



PEDALING THEIR PATH

Cherokee cyclist Jenny Kliet (Arkansas-Fort Smith) retraced the 950-mile journey of her ancestors on the Trail of Tears, connecting with her community and the roots of her own identity.

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Winter 2026

GAMMA PHI BETA

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Corrections and Clarifications: In the fall 2025 issue, Patti Colnon Peressini (Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) was mistakenly included in the "In Our Hearts" section. We regret the error. Patti is alive and well.

get in touch

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@gammaphibetasorority



Gamma Phi Beta



GammaPhiBeta.org

ON THE COVER Jenny Kliest (Arkansas-Fort Smith)

DEAR *Sisters*

As the year comes to an end, it's the perfect time to reflect on all that we've accomplished, both personally and as a sisterhood. What goals did you achieve in 2025? What challenges did you overcome, and how did they help you grow? Which moments make you smile when you look back on the year? For me, one highlight was the opportunity to attend the Gamma Phi Get-Together with Tucson Alumnae Chapter. I recently moved to Tucson, Arizona, and attending this event helped me immediately connect with sisters and build a local network. Connecting with sisters is my favorite thing about my alumnae membership. It truly isn't four years — it's for life if you take full advantage of your membership after college.

This issue is brimming with stories of achievement. Three members featured in "Confident Women" (Page 6) are making waves across diverse industries, while Ali Kaminetsky (Lehigh) shares more about her stylish and functional lunchbox brand in the standalone feature, "Chic To-Go" (Page 14). Our "Collegiate Chapter Sweet Chapter" section shines a light on Rho (Iowa) sisters who earned three prestigious campus awards. Learn all about them on Page 29.

Our cover story highlights the extraordinary Jenny Kliest (Arkansas-Fort Smith), a recent alumna and proud member of the Cherokee Nation. Every year, the Cherokee Nation hosts Remember the Removal, a moving journey where young participants retrace by bike the very route their ancestors were forced to walk on the Trail of Tears. After navigating a competitive application process and multiple interviews, Jenny secured her place on the 2025 team. She shares the challenges, triumphs and profound lessons from this life-changing experience, starting on Page 20.

I've said it before, and I'll happily say it again: our sisterhood never ceases to amaze me. We are strong alone, but even stronger together. I can't wait to learn about all the achievements our members, chapters and organization will reach in 2026.

Enjoy this special season of reflection, sisters, and happy holidays!

Warmly in IIKE,

Stephanie Carrière

Stephanie Gauchat Carriere (Arizona)
International President



WHO IS STEPHANIE?

Stephanie Gauchat Carriere is serving her first term as International President of Gamma Phi Beta. She also serves on the Bylaws Committee, National Panhellenic Advisory Committee, Governance and Personnel Committee and Audit and Finance Committee, and as a Foundation Trustee.

An initiate of Alpha Epsilon Chapter at the University of Arizona, Stephanie holds bachelor's and master's degrees in special education and rehabilitation, with an emphasis on emotional and behavioral disorders, and an administrative certification from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE WINTERTIME TRADITION OR ACTIVITY?

Baking Christmas cookies with my daughter

WHAT'S MAKING YOU SMILE THESE DAYS?

My family's new puppy, Benelli "Nelli"

ARE YOU A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION MAKER, OR NOT?

Nope, I don't wait for the new year to set goals!

GOTR GIRLS BECOME GAMMA PHI WOMEN

From the track to sisterhood, members reflect on the confidence, friendships and lessons Girls on the Run (GOTR) instilled in them.

When it comes to social media trends, TikTok reigns supreme. It's nearly impossible to keep up with what's "in" and what's already yesterday's news. Recently, though, members have been following a TikTok trend that, if you ask us, will never go out of style.

The trend starts with a current photo of a member, captioned "The girl who loves to talk about her sorority." The next photo shows that same member as a GOTR participant, this time captioned "The girl who lived it."

Members from chapters such as Alpha Chi (William & Mary), Beta Delta (Michigan State), Beta Xi (Ohio State), Epsilon Lambda (Alabama) and Zeta Phi (Arkansas-Fort Smith) have all joined in on this latest social media trend. We sat down with one of them, Katie Kerrigan (Alabama), a sophomore majoring in advertising, to learn more. Here's what this GOTR participant-turned-Gamma Phi had to say.

How old were you when you first got involved with GOTR? How did you first hear about it?

I was eight, at the beginning of third grade. Both of my second grade teachers were coaches at my school, and they really inspired me to give it a try. I thought it sounded so cool.

How many seasons did you participate in?

I participated in GOTR during the fall 2014, spring 2015 and spring 2016 seasons.

Was there a specific lesson or activity that resonated with you the most when you were younger?

I remember all of us girls being told to crumple up a piece of paper. Our teachers and coaches explained that no matter what the paper had been through, it still had the same value and worth. That really stuck with me.

What was your biggest takeaway from your time participating in GOTR?

Learning how to push myself to do hard things. I've never liked running and I've never been great at it, but GOTR



taught me the importance of challenging myself, putting in the work and accomplishing something amazing.

What inspired you to go through sorority recruitment, and why did Gamma Phi Beta stand out?

