

The summer before I joined Phi Gamma Nu I traveled to **hill-tribe** communities in **Thailand** on a **humanitarian trip** to work on a variety of **sustainability** and **English education projects**. I was beyond nervous to fly across the world and fully engulf myself in a culture that I knew nothing about. On my first day of teaching first graders English, I quickly connected with a young girl named **Anong**. As she caught on to the words I was teaching her, I could see the thankfulness in her eyes. At the end of the day, she put her *(do gesture)* thumb and her pointer finger together forming a heart while she waved goodbye with her other hand. I asked my guide what this meant. He said that because of the language barrier this is how they say “**Thank you and I appreciate you.**”

This was the moment I knew that I wanted to carry on my newfound passion for philanthropy into college and beyond. So to start, I would like to say **thank you** and **I appreciate you all for coming** with the same gesture that changed my life. **do gesture**

My name is Anna Riedl and I joined Phi Gamma Nu in the Fall of 2019. I served as the philanthropy chair in the Spring of 2021 because of the same drive which pushed me to join - **to encompass the philanthropic culture of Phi Gamma Nu.**

The memory I shared with you just now was an emotional moment for me; it was the moment I realized that putting someone else’s needs before my own provided me with feelings of **wholeness** and **love** - emotions that I have continued to chase. This is what philanthropy means to me and - ***what I quickly realized*** - is what philanthropy means to Phi Gamma Nu, an organization filled with **like-minded, altruistic** individuals that feel the same strong connection to giving back as I do.

Partnerships with local organizations have not only worked because of our **commitment** to their **missions**, but have **thrived** because of the **personal bonds** we have formed with each person. I remember experiencing this first hand when I volunteered at my first event at **Urbana Prairie Winds**, a local assisted living facility. One resident took a particular liking to me as we chatted about life. Eventually she pulled out a picture of a young girl who was about my age. She said that she is beyond thankful to have met me

because I reminded her of her **granddaughter** who she **does not** get to see as easily anymore.

Before I left she thanked me for coming even though she knew I probably had many other things to do. **This stuck with me** - you never know how much a small interaction can shape someone's entire day. We spend so much time with our **face in our phones** scrolling through social media or our **nose in a book** studying for an exam. Phi Gamma Nu's **philanthropy events** allow you to take the time to acknowledge what's truly important - **connecting with others**.

Just this past year we were able to host our annual **Compete-For-A-Cure Event** where we raised just under \$5000 in support of **Make-A-Wish Illinois**. This event consisted of a 5K run and ended in a live concert featuring five talented members. A few of our members, **including last year's Compete-For-A-Cure chair**, were sponsored by Make-A-Wish as children, which is why this charity is so close to our hearts. Our idea of **success** and **quality of life** is not measured by what we can accomplish for ourselves, but what we can accomplish for others and that is exactly what Compete-For-A-Cure represents.

What also excited me about Phi Gamma Nu's philanthropy efforts is that we not only serve the Champaign-Urbana community, but we take our efforts global and sponsor Oswald, a young boy who grew up in Zambia, Africa and is dear to our hearts. We have helped him overcome lack of access to **health care, schooling, mentorship, and a proper nutritional diet**. In many ways our impact is not just about ***giving someone help***, it is about ***giving someone their entire future***.

We extend our love for empowering our youth on campus as well through the **DREAAM program**, an after-school initiative that focuses on developing the **behavior** and **achievements** of young boys in the C-U area. I remember sitting down at DREAAM with **Nina Mitchell**, a fellow member, and watching her form a connection with the boys she was working with through her **compassion** and **patience**. As she returned week after week to continue helping them with homework and interpersonal skills, she was **accepted** and

looked up to in the program. I can proudly say that because of Nina, those young boys are one step closer to a brighter future. This is an excellent example of the selflessness this organization embraces.

We strive to support a community that has given us a *home away from home* while we pursue our college education. *(slow down here)* Whether our partners are *older or younger, close or far*, Phi Gamma Nu will find a way to **open our hearts** and **touch their lives**. These are just a few of the many events that we participate in. Whether I'm **traveling across the country** or **down the street**, Phi Gamma Nu has allowed me to think of giving *not only as a duty* but as a **privilege**.

This year we introduced a new philanthropy event at the Champaign County Forest Preserve Botanical Gardens. I recall speaking with **Mike**, the groundskeeper of the preserve, about the importance of *leaving more handprints than footprints*. In essence, this means to *give more than you take*. Bettering your **surroundings** means bettering **yourself**.

I invite you all to consider standing with Phi Gamma Nu as we continue to leave more **handprints** than **footprints** on this **world** and the **lives** of our philanthropic partners. Once again, I **appreciate you and thank you all for coming**. **hold up heart with my hand**