

Boulder's Chi Psi fraternity looks to reopen, 5 years after pledge Gordie Bailey's death

By **Brittany Anas**, Camera Staff Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 12/10/2009 12:48:06 PM MST

Boulder's Chi Psi fraternity, which shut down in 2004 following the alcohol-poisoning death of a pledge, will return to the University of Colorado campus this winter to recruit new members, possibly re-opening the chapter.

Chi Psi executive director Sam Bessey will be in Denver today to talk about efforts to revive the fraternity.

Marc Stine, a Greek advocate who works with Boulder's Interfraternity Council, said the fraternity is committed to running the chapter "absolutely right this time."

"The heart of a fraternity, and the reason new men join it, is the quality values and behaviors of the men who are in it," Stine said. "These will be men who were in middle school when the old chapter closed. There is no organizational memory within the fraternity."

Gordie Bailey, a freshman Chi Psi pledge, died of alcohol poisoning in fall 2004 during a fraternity ritual in which pledges were blindfolded, taken to the mountains and told to drink whiskey and wine.

In 2008, Bailey's mother, Leslie Lanahan, settled a lawsuit with the national Chi Psi organization, saying the undisclosed amount of money would go toward the "Gordie Foundation." The foundation works to curb hazing, binge drinking and educate students about the dangers of alcohol.

Chi Psi, in the settlement, agreed to ban alcohol from being served at any pledge events.

Lanahan could not be reached for comment Thursday.

CU's Interfraternity Council — an umbrella group of Boulder fraternities — approved the request from Chi Psi to establish an interest group in the spring of 2010.

"Chi Psi is pleased with the cultural changes taking place in the Boulder Greek community," E. Todd Falls, chairman of Chi Psi Fraternity's Executive Council, said in a statement provided to the Camera. "The Colorado Interfraternity Council has demonstrated great leadership as they have transformed into a community which embraces social responsibility and adherence to the core values of fraternal life."

The "interest group" status gives Chi Psi time to further evaluate the Greek community and decide whether there's enough interest to reopen Chi Psi's Boulder chapter.

"It is ultimately our desire to re-colonize Chi Psi at the University of Colorado," Bessey said. "This evaluation period allows us to make decisions with diligence due to the best interests of Chi Psi Fraternity, our Colorado alumni and the Colorado Greek Community."

The Interfraternity Council lost its affiliation with CU in spring 2005 after refusing to sign on to a series of reforms put forward by administrators.

A major deal-breaker for the chapters was a demand that rush be delayed until the spring semester. Fraternities, as a result, lost several of the perks that come with being a recognized CU group, including discounted office and meeting space on campus and access to student lists for recruitment.

Still, fraternities have flourished and grown their membership.

CU-Boulder spokesman Bronson Hilliard said university leaders are aware of Chi Psi's plans.

"We're watching the situation and we're hopeful of a different philosophy this time around," he said. "We've got some early indications that that's the case."

Hilliard said the house will have live-in supervision, and the young men will be in close contact with fraternity alumni.

"We hope the lesson of what happened in the house to Gordie Bailey is never far from the hearts and the minds of the members of the fraternity," Hilliard said. "That's an important lesson. Our entire community can't afford to forget it."

Boulder's Chi Psi house is on University Hill, at 14th Street and College Avenue. In recent years, it has been used as apartments and housed members of a Christian sorority.

Close Window

Send To Printer