

# ALUMNNAE INITIATES



*Sisterhood for a  
Lifetime*

## Several **alumnae** initiates, each **with a different story**, share how they came to join Phi Mu.

**W**hile many Phi Mus join their chapter while they are in college, others join as alumnae initiates. Alumnae initiates are outstanding women in their community who may not have attended a school that had sororities, or who were not interested in the collegiate sorority experience but now want the benefits of lifetime sisterhood. Sometimes, alumnae initiates pledged Phi Mu in college but were not initiated at that time.

Alumnae initiates demonstrate to all Phi Mus that the bond of sisterhood, no matter when it begins, is strong and long-lasting. They often become involved, dedicated volunteers who serve as mentors to collegiate members.

Congratulations to all of the Fraternity's alumnae initiates, and thank you to their Phi Mu sponsors.

### **Lady Dell Mechatto Martin, AO**

**University of Southern Mississippi**

I pledged the Alpha Omicron Chapter of Phi Mu 58 years before I was initiated! I enjoyed my time in Phi Mu, but I had to leave school as a freshman to care for an ill family member.

While in college, I was a founding member of the Dixie Darlings, the USM dance team for football games. At every Homecoming, Dixie Darlings hold a reunion and then dance during the halftime show. At Homecoming 2009, I met Carr Murphy Brown, an Alpha Omicron alumna. She asked if she could take a picture of me in my uniform.

We started talking and I told her I had pledged Phi Mu in 1954. In fact, I was mentioned in the Winter 1955 issue of the *Aglaiia*, in "Mississippi Southern College" news. It listed my name and the five other Phi Mus who were also Dixie Darlings.

Carr and I connected instantly about our shared love for Phi Mu and we became friends. In 2012, Carr asked me if she could be my alumnae initiation sponsor. To think that a chance encounter at a football game would ultimately lead to this!



That fall, I participated in Phi Mu Lady Week (Alpha Omicron's Inspiration Week) and I was initiated on October 18. It was nearly six decades after I first pledged. Walking into the room for the ceremony, I was overwhelmed. It was such a special time. After the ceremony, my Phi Mu sisters gave me a ladybug necklace and a Raggedy Ann doll, symbols of the chapter in 1954.

Carr is now my big sister. My fellow Dixie Darling Clarice Surratt, AO, was also present at Initiation.

My Initiation in October, and Phi Mu's signature color of pink, are even more special to me because I am a 23-year breast cancer survivor.

Being initiated was a dream come true. I finally get to experience sisterhood after 58 years. I wanted to be a Phi Mu for so long, and now I can proudly wear my letters. I look forward to living my Creed, practicing day by day love, honor and truth.



live in the neighborhood where my family was considering moving. I was impressed with Carey, her house and the neighborhood – we ended up buying the house just two doors down from her! It is fun to have a sorority sister nearby. Carey’s daughter Laurel has babysat for me and she pledged Phi Mu last fall at Oklahoma State.

I would definitely recommend this experience to others. At alumnae events, everyone comes from different chapters and backgrounds. I always meet interesting women with different stories to tell. No matter where we were initiated, or when, we share the bond of Phi Mu.

**Rosalind Alderman, ΔK**  
Bowling Green State University

As an undergraduate student, I thought I was going to transfer from West Texas State University, so I waited until my sophomore year to go through recruitment. I received a bid from another sorority, but because of university rules about student workers in sororities, I did not pledge.

Maureen Crawford Hentz, ΓΔ, was one of my best friends in graduate school at Bowling Green State University. We both had assistantships in

**Karin Johnson, ΔN**  
Michigan State University

My sister, National President Kris Bridges, ΔN, and mom were very involved with sorority life. When I went to college at Michigan State, I was a bit of a rebel and did not want to join one. Luckily, I met six girlfriends in my freshman residence hall and we became lifelong friends.

My impression was that sorority life was all about appearance. However, I now see how wrong I was. I see how beneficial Phi Mu has been for Kris and the opportunities she has had thanks to her membership and volunteer work. It is also rewarding to know that she inspires other Phi Mus.

When Kris asked me to become an alumna initiate, I was honored. I was initiated at the 2010 National Convention on the same day that she was installed as National President.

The first sorority event I attended after being initiated was a Denver Alumnae Chapter meeting hosted by Carey Conley, EN. She happened to



fraternity/sorority life. She recruited Lindsey Mahoney Goodhue and me to join the Delta Kappa Chapter at Bowling Green as alumnae initiates.

