



NP 23: A Look at Theta Phi Alpha's 23rd National President

by Leslie Ervin Trahant, Alpha Beta, and Stephanie Galendez, Alpha Beta

For the past six years, Theta Phi Alpha has blossomed under the leadership of Dr. Mari Ann Callais, AB, immediate past National President. Mari Ann received the gavel at the 2002 National Convention and has guided our Fraternity through many positive changes.

From Buras, La., Mari Ann is the first in her family to attend college. Her quest for knowledge and broadening of her experiences has led her from being an Alpha Beta collegiate member who never held a chapter office to one of the nation's most prolific leaders in Greek Life.

Since graduating from Loyola University in New Orleans, La., Mari Ann has dedicated her professional and personal life to advancing the experiences of college students, particularly sorority women. Her doctoral dissertation focused on the impact that sorority rituals have on the lives of contemporary college women. She has impacted various arenas of higher education, having served as a college admissions professional, a Greek advisor, and an assistant professor. Currently, Mari Ann serves as Senior Vice President for Marketing and Leasing for the Cottages Division for Capstone Development Corporation. She is also a CAMPU-SPEAK national speaker, visiting college campuses throughout the country each year. She has volunteered at every level of involvement in Theta Phi Alpha.

Mari Ann's impact on Theta Phi Alpha is immense. Under her leadership, the Fraternity's strategic plan was developed, collegiate membership expanded significantly, and several new chapters and alumnae associations were chartered. Mari Ann has also impacted a variety of new initiatives, including a rewrite of the *My Sister, My Friend* pledge sister education program, development of the *Reflections* member education program, revamping of the Fraternity's website, and introduction of our new online community, Theta Phi Alpha inCircle, co-sponsored by the Fraternity and the Theta Phi Alpha Foundation. Other new educational programs include the *Presidents' Academy* and the *Institute* for chapter presidents and vice presidents, respectively.

Perhaps Mari Ann will be best remembered for the lasting impression she leaves on each person whose life she touches. Dionne Myers Tuplin, AE, National Pledge Sister

Educator, states, "Mari Ann has always welcomed my ideas and questions no matter how weird they were. She has taught me the true meaning of sisterhood. It's not just the letters you wear – it's your attitude, how you treat others and live the Creed. After hearing one of her presentations, I finally 'got it.'"

Collegiate sister Madeleine Moody, X, shares, "Mari Ann has given me deeper insight into what's important in life and is a role model to strive to be like as I learn and grow as a woman."

Mari Ann's positive influence extends outside $\Theta\Phi\Lambda$ as well. Emily Tarr, Grand President of Pi Beta Phi, says, "Mari Ann's impact will not be known for many years. When I think of the thousands of collegians who have attended her programs, her reach is broad. The fraternal world is already a better place due to her efforts." Kathy Williams, Past National President of Phi Mu Fraternity, adds, "Without a doubt, Mari Ann has influenced the lives of numerous collegians and alumnae. I thank her for her service, dedication, and love of the Greek community. I am proud to call her my friend."

Theta Phi Alpha has recognized Mari Ann with a number of awards, including Outstanding Chapter Governor in 1994 and the first individual recipient of the $\Theta\Phi\Lambda$ National Achievement Award in 1996. A new national award was named in her honor in 2006: the Dr. Mari Ann Callais Outstanding Greek Professional Award, which recognizes a fraternity/sorority advisor who has made a difference on her/his campus and has promoted a positive Greek experience. At the 2008 National Convention, Theta Phi Alpha awarded Mari Ann the highest honor bestowed on a sister, the Guard of Honor.

In addition to her many accolades, the Theta Phi Alpha Foundation recognized Mari Ann's service with the establishment of the Dr. Mari Ann Callais Leadership Endowment (see sidebar on page 35).

We thank Mari Ann for her visionary leadership and past devotion to Theta Phi Alpha and we look forward to her continued dedication and support.