I decided to go through recruitment because I wanted to find a small community within such a large school. I'd wanted to join a sorority ever since I was a little girl. I know they say not to get your heart set on one house, but

I always knew Gamma Phi Beta was it for me. I loved our beautiful house, the energy, the strong sisterhood — and most importantly, our connection to philanthropy. I really wanted to continue my GOTR journey in college.

Why do you think Gamma Phi Beta and GOTR make such a great match?

They make perfect sense together because Gamma Phi Beta is all about inspiring the highest type of womanhood, and GOTR instills that same message in girls from a young age.

What helps you activate your “Star Power”?

Spending time with my friends and family. It’s so uplifting to be surrounded by people who love and care for me, push me to succeed and help me become the best version of myself.

Other GOTR-Participants-Turned Gamma Phis



The girl who loves to talk about her sorority.



The girl who lived it.

“I used to doubt myself, but GOTR helped me build confidence and resilience. Now, as a college student working toward becoming a pharmacist, I still carry GOTR’s lessons with me every day.” —Toni Parrish (Arkansas-Forth Smith), senior majoring in biology



The girl who lived it.



The girl who loves to talk about her sorority.



The girl who lived it.

“If I could tell my younger GOTR self one thing, I’d tell her that she is capable of amazing things. I’m now serving as chapter president of Beta Xi, surrounded by incredible sisters who support and believe in me. I’ve accomplished so much and grown through challenges I never imagined back then. I’d tell her that all the confidence, teamwork and lessons she learned from GOTR helped her get to where she is today.” —Summer Boedeker (Ohio State), senior double majoring in psychology and criminology

Confident Women



JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Find a Hot Girl
Walk® near you:
hotgirlwalk.com
@hotgirlwalk
No walk in your
city? Bring it
there! Become a
Hot Girl Walk®
ambassador by
emailing [collabs@](mailto:collabs@hotgirlwalk.com)
hotgirlwalk.com.

Mia Lind

BETA ALPHA (Southern California)
CREATOR OF HOT GIRL WALK®

It's hard to believe that just six years ago we were living through a global pandemic. When COVID-19 struck, everything changed for everyone overnight. For collegiate members, especially those serving on executive councils, the pandemic meant reimagining how to recruit new members while still fostering sisterhood and connection among current ones. Few felt that challenge more than Mia Lind (Southern California), who was serving as her chapter's president in 2020.

Despite the challenges, Mia and her executive council took their term as an opportunity to look inward, fostering growth within both their chapter and the campus Panhellenic community. As the saying goes: no mud, no lotus.

"While everyone else was on summer break, our chapter showed up to change the University of Southern California's Panhellenic bylaws to be more inclusive," Mia recalls. "This constant drive of our sisterhood always encouraged me and the rest of our chapter to be 1% better every day."

While her chapter grew more resilient during unprecedented times, Mia herself was struggling. Growing up, she had always battled self-esteem issues, but she kept them at bay by staying busy with dance classes, time with friends and schoolwork. When the distractions of college life came to a screeching halt in 2020, those struggles resurfaced twofold. As she shares, "I was left to deal with the negative voice inside my head."

The remedy? She went for a walk. But Mia didn't just walk, she used each stride to be introspective. She practiced gratitude, set goals and reflected on what makes her feel confident — and how hot that made her feel. She coined this daily pandemic ritual her "Hot Girl Walk." With every step, her mental and physical health improved. Soon, some of her Gamma Phi sisters joined her, reaping the same benefits. Encouraged by one sister, Mia posted about her walk, and it went viral. Every video she shared after that drew more attention to her Hot Girl Walk and gained her more followers. Fast forward to 2023, and it's now Mia's full-time job.

"I never expected my daily walks to turn into something so much greater! I anticipated some positive feedback since my chapter had kind of been my test group, but I never imagined it would become part of so many people's wellness journeys."

Today, Hot Girl Walk® exists to unite women by promoting both mental and physical wellness through fitness in a way that is accessible and inclusive to all. Mia, her mom (Mia's righthand woman) and 17 city ambassadors host monthly walks across the country in cities including Los Angeles, Washington, D.C. and New York City, to name a few.

What started as Mia's pandemic walk has grown far beyond her, but the intention remains the same as it did in 2020. Each walk is four miles, with participants encouraged to reflect on three things: 1) what they're grateful for, 2) their goals and how to achieve them and 3) how hot they are. And for Mia, "hot" isn't what most people think.

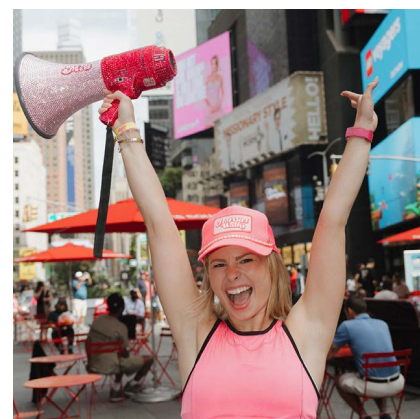
"I was taught that being hot was the most important thing a woman could be. Through my experience in Gamma

Phi and Hot Girl Walk®, I learned that being a hot girl has nothing to do with what you look like, but with the glow you nurture from the inside out. I want to help create a world that tells young women that being a hot girl means being kind, generous, hardworking, a good friend and confident."