The main reason I joined, other than loving my dear friend Maureen, was because I understood that membership lasts a lifetime, and that although I was joining in a non-traditional way, I would still have the same privileges and responsibilities of membership. Lifelong commitment is so important to me.

The benefits have been enormous. I met Pam Wadsworth, HI, at St. Mary's University, where I still work, when I interviewed on campus two months after my Phi Mu Initiation. She worked at St. Mary's at that time and was very welcoming to me. It was amazing to have a Past National President as a colleague and mentor.

When I moved to San Antonio nearly 20 years ago, the first person to call me was Toni Olsen,  $\Xi K$ , who was then the alumnae chapter president, to invite me to a chapter lunch-bunch gathering. I immediately came to understand the honor of sharing in a women's only cross-generational group.

I was honored to facilitate Phi Mu IMPACT at the 2012 National Convention. I was so inspired by the power of the amazing Phi Mu women there. I am currently a member of Forever Faithful, and a member and panhellenic delegate of the San Antonio Alumnae Chapter. Phi Mu is where I was meant to be.

### **Jan Brakefield, AZ** University of Alabama

I attended junior college as a freshman and transferred to the University of Alabama as a sophomore. I didn't realize that I could have gone through recruitment my second year. Several of my friends were involved in sororities and fraternities, and I saw that it was a positive part of their college experience.

I always regretted not having been a collegiate sorority member. Mary Young, AZ, recruited me to join as an alumna initiate. I am so grateful that she provided me with this opportunity to experience sorority membership and sisterhood.

Before Initiation, I was horrified that I might not be able to say the Creed perfectly. I practiced for weeks. The night of the big event, to my delight, all of the college-age initiates were equally nervous about remembering it correctly. We huddled together and practiced it over and over before

the ceremony began. That act of sharing and supporting is the essence of sisterhood. I truly felt a part of Phi Mu for the very first time immediately prior to Initiation.

I am now the Alpha Zeta Chapter faculty adviser, Alpha Zeta Chapter Association secretary and a Phi Mu Foundation donor.



Unaffiliated women should consider membership in Phi Mu and volunteering with a chapter. Determine how much time you can devote to a chapter and accept leadership roles that allow you to use your greatest strengths. Membership benefits are camaraderie, opportunities for leadership and mentoring and friendships with women you may not have met otherwise.

### **Sharon Gaddo, AD** University of Mississippi

I didn't attend college. During my senior year of high school, my parents both suffered heart attacks so I deferred college to take care of them.

My daughter Andrea Gaddo Dixon joined the Alpha Delta Chapter of Phi Mu at the University of Mississippi in 1989. She served in several officer positions, and I became involved as a volunteer. In December of 1991, the entire chapter surprised me and invited me to join. I was initiated at the 1992 Convention in Naples, Fla. Andrea and other Alpha Delta attendees there were my guards in the ceremony. It was very special; you can only imagine how many tissues I went through.



# sisterhood for

One of my favorite Phi Mu memories was when my husband Don and I attended the 2010 Convention in Phoenix. We have both worked with the Alpha Nu Chapter, at the University of Florida, for several years. We sat with the Alpha Nus at the Carnation Banquet.

As part of the awards program that night, Diane Eggert, ZI, who was then the Phi Mu Fraternity vice president finance, announced that we had been awarded a Love, Honor Truth Award for our dedication to Phi Mu. The Alpha Nu sisters began to cry; Don and I did the same. The women of Alpha Nu congratulated us, then the women of

yourself to volunteering for a chapter. Service to your sisters is your gift to them.

**Michelle Blair, EN**  
Oklahoma State University

I went through recruitment at Oklahoma State University in the fall of 1980. Although I did not initiate, I remained close friends with several Phi Mus – six of them were bridesmaids in my wedding in 1985!

Through the years, we talked about our bond of friendship that began thanks to Phi Mu, and they



Alpha Delta also came over to celebrate this honor with us. It was an amazing feeling to be so honored with that wonderful award, in the presence of all my Phi Mu sisters.

As an alumna initiate, there is no greater benefit than watching unrelated sisters bond as a Phi Mu family. For anyone considering membership, I recommend that they learn as much as they can about Phi Mu's ideals. Once learned, embrace them, teach them and share them. Then commit

wanted me to fulfill my dream of going through Initiation. In the spring of 2009, two of my pledge sisters, Robin Mays Benoit and Shannon Chaney Custard, called me to tell me that they had applied as sponsors on my behalf, and I would be initiated that fall! Shannon is my big sister, which is very appropriate because she has been my best friend since we pledged Phi Mu.

