

Leader in service

SIUE senior glad to volunteer

By **CAILIN PETERSON**

For The Telegraph

For Andrea Thies, volunteering is simply a way of life.

Since joining Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's Alpha Phi Omega in 2007, Thies has immersed herself in community service.

"I don't know what I'll do with myself when I'm no longer able to be an active member," Thies said.

A native of Alton, Thies has held five leadership positions within the chapter. As current vice president of service, she coordinates two volunteer projects each weekend for the 50 members of Alpha Phi Omega.

The service fraternity, with 750 chapters nationwide, challenges members to improve lives and positively affect the community.

Volunteer projects include helping organizations with painting, landscaping or other projects.

"We love what we do and we love to help," Thies said.

Thies became involved with the service fraternity when a high school friend introduced her to Alpha Phi Omega. She immediately fell in love with the organization.

"I've done a wide variety of enjoyable service projects, made countless friends and the organization has really helped my leadership skills," Thies said.

In 2009, Thies' employer, Panera Bread Company in Alton, organized a volunteer project through United Way's



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Andrea Thies, a senior at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and member of the Alpha Phi Omega fraternity, raised money for supplies at the Alton Day Care center by selling hand cut-outs for one dollar at the college campus. Thies volunteers at the day care center.

Impact Your Neighborhood program. Through this project, Thies discovered Alton Day Care and Learning Center.

"We had a lot of fun," Thies said. "The people we worked with were very nice."

Thies, impressed by the organization, contacted the executive director, Keith Neuber, to continue giving back.

For their fall service day, Thies arranged for the fraternity to finish painting a hall-

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way at Alton Day Care and Learning Center. On April 17, Alpha Phi Omega members will return to the center to continue the improvements.

"We try to do as much as we can and have fun while doing it," Thies said.

The organization, which Thies said completes about 3,000 hours of community service each year, is looking for organizations making a difference in the community.

Alton Day Care and Learning Center, a United Way-funded agency, has been the site for several other volunteer work days in previous years.