To date, Mia and her team have hosted 200 walks with more than 100,000 participants in total. Hot Girl Walk® has received media coverage from *The New York Times*, HuffPost and more, and has partnered with brands such as e.l.f. Cosmetics, Lululemon and Nintendo. Not long ago, a publisher approached Mia to share her Hot Girl Walk® journey and insights in a book, reaching even more people. That book, "Hot Girl Walk: Find Happiness, Achieve Your Dreams and Cultivate Confidence," is out now, and Mia celebrated its launch with the people who fill her cup and make it all possible: her Hot Girl community.

"This past September, my book and I were featured on a billboard in Times Square! To celebrate, we hosted a walk with hundreds of attendees from Central Park to Times Square. It was so rewarding."

If you see a fleet of women walking together in your city, all wearing pink, know that you've stumbled across Hot Girl Walk®: a community steeped in gratitude, self-growth, self-love and confidence. As for her business's future, Mia knows it's only going to get hotter from here.



Julia Stier

BETA ALPHA (Southern California)
ACTOR, WRITER, PRODUCER

By Alejandra Sandomirskiy (Maryland)

Tenacious, unconventional and always open to learning, Julia Stier (Southern California) is the definition of a multi-hyphenate, someone who thrives across multiple roles. An actor, writer, producer and now head of development at Cold Iron Pictures, Julia has carved her own path in Hollywood with confidence and commitment. For her efforts, she earned a spot on the 2025 Forbes 30 Under 30 List in Hollywood and Entertainment.

Julia grew up in the Chicagoland area before spending her formative years in San Antonio, Texas. Her love for storytelling began at age six, when her mom played her the soundtrack of “Les Misérables.” “I loved everything about it — the music, the drama, the emotion,”

Julia says.

While attending college at the University of Southern California, Julia played Juliet in a MainStage production of “Romeo and Juliet” and co-founded a theatre company with friends, one of whom remains a close Gamma Phi sister today. That experience led to an internship at Hero Theatre, where she began working in development under Elisa Bocanegra. Elisa became an early mentor and later introduced Julia to director Liesl Tommy, another formidable woman in the industry. Those relationships proved invaluable in shaping Julia’s career and inspired her to mentor others in the industry.

After college graduation, Julia built a career in theatre and film, with her play “Callback” adapted for screen and the award-winning podcast “Bite Me,” among other achievements. But when the pandemic shut down productions, her path took a pivotal turn.

“When all the theaters and production

shut down, I learned the power of the pivot,” she says.

Julia began writing pilots and screenplays, producing digital content and leaning into development. That shift led her to Cold Iron Pictures, where she was promoted to head of development and helped take the feature “By Design” to Sundance. She also served as co-executive producer for the documentary “Broken English,” which premiered at the Venice Film Festival. When she received the Forbes news, Julia couldn’t contain her excitement: “I screamed and then ordered a bottle of Prosecco to my place!”

Breaking into Hollywood hasn’t been easy, but Julia never felt alone. “I have met so many amazing people who understand what this crazy industry is like and who have really become my support system. When things get tough, I turn to the people who are right there in the trenches with me!”

That sense of community began at Gamma Phi Beta. “When my mom got cancer my junior year, I had a whole community of women rallying around me and looking out for me. To this day, my Big, Sasha, is still one of my best friends.”

Now Julia shares her journey with others. She has spoken at the American Film Market, her alma mater and festivals across the country on topics like indie filmmaking, women in film and creating your own opportunities as a multi-hyphenate.

And when she needs to reignite her own spark, Julia turns back to creativity. “I refill the well — read, watch movies, listen to new music! Anything to get me inspired!” she says.





Small photo: Sanjyot (left) and her pledge mom, Anjali Patel Singh (Northwestern), at a Gamma Phi Spring Formal in 1985.

Large photo: Sanjyot (right) and Anjali (left) at a recent wedding reception.



Sanjyot Dunung

EPSILON (Northwestern)
A RELENTLESS DOER

India-born, Illinois-raised Sanjyot Dunung (Northwestern) isn't afraid to roll up her sleeves to make things happen. Inspired by her parents' strong work ethic, Sanjyot showed her entrepreneurial spirit early, landing a babysitting gig at just nine years old. By 10, while other neighborhood kids were running lemonade stands, she launched her own Sunday-morning camp, charging an unbeatable 50 cents per camper.

“Quite a bargain in today’s terms,” Sanjyot laughs. “It was the first of many ideas, and I gradually learned, as many entrepreneurs do, that it’s a long way from a great idea to tangible success.”

A shy child growing up, Sanjyot made a conscious effort to step outside of her comfort zone by raising her hand first, signing up to lead, organizing events and volunteering wherever she could. “I found it very fulfilling just to be useful,” she says. “I still do.”

At Northwestern, that same spirit carried through. Sanjyot threw herself into her studies and joined organizations that sparked her curiosity, always eager to learn, contribute and make a difference. One of those organizations was Gamma Phi Beta.

At first, she didn’t quite understand Greek life — her parents hadn’t attended college in the U.S., and none of her relatives were members. But after learning about it from friends who were already Gamma Phis, Sanjyot decided to give recruitment a try during her sophomore year. What she found was more than she expected: connection, community and the sisters she’d always wanted as an only child.