My daughter Mary Katherine grew up hearing stories about Phi Mu. She went through

# or a lifetime

recruitment at Oklahoma State and pledged Phi Mu in the fall of 2009. We were able to be Phis together and were both initiated that October. Although it took me 29 years to be initiated into the bond of Phi Mu, I wouldn't have it any other way. Sharing it with my daughter, who is now also my sorority sister, is priceless!

I see so many benefits to membership in Phi Mu as an alumna. I now have the opportunity to help the next generation of members. I can mentor and provide support, whether that be emotional, financial, physical or spiritual.

I am currently involved as president of the Oklahoma State University Parent Club and I sit on the Epsilon Nu House Corporation Board. I am also a member of the Oklahoma City Alumnae Chapter.

Phi Mu provided the family that I chose. Through Phi Mu I found lifelong friends. The Creed of Phi Mu is what I aspire to each day. My favorite part reads, "To lend to those less fortunate a helping hand."

### **Zereana Jess-Huff, K** University of Tennessee

I went to Wesleyan College, which is, of course, where Phi Mu was founded! We had secret societies, but I did not know much about sororities, how active they were in their communities or that the bonds of sisterhood are so strong.

My longtime friend Beth Denney Ward, ΔH, invited me to join Phi Mu at the 2012 National Convention. Her younger sister Johanna Denney, ΔH, was also initiated at that time. Beth is now a big sister to us both!

As an alumna initiate, you gain an instant connection to sisters who support you personally, professionally and share in the joy of serving your community. You also have the amazing opportunity to share some of your wisdom with the next

generation of Phi Mus. I firmly believe that everyone needs sisterhood!

Last year, I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. It was a rough experience, but one that was made more bearable because of my Phi Mu sisters. Before a big Phi Mu event, I found myself fretting over what to wear or how to style the hair I didn't have. Johanna came over, with ice cream, and we made a party of planning my new look. I walked out of the house feeling and looking like a million bucks!

I found that joining Phi Mu as an alumna can be just as powerful as joining in college. The experience



provides you with an instant network of support. As an alumna, I have a deeper appreciation for the bonds of sisterhood and the necessity for this support as we all navigate the waters of what it means to be a woman in today's world.

## Do you want to recommend someone as an alumna initiate?

If you know of a woman who would be a great addition to our Fraternity as an alumna initiate, please contact [alumnae@phimu.org](mailto:alumnae@phimu.org) to learn how to sponsor her. Alumnae initiates are responsible for paying Initiation Fees and purchasing a Phi Mu badge.

# PHI MU and the National Panhellenic

Phi Mu Fraternity is one of the 26 member groups of the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC). At the 2012 NPC Annual Meeting of NPC delegates, inter/national presidents and executive directors, attendees reviewed accomplishments of the past year and planned for the future as **“the voice for sorority advancement.”**

The phrase “the voice for sorority advancement” and new NPC branding images were debuted at the Annual Meeting by NPC Chairman Jane Sutton, Alpha Xi Delta. That tagline echoes the NPC Mission Statement.

One recent change within NPC is to have delegates work more hand in hand with their college panhellenics. In addition to supporting collegiate and alumnae Phi Mu chapters designated by Phi Mu area, the Fraternity’s delegation serves on the College Panhellenics Committee as area advisors to colleges and universities in parts of the following states:



*Phi Mu representatives at the 2012 NPC Annual Meeting (L to R): Shani Burley-Moore, KA; Kris Bridges, ΔN; Beth Denney Ward, ΔH; Donna Stallard, AX; and Frances Mitchelson, AP.*

- Donna Stallard, AX, Vice President Panhellenic, Texas
- Frances Mitchelson, AP, First Alternate Delegate; Area II, Kansas and Missouri
- Shani Burley-Moore, KA, Second Alternate Delegate; Area III, Missouri
- Beth Denney Ward, ΔH, Third Alternate Delegate; Area I, New York and West Virginia

NPC delegates function as a board of directors. At Annual Meetings, they vote on the governing procedures for NPC, just as Phi Mu delegates do at our conventions. Each NPC group has one vote. Recent important decisions include a new Unanimous Agreement VII: College Panhellenic Association Judicial Procedure. This streamlines the judicial process and provides college panhellenics with easier steps for dealing with infractions.