

# features

## Coronavirus takes community away from FSL

MADISON GRAVER  
Reporter

The year 2020 turned the world upside down. With coronavirus being the largest driving factor, everyone was forced to change the ways in which they went about doing things in their everyday life — from going to the grocery store to having zoom classes, rather than in-person classes.

When fall semester rolled around and Ashland University students began returning to campus, it was common knowledge that this school year would not look like previous years.

Health guidelines were put into place before students returned, meaning that masks, social distancing and heavy sanitization were going to become everyone’s best friend.

Unsurprisingly, almost all “normal” activities had to be altered in some way to accommodate the new precautions.

One facet of AU’s campus that has felt the weight of the restrictions is the Fraternity and Sorority Life community.



Members of Theta Phi Alpha during Bid Day 2020.

last year of college and kind of seeing the transition from normal to not normal is really sad.”

With everything being virtual, FSL members are finding

“Now that we’re not able to do in-person events, that’s where a lot of that big money comes in and with the economy how it is now, people don’t have as much money to give to these

Sync was going to take place virtually in the fall but with the increased guidelines that were put in place, it was not able to happen.

Currently, there is discussion about possibly having it take place virtually this semester instead, but there are no confirmed details at this time.

As for Greek Week, Hargis does hope they will be able to continue with it later this semester.

According to Chylinski, those two events are the ones she is missing the most.

“It’s all about the Greek community coming together,” she said. “It really promotes a sense of community within the Greek chapters. It gets all of us together and it’s a lot of fun, so I definitely miss that.”

Despite all of the changes that have been made this year, each chapter is doing what they can to maintain some sense of normalcy.

Hargis has seen first hand what the members have been able to do despite the unfortunate circumstances.

“One of the biggest things is just being willing to try new things,” he said. “That’s one of the things that COVID-19 has presented for anyone in general. It forces you to look at everything you’re doing and say ‘okay, how can we do this differently,’ and sometimes doing it differently can result in doing it better. It takes some creativity, but it’s still possible to have a somewhat normal experience.”

Giffin has a similar perspective in that scheduling meetings with their members, even though they may be virtual,

will still keep everyone engaged and focused on all of the same things that they would have had it been a normal year.

“The leaders in the chapters are just pushing to be as normal as we can whether that’s scheduling meetings even if they’re virtual or trying to do some sort of event that’s with other chapters,” he said. “Obviously there’s a lot of things we can’t do, but trying to keep things normal, trying to be optimistic about the whole thing and continuously reminding every member in the chapters of that, I think, will help.”

If the pandemic has taught anything, it is to be open to change, adjustment and experimenting with new ways to have fun despite the uncertain times.

“Be creative with the events that you put on, your socials, your sisterhoods, and just be optimistic,” Chylinski said. “As a leader in my sorority, people look up to me and if I am down about COVID-19 and the things that we can’t do, then people will have the same attitude. Try to be uplifting and positive and just optimistic about the future.”

Chylinski, Giffin and Hargis are all optimistic about the future of FSL events, but the reality is that no one really knows what things could look like in the coming months or even by next school year.

“I’m definitely optimistic,” Hargis said. “But if this past year has taught us anything, it’s to be cautiously optimistic because we don’t truly know where anything’s going.”



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY: MATT GIFFIN

Members of Kappa Sigma mask up for a group photo.

In previous years, it seemed there were always FSL members tabling in the student center or holding events around campus.

Now with COVID-19, those things are not possible to do anymore and almost everything that AU’s sorority and fraternity chapters do is now virtual.

Everything from chapter meetings to philanthropy to simply spending time together has all been transferred to zoom for the entirety of this school year.

For a group that thrives on community and togetherness, the COVID-19 guidelines have made it much harder for fraternity and sorority members to carry out some of their most cherished times together.

“It’s definitely very disappointing,” said Theta Phi Alpha President Jillian Chylinski. “Being a senior and this being my last year, I remember going into my freshman year and all of the fun things that we did, all the dances, the social events, the sisterhoods. I remember how it was when it was normal, so going into my

it difficult to connect on the same levels that they did when things were held in person.

Dustin Hargis, director of Fraternity and Sorority Life, is well aware that members are struggling.

“The motivation to do brotherhood or sisterhood events virtually just isn’t there as much as trying to do something in person,” he said.

On top of a virtual event not being as fun for members, it has also made it more difficult to spread the word about events and raise awareness about each chapter’s respective philanthropy.

“It kind of just hurts and is harder to raise money and get the word out when you’re not actually hosting the event on campus,” said FSL intern Matt Giffin.

While raising awareness is a big part of their philanthropy, receiving donations is also a substantial way in which each chapter helps support their organizations.

“Our community has done really well in the past and we’ve raised a lot of money as a community,” Hargis said.

organizations.”

Lip Sync and Greek Week are two annual events that FSL typically holds in the fall and spring, but plans for those events are still up in the air.

Originally, this year’s Lip



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY: JILLIAN CHYLINSKI

FSL members following a previous year’s lip sync event.