“From day one, I loved the spirit in Gamma Phi,” she recalls. “I felt at home.”

After graduating from Northwestern with a degree in political science, Sanjyot went on to earn an MBA in international business. Following a few years in New York’s banking sector, she returned to her entrepreneurial roots and launched Atma Global in 2003, building on ideas she had been developing since the mid ‘90s.

At that time, a friend who was moving abroad offered to sell Sanjyot her “business” for \$500. It came with one

client and a fax machine. Sanjyot took it on without reservation. When she realized how limited the work was, she saw an opportunity instead of an obstacle. As Asia’s economies began to boom, she expanded the business into cultural training services that helped companies enter new markets. That early experience sparked what would become her life’s work: creating innovative learning solutions to help people and organizations better understand the world around them.

“Atma Global grew out of that simple idea,” she explains. “To help people learn about other cultures, connect across differences and communicate and interact more effectively with learning applications for business, government and higher education.”

Atma Global has earned several accolades in its 22 years, and each award holds special significance for Sanjyot and her team. Among them, being named to Fast Company’s Most Innovative List resonates most deeply with her.

“This recognition not only reflects our hard work and dedication, but it also highlights our commitment to pushing boundaries and embracing innovation to make the world a better place.”

As if running her own business weren’t enough to keep this self-proclaimed “workhorse rather than show horse” busy, Sanjyot also serves on the board of directors of the National Small Business Association, which helps small businesses around the country thrive, and the Truman Center for National Policy. She previously served on the board of directors of United Nations Children’s Fund, committed to helping children around the world.

For the past decade, she spent half

her time back in her hometown of Des Plaines, Illinois, caring for her aging and disabled parents. There, she helps her neighbors and the community she calls home continue to grow and thrive.

Beyond her professional pursuits, Sanjyot is a proud single mom of three adult boys making their own mark in the world, with the youngest serving in the military. She lights up when talking about them and has designated phone time with each, despite the varying time zones.

“We all live across the country from each other! One is in Washington, another in New York and the third in Mississippi.”

When she isn’t rolling up her sleeves for her kids, her community or her work, it should come as no surprise that this Gamma Phi likes to keep her mind busy in her spare time. Currently, she’s brushing up on Spanish and Japanese on Duolingo or catching up on her favorite socio-economic podcasts.

For members who are also bitten by the entrepreneurial bug, take it from this Gamma Phi: find “snacks” of restorative and meditative moments throughout the day. These can be short walks while on calls, bike rides, dance classes, restorative yoga or simply reading — one of Sanjyot’s favorite activities.

“My days and evenings can often blur together,” she admits. “But as an entrepreneur, I learned to take little breaks whenever possible. My executive mentor taught me that going 24/7 indefinitely is unsustainable. It took me nearing burnout and multiple injuries to realize the importance of balance.”

ALUMNAE

Chapter Sweet Chapter



MARIN COUNTY ALUMNAE CHAPTER

For 71 years, Marin County Alumnae Chapter has fostered connection across generations. Much of that success comes from volunteers like Margy Ayotte (California-Berkeley), a 2022 Merit Award recipient who served 19 years as chapter president, guiding the chapter and creating sisterhood for members of all ages.

That spirit of commitment carries through members like Karen Jensen Carmody (Colorado College) and Jennifer Brandt Sicklick (California-Riverside). Karen is a member of the Tau Epsilon Pi Giving Society, making the ultimate gift to secure the future of our sisterhood through thoughtful estate planning. Jennifer was recently selected as

scholarship application reader for the Sorority. With achievements like these, it's no surprise the chapter has earned the 1874 Award multiple times.

Marin County Alumnae Chapter has also built a strong bond with its closest collegiate chapter, Eta Chapter (California-Berkeley). Alumnae show their support throughout the year, especially during fall recruitment, and celebrating with collegians on Founders Day. Their presence reminds younger members that sisterhood truly lasts a lifetime, with friendships that span generations and a network to lean on in every season of life.



1

MARIN COUNTY ALUMNAE CHAPTER:

Fast Facts

FOUNDED: 1954

MEMBERSHIP: 21 active members representing 14 different Gamma Phi Beta collegiate chapters

CLOSEST COLLEGIATE CHAPTER: Eta Chapter (California-Berkeley)

LOCAL TO MARIN COUNTY? INTERESTED IN JOINING?

Email quinnfore@gmail.com.



2



3

1. COASTAL CHARM

Sausalito, nestled along the Marin County waterfront, feels straight out of Europe with its picturesque harbor, intricate architecture, inviting eateries and one-of-a-kind shops.

2. A NATIONAL TREE-SURE

Muir Woods National Monument, part of California's Golden Gate National Recreation Area, is home to towering old-growth redwoods — an awe-inspiring forest that Marin County sisters cannot recommend enough to visitors and West Coast locals.

3. SCENIC SIGHTS

The Marin Headlands offers sweeping views of the Golden Gate Bridge and rugged coastline, with miles of trails for every skill level and natural beauty at every turn. As one sister shares, "The sights never disappoint and always take your breath away."





Chic To-Go

From her parents' garage to national acclaim, Ali Kaminetsky (Lehigh) transformed a scrappy side hustle into a booming business of chic, functional lunchboxes.

