

Parade

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Gras Extravaganza each year.

"It's festive, it's a way to get the community involved," said the father of three adult children. "The party is for ages 21 and over, but this way, everybody in the city can take part in the celebration."

Bethea was hopeful the parade would draw attention to the work the Omegas do in the community—which includes an ongoing tutoring program at Easton Elementary and the first-ever Black History Quiz Bowl, staged at Atkins High School late last year—and the Extravaganza, which is slated for Feb. 19. It was the organization's commitment to community service that first attracted Bethea.

"I pledged Omega because of some of the great stuff they were doing around campus," related Bethea, a WSSU alumnus. "They were pretty much the leaders at that time."

Juan Eckard, the band director at Carver for the last seven years, was the parade's visionary. Eckard, a Charlotte native, pledged



Omegas (from left): Billy Friende, Basileus Charlie Bethea, Galvin Crisp and Kenneth Francis pose with Ms. Manhood Beverly Robinson.

Omega Psi Phi in the fall of 1988 while a business and music education major at WSSU. The former drum major said he felt a Mardi Gras celebration could only be enhanced by a parade.

"The idea was to bring fun and New Orleans flavor to Winston-Salem," said the father of two.

His Marching Yellow Jackets jumped at the chance to be a part of the showcase, Eckard said.

"This group of students, they just love to perform," he related. "They just have fun regardless."

Marcus and Patrice Stacey brought their three year-old son Marcus II out to take part in the festivities.

"I saw it on the news this morning so I thought it would be a nice family outing," related Patrice, who is studying to gain acceptance into the January 2012 Doctorate in Physical Therapy class at Winston-Salem State University. "It's something quick and short to do on the weekdays."

Foothills Bartender Ché McPherson was also among the dozens who populated the sidewalks as the Red Sea of Sound thundered past. He cheered the young people on, dancing along to the



Marcus and Patrice Stacey with their son, Marcus II.

rhythmic drumbeat.

"I heard the band, I heard the drums, and I just had to come check it out," he said, a wide smile breaking across his face. "I'm all about some college bands."

The chapter's annual Mardi Gras Extravaganza serves as a fundraiser for its scholarship fund and helps to offset the

cost of sending young boys to camp, which is also a tradition for the brothers.

Four local women, Latandra Vance, Heather Davis, Beverly Boykin Robinson and Latrina Leak, are hoping to capture the

Omega Psi Phi Mardi Gras crown by raising money for the scholarship fund under the organization's cardinal principles of Perseverance, Uplift, Manhood and Scholarship. The Fraternity brothers, who are divided into four groups, also help raise funds for their respective division. The woman whose division raises the most money will be crowned

Mardi Gras Queen Saturday evening.

Beverly Robinson, a client services consultant with Wachovia-Wells Fargo, staged a holiday concert with her husband, Ted, and their two adult children to help raise money for her division. Representing the Fraternity as Ms. Manhood 2011 has been a rewarding experience, Robinson said.

"I didn't realize how they have woven themselves so tightly into the community and I am so impressed with that," she said of the Omega brothers. "They have me hooked. From here on, I will continue to support them."

The Omega Psi Phi Mardi Gras Extravaganza will be held Saturday, Feb. 19 from 9 p.m.-2 a.m. at the LJV Education Building. Tickets are \$35 each. For more information, contact Eckard at 988-9217.



McPherson



Eckard

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