi focused their attention on providing aid to Jewish War Sufferers. They held events to raise money and awareness for the suffering and in 1919 they held a charity ball in New York City.

In 1921, at the installation of honorary member Mrs. Enoch Rauh, a dental clinic, established in honor of her husband and located in the Gusky Orphanage in Pittsburgh, was dedicated in the name of Alpha Epsilon Phi. Following this dedication, AEPi established dental clinics in New York City, New Orleans and Los Angeles.

In 1928, the sorority adopted the project of **Traveling Libraries for Arkansas**. This project later became part of the state and forged the way for a diversified scholarships program to be adopted, which included social service fellowships, academic loan funds and Hebrew Union scholarships. The Hebrew Union scholarships made it possible for many Jewish girls from rural areas to attend summer sessions of Hebrew Union College and then return to their respective communities to instruct children in religious education.

In 1936, the national project known as **Scholarships for Refugee Students** was adopted. Each undergraduate and alumnae chapter was expected to tax its members a minimum of one dollar per year. This money was placed in a separate fund in the National Office and was distributed to our various refugee guests for tuition, books, traveling expenses and spending money. Some of our chapters contributed room and board to these guests in place of the financial tax. A total of 11 one-year scholarships, three semester scholarships and one summer school scholarship were awarded. Chapters participating in this were Mu, Alpha Beta, Omega, Xi, Pi and Kappa. Each scholarship cost an average of \$300. Many Mother's Clubs gave affairs and raised large sums for this project as well.

In 1942, the United States was deeply involved in World War II, and all philanthropic support was concentrated on the war. Alpha Epsilon Phi fell into line with other national groups and adopted a project to raise money to donate a fully equipped ambulance or mobile canteen. A minimum dollar contribution per member was requested. The sorority managed to raise close to \$1500, the cost of an ambulance, and on April 13, 1942, at a ceremony held at the Hotel New Yorker, an ambulance with a silver plaque was presented to the U.S. Army. The plaque on the side stated it was a gift from the sorority, the first collegiate sorority to make an outright gift of this kind to the government. At the ceremony, AEPHI was presented with a citation for patriotism from the U.S. Treasury Department.

In 1969, Project Arrow caught the eye of Alpha Epsilon Phi and sisters dedicated their fundraising efforts to provide playgrounds for Native Americans, who at that time didn't have steady incomes or casinos for support.

In 1975, Alpha Epsilon Phi adopted the **Chaim Sheba Medical Center** in Tel Hashomer, Israel as the national philanthropy, asking all chapters to raise awareness and funds for the hospital. For over twenty-five years (until 2007), it was the sorority's national philanthropy, and as a whole, we raised enough money to outfit two entire rooms at the hospital, plus more.

Currently, **Sheba Medical Center** is the largest hospital in Israel, world renowned for its medical services, research, and patient care. Started in 1948 along with the fledgling State of Israel to treat the wounded of Israel's War of Independence, the Sheba Medical Center at Tel Hashomer has grown into Israel's national medical center—the largest and most comprehensive medical center in the Middle East.

Recognized for its compassionate care and leading-edge medicine, Sheba is also a major medical-scientific research powerhouse that collaborates internationally with the bio-tech and pharmaceutical industries to develop new drugs, treatments and technologies, and is a foremost global center for medical education. At every important juncture in Israel's turbulent history, the Sheba Medical Center has played a pivotal role. As the main hospital for the Israel Defense Forces, it provides Israel's soldiers with the best acute and rehabilitative care; it leads the rehabilitation of terror victims; is the most advanced center for treatment of genetic, congenital and malignant diseases; and has revolutionized medical care in Israel: pioneering Israel's first open-heart, artificial heart, and congenital heart defect surgeries, and more. Situated on a 150-acre campus on the outskirts of Tel Aviv, Sheba today comprises 120 departments and clinics and 1,700 beds, employing more than 1,300 physicians, 2,400 nurses and 3,300 other healthcare workers and scientists.