By Editorial Manager Elizabeth Liberatore

The year is 2016. Connecticut-born and -raised Ali Kaminetsky (Lehigh) has just graduated and is finding her footing in New York City. With a degree in supply chain management and marketing, she steps into the buying department at Macy's, first as a trainee and then as an assistant buyer. From her front-row seat, Ali watches how products move from concept to shelf, how consumers shop and how brands grow — insights that would prove invaluable later.

Ali packed her lunch every day, because in New York even a quick bodega sandwich comes with a hefty price tag. Tired of carrying a nondescript lunchbox that clashed with

her outfit, she searched online for something stylish and functional. What did she find instead? Bluey lunch bags, bulky totes, bland designs. Nothing chic. Nothing sustainable. Nothing that was actually functional. Nothing. For Women. Then a lightbulb went off.

"I realized there was a huge gap in the market, so I decided to fill it," Ali says, "Modern Picnic, insulated lunchboxes designed for the modern female consumer, was born."

Ali took the experience she gained at Macy's and, in 2018, left to pursue Modern Picnic full time. The early days were scrappy, as she recalls. "I was shipping out of my parents' garage, packing and shipping boxes myself. It was both exciting and exhausting, but those beginnings really shaped the company's DNA."

Her hustle soon landed her on national TV — "Shark Tank." To showcase her brand up close, Ali cleverly packed the Sharks a meal in Modern Picnic's first and most popular product, the Luncher. The experience was equal parts nerve-racking and exhilarating, even without a deal.

"The exposure was priceless. It gave us massive visibility, drove traffic to our site and opened doors to new customers and opportunities."

The Sharks passed on what would become a booming business. Today, Modern Picnic has built a strong community both online and offline and offers a full collection of chic insulated vegan leather bags, totes, backpacks, pouches

and even food storage containers. Ali has also landed partnerships with major retailers, including Saks, Bloomingdale's, Target, The Container Store, Anthropologie and Nordstrom.



Any parting wisdom for young members looking to launch their own business?

Start before you're ready, and don't be afraid to be scrappy.

Lean into your network, ask for help and remember that resilience is everything.

Entrepreneurship is a rollercoaster, but if you're passionate about the problem you're solving, it's worth every twist and turn.

People can't get enough of Ali's chic, functional lunchboxes. Modern Picnic has been celebrated in the media more than 450 times, with features in *Forbes*, *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, just to name a few. Long before her

"Shark Tank" appearance, Ali was recognized on the 2021 Forbes Next 1000 List, which celebrates self-made entrepreneurs for their ambition and resilience.

Fast-forward to this year when Modern Picnic celebrated its seventh birthday. Ali and her team partied with their community online and in person. For Ali specifically, she celebrated with a moment of reflection. "It's so important to pause and recognize how far we've come."

What started as a one-woman business in her small NYC apartment has grown into a thriving operation with more people, more space and more chic lunch bags — all thanks to Ali's resilient, collaborative and driven leadership. She hopes to see Modern Picnic still going strong in another seven years, with ambitious goals she's sure to reach: "I see us expanding our retail partnerships, launching new categories and becoming a household name in the space where fashion meets function."

Even a lunchbox boss needs a break. When she's not developing the next chic to-go option, Ali is at home planning her wedding with her fiancé, with their Persian kitten, Benjamin, snuggled nearby. "I'm truly obsessed with him," Ali says about her kitten. No doubt Benjamin will have some starring role on the couple's big day.





treat yourself

1. The Food Container \$20+
2. ***BESTSELLER*** The Luncher \$159
(Fits one Food Container and one drink)
3. The Snacker \$59
4. The Backpack \$210
(Insulated interior and padded laptop sleeve)
5. The Cooler \$160
6. The Fanny Pack \$49

Explore the full line at ModernPicnic.com.



Items and prices were compiled in November 2025 and are subject to change.

Seen on Social!

A roundup of Gamma Phi Beta members' posts that celebrate sisterhood. Here's a snapshot of what our members have been sharing lately.

Pssst: Don't forget to tag us @GammaPhiBetaSorority for a chance to be featured on our official IG or here!

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



@gammaphibetasorority



presley_dew Never wanna wake up 😊 #biglittle



gammaphibetatampabayalumnae Our sisters met up for a night of fun at Shuffle in Tampa!



chicagoggphibalumnae We had a great time at our 2025 #gammaphigettogether! We had fun sharing stories and memories across our sisterhood.



ksugammaphibeta The secrets are out and the bonds are sealed 🌈🌟 Big/Little Reveal was everything we dreamed of and more!!!



emmaleawerling We love Building Strong Girls through Girls on the Run!



gammaphibetauwm BID DAY = BEST DAY! We gained some amazing new members and had an absolute blast celebrating them during Bid Day! Welcome home ladies!



gammaphiuni Some of our amazing new members ❤️



PEDALING THEIR PATH

By Editorial Manager Elizabeth Liberatore

Cherokee cyclist Jenny Kliest (Arkansas-Fort Smith) retraced the 950-mile journey of her ancestors on the Trail of Tears, connecting with her community and the roots of her own identity.

