Greeks join to give children holiday lift

By Jodi Oman
Lantern staff writer

An OSU fraternity and sorority are combining their efforts to make this Christmas a special one for the residents of the Hannah Neil Center for Children.

About 48 children from center will be guests at a Dec. 4 Christmas party at the Kappa Sigma fraternity.

"This is the first time we've ever done anything like this but we hope to make it a tradition," said Christine Stack, philanthropy chairwoman of Alpha Kappa Theta.

"Many of the children come from low-income families and they're not able to have much of a Christmas at all," said Douglas Kline, director of community relations at the center.

Although the children do not know all of the details about the party, they are still very excited, Kline said.

The center, 301 Obetz Road, houses children between six and 13 years old with emotional and behavioral problems, he said. The children usually stay at the center for about a year.

Kline said about half of the children return to their families after they and their families have received special counseling at the center. The others are moved to relatives or foster homes.

"They probably don't know this, but the old Kappa Sigma house used to be the home of Hannah Neil's son," Kline said. "It's coincidental that they're doing something for the Neil family and living in their mansion, too."

Mark McCrery, a member of Kappa Sigma, said he knew about the previous owner of the house and he is excited about having the party at the fraternity.

"Everyone in the house is really looking forward to helping the center. In a way, Kappa Sigs are in debt to the Neils for the great house that we now have," McCrery said. "I'm glad we're doing something to help some people who need a little lift around Christmas."

The two houses will also be holding a happy hour at Char Bar tonight from 8 to 9 p.m. with all proceeds going to the center.

Esther Craw, an accordionist from Deibel's in German Village, will be playing at Char Bar. Stack said. The cover charge will be $1 at the door.