At the Summer Leadership Seminar in 2000, Alpha Epsilon Phi announced the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation as an additional national philanthropy. EGPAF was founded in 1988 by AEPi alum, [Elizabeth Meyer Glaser \(Sigma\)](#), and her friends Susan DeLaurentis and [Susie Bernstein Zeegen \(Xi\)](#), after discovering that she, along with her two children Ariel and Jake, were infected with the AIDS virus, as a result of a blood transfusion in 1981. At the seminar in 2000, EGPAF representative, Joel Goldman came to present the organization to AEPi and unbeknownst to everyone, brought with him, actor Scott Wolf, who at the time was on the hit TV show, Party of Five. Scott, a national spokesperson for EGPAF, addressed the women, thanked them for the decision and shared his own memories of his days as a student at George Washington University where he was Alpha Epsilon Pi chapter president and spent much time with the AEPis.

Elizabeth's husband, Paul Michael Glaser, is a member of Sigma Alpha Mu and his fraternity had adopted the organization as its national philanthropy earlier. Joel Goldman, then a staff member at SAM, approached AEPi Executive Director [Bonnie Rubenstein Wunsch](#) about the idea of the AEPi doing the same. Bonnie took the idea to National Council, who at that time was looking for a way for the collegians to become more involved in hands on community service and this was a great opportunity. Additionally, chapters were looking for "local" philanthropy opportunities and EGPAF provided this, as well as a tie-in to helping children, a natural fit with the collegians. In a somewhat daring move, considering so much was still unknown about AIDS and its scope, Council made the decision to add EGPAF as a second national philanthropy.

The goal of EGPAF is to educate people on the special issues concerning children with the AIDS virus. The foundation has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars towards AIDS research in the 15+ years since its inception at the Glaser's kitchen table. AEPHI has been proud to support such a worthy cause through the efforts of all its members. Throughout the past nine years, chapters have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars through a myriad of activities such as Greek God competitions, bowl-a-thons, dance-a-thons, silent auctions, fashion shows and more.

The Hebrew term B'sheret (soul mate) could be used in talking about AEPHI's ultimate affiliation with Sharsheret. By 2006-2007, AEPHIs were working full-force for EGPAF and were still helping with efforts for Sheba Medical Center. However, AEPHI was not successful in forging a more proactive relationship with Sheba's American fundraising arm and wanted to find another outlet for its philanthropic efforts.

While trying to work out a project with nationally acclaimed Judaic artist Gary Rosenthal, then National President **Connie Savitt Sandler** came across information on Sharsheret. She remembers calling Executive Director Bonnie Wunsch and saying, "Don't kill me but I think I found a great new philanthropy for us." Bonnie checked out the website and immediately called Connie to say, "Kill you, I think you're brilliant."

Sharsheret was the perfect replacement for Sheba – it dealt with breast cancer, an effort that many chapters were already supporting and a cause that directly affects so many of our members and it brought home our Jewish heritage. The best part was that Sharsheret was willing to work with our members regardless of religious background and could provide, much like EGPAF, an avenue for both fundraising and hands-on community service.

It didn't take much to get Council on board and ready for a very quick rollout of the new project. In preparation for an announcement at Convention 2007, Connie and Bonnie worked with two staffers at Sharsheret and in another case of B'sheret they were told **Ellen Schwartz Kleinhaus (Phi Mu)** would be their key liaison. Ellen constantly talks about how amazing it is to have her own sorority making such a difference in her professional life!

So, in 2007, Sharsheret (Hebrew for "chain") was adopted in an effort to raise breast cancer awareness among young adults on college campuses. Founded in 2001, by Rochelle Shoretz, a former law clerk to United States Supreme Court Justice **Ruth Bader Ginsburg (Kappa)**, who

recognized the need for a breast cancer organization that would provide culturally sensitive support for Jewish women after her own diagnosis at age 28. Sharsheret's programs include a one-on-one peer support network, education and outreach programs addressing the unique concerns of younger women facing breast cancer, and quality of life programs. Chapters and alumnae across the country partner with Sharsheret to educate students about breast care, appropriate breast cancer screening methods, and Sharsheret's national programs. AEPHi chapters nationwide coordinate and host breast cancer outreach events and fundraising initiatives in support of Sharsheret. They create teams for local walks, runs and marathons for breast cancer, organize health fairs and raise money in many other ways as well. In return, Sharsheret provides AEPHi chapters with culturally sensitive breast cancer information and resources to share with their members. Sharsheret speakers also present at AEPHi-sponsored breast cancer awareness events. Sharsheret, in less than two years has far exceeded AEPHi's expectations. Undergraduates and alumnae, alike, have gravitated to the cause and have raised funds, held educational programs, put together AEPHi/Sharsheret teams for Komen for the Cure Walks and much, much more.