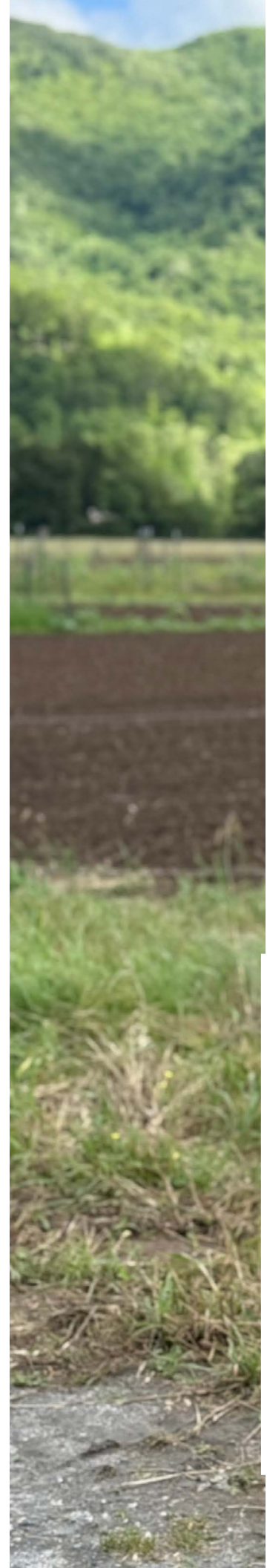


Buzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz.

At 5 a.m. sharp, Jenny Kliet's (Arkansas-Fort Smith) alarm jolts her awake. There's no time to hit snooze. She rises from yet another hotel bed, pulls on the same riding clothes from the day before, grabs her helmet and steps into the morning air thick with humidity.

Her muscles ache from yesterday's 60-mile trek, her eyes still puffy from tears. Looking up at the long stretch of road ahead, she joins her teammates in chanting, “ᎠᎩᏳᏍᏔᏅ” — “We are still here.” Together, the 12 Cherokee cyclists pedal forward, ready for another day of connection to their history, to their people, to themselves.

“That reminder, that we are still here, was powerful for me and really captured what it means to be Cherokee today,” Jenny shares.



This is the Remember the Removal bike ride, an annual journey where young Cherokee adults retrace the grueling 950-mile path their ancestors traveled nearly two centuries ago on the Trail of Tears, the forced removal of about 16,000 Cherokee people from their homelands in the southeastern United States. Of that number, an estimated 4,000 died along the way from disease, starvation and exposure to the elements.

The ride ends in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, the capital of the Cherokee Nation, where Jenny's ancestors who survived the Trail of Tears rebuilt their lives. Jenny grew up just 23 miles away in Stilwell, on the reservation. As she neared the finish line, a wave of emotions washed over her, most of all joy. She was completing the ride near the place where her sense of identity, community and purpose first took root.

As a kid, Jenny erred on the shy side. Growing up in a large extended family — with eight aunts and uncles and more cousins than she could count on her mom's side alone — she rarely had to speak up for herself. Her older relatives were always there to do the talking. But Jenny was happy to listen, especially during Wednesday dinners at her Granny's house.

"We'd all tell stories at my Granny's house," Jenny says. "Storytelling is a vital part of Native American culture, and so much of it happened around her table. That kind of closeness isn't something you see every day, and it's a tradition I really hope to carry on with my own kids someday."

Cherokee culture was the cornerstone of Jenny's upbringing. She was constantly surrounded by her people and their history and traditions. It was all she'd ever known, until she left Stilwell for college and discovered how differently the rest of the world operates.

"There wasn't the same presence of Cherokee culture [in Fort Smith, Arkansas], and that was a real eye-opener for me," she shares.

Jenny attended the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith, earning a bachelor's degree in dental hygiene in May 2024. While on campus, she decided to go through sorority recruitment, hoping to find both friendship and academic accountability. Back home, she had always been surrounded by strong, supportive women, and she wanted that same sense of community, even a state away. She found it in Gamma Phi Beta.

"Gamma Phi Beta was the right fit because I immediately loved the members I met, and the philanthropy spoke to me so much."

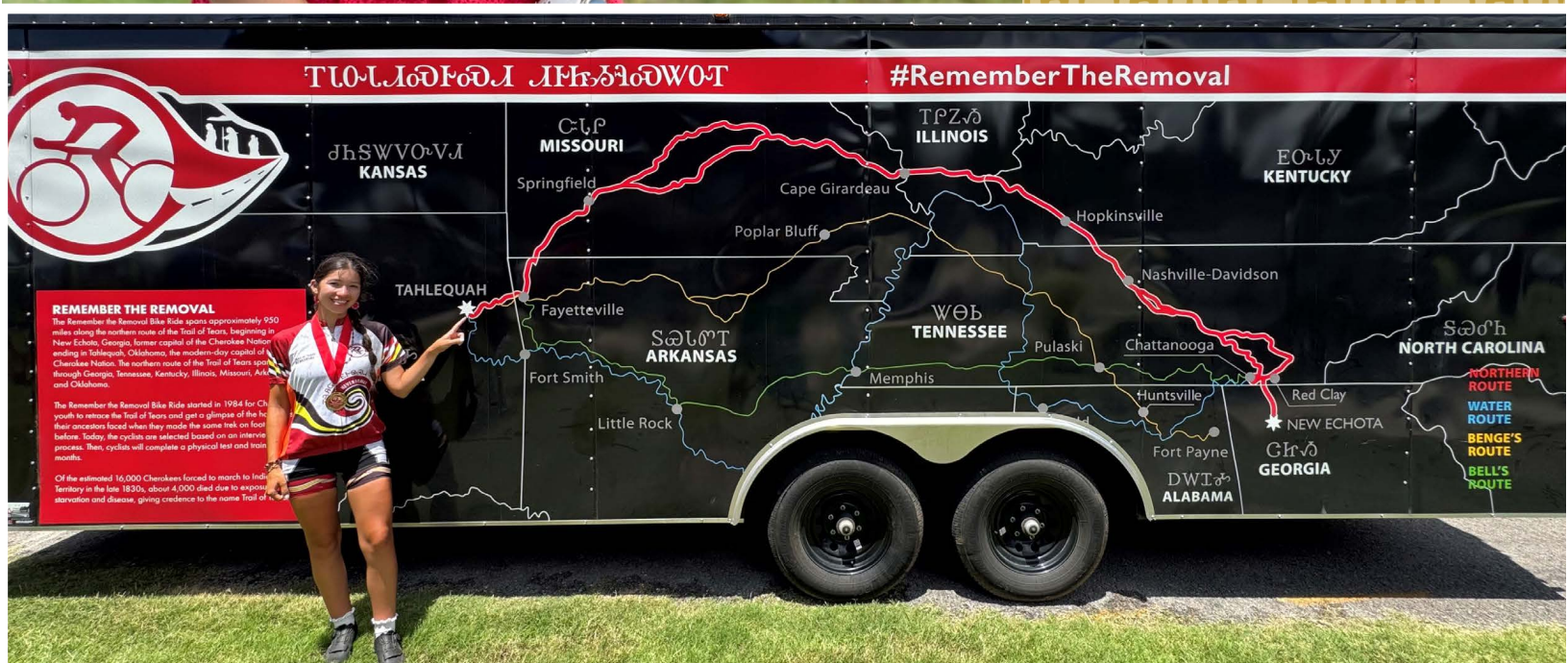
Beyond her Gamma Phi sisters, Jenny found a mentor and friend in Cherie Qualls Spencer (Oklahoma), her chapter advisor. Affectionately called "Big Mama" by members, Jenny says, "[Cherie] was like our mom while we were away from our moms. She gave the best advice, helped solve problems and always knew just how much guidance to give to push you to take the lead."

It was Cherie's encouragement that motivated Jenny to apply for Remember



“Through all the pain, loss and endurance, I and all the Cherokee people who came before and will come after are still here.”

—Jenny Kliest (Arkansas-Fort Smith)



the Removal. During college, she couldn't commit the time required for the ride while focusing on her dental hygiene program. By the end of 2024, Jenny, a recent alumna at the team's age limit of 24, knew this was her final chance to pursue a dream she had since hearing about the experience from a friend who rode in 2022.

"My friend who did the ride said she couldn't exactly describe the experience, just that it was life-changing," Jenny says. "Now that I've completed the ride, I fully understand."

The application process included an essay, two references and an interview, and she turned to Big Mama for one of the letters.

"I happily wrote Jenny a letter, and when she found out she made the 2025 team, I was so incredibly proud of her," Cherie says. "Her journey on this team is so inspiring and interesting, and I'm just in awe of all she's achieved, both as a collegian and an alumna."

Jenny, who now works as a dental hygienist for the Cherokee Nation, learned she made the team through an email. Filled with excitement, she soon shifted her focus to training. She and the 11 other riders committed to team workouts on Saturdays and Sundays, starting in December 2024 and continuing until the ride began in May 2025. On weekdays, each rider trained individually to stay prepared.

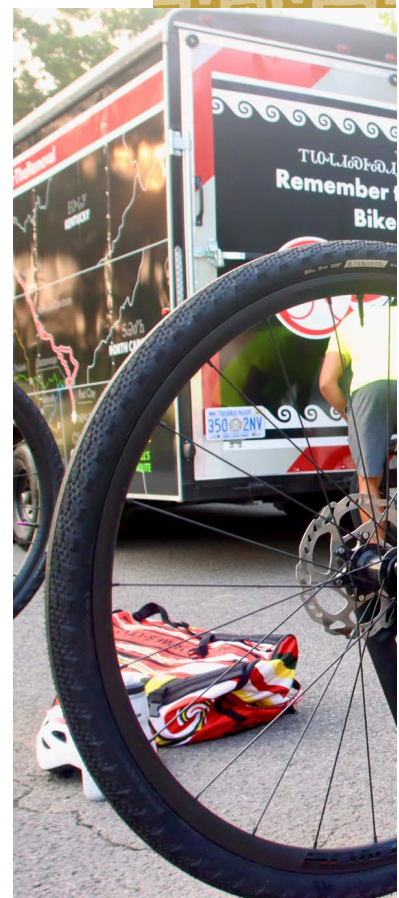
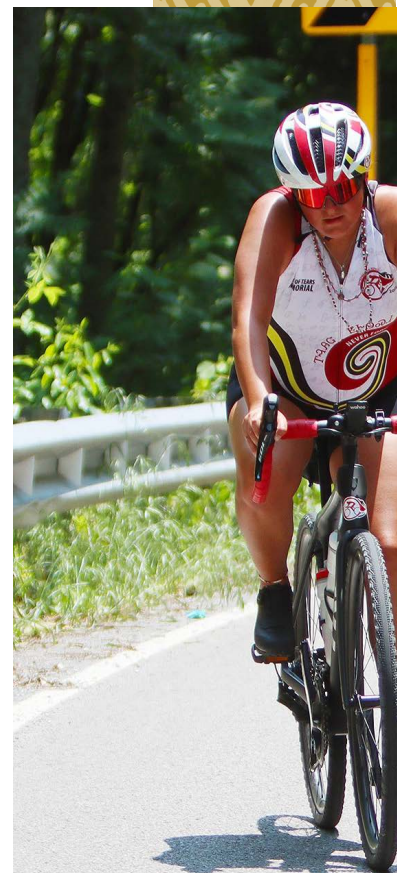
"We had a group chat that kept us accountable for our workouts during the week," Jenny says.

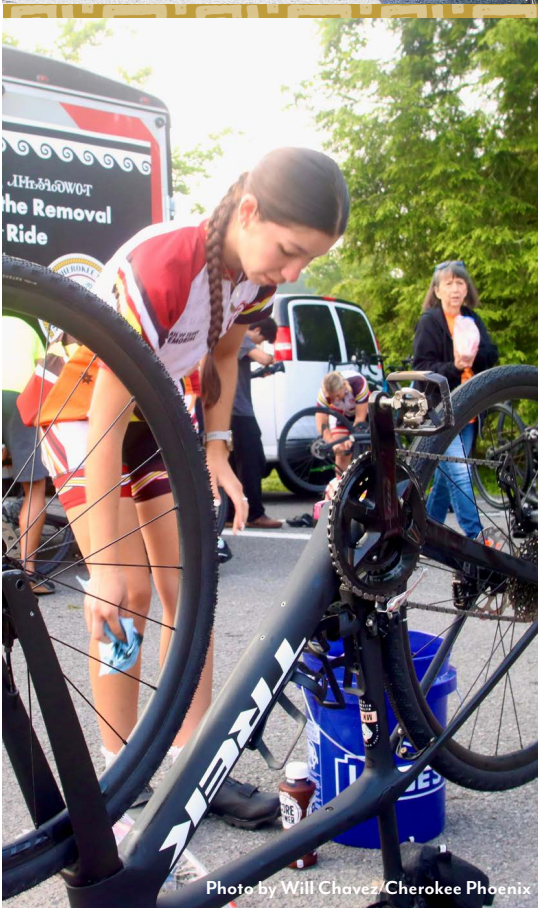
May finally arrived, and Jenny and her team were geared up and ready for the 950-mile journey. The ride began in New Echota, Georgia, where the New Echota Treaty was signed on December 29, 1935. Though deemed invalid by the Cherokee National Council and the Nation's principal chief, the treaty became the legal basis for the forced removal of the Cherokee people from their homes.

From the very first mile, the ride was steeped in both grief and pride. As Jenny and her teammates pedaled, they reflected on the pain and trauma their ancestors endured on the same land they biked through. At the same time, Jenny felt immense pride in the unshakable resilience of her tribe.

"I feel like I went through every single emotion there was. I felt so angry and sad while also feeling unity and friendship with the team. There was a time we walked on a preserved part of the original trail. It was just solemn; all you could hear was the wind and our footsteps. It was sad, but it also made you appreciate how strong Cherokee people are, to have gone through this and to have made it to Tahlequah to rebuild, just to see where we are today."

The team cycled across seven states before finishing in Tahlequah, averaging about 60 miles a day, with the longest day totaling 77 miles and the shortest 26. Each morning began with breakfast at the hotels along the route before riding to the previous day's finish line. Volunteers hosted the team for meals and the Remember the Removal





Just Jenny

What's bringing you joy in life right now?

My husband, some coworkers and I have all been going to a new workout class before work and I love it. Sometimes it's hard to get out of bed but I'm always glad I did.

What are some of your hobbies or interests?

Right now, I'm into sewing and reading books that are about to be movies. I also love to bake.

How do you like to unwind after a long day?

I love rewatching shows or movies. I'm probably watching "Parks and Recreation," "SpongeBob SquarePants" or "She's the Man."

Describe yourself in a few words.

Determined,
funny, outgoing.



support staff, many of them alumni riders, provided snacks, drinks, encouragement and, when needed, a shoulder to cry on.

In addition to the support staff, Jenny found comfort in her teammates. Kiyah, in particular, helped her tackle the hardest physical feat on the route: Cumberland Gap, a mountain pass where Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia meet. The thought of cycling up a mountain made Jenny understandably nervous. Thankfully, Kiyah, a more experienced biker, guided her every step of the way.

“We pushed and encouraged each other to make it up the mountain,” Jenny recalls. “It was an unforgettable day. The feeling we had when we made it to the top and just cried is something I will never forget.”

The team stopped at many important historical sites where their ancestors had traveled during the removal. From Blue Hole Spring at Red Clay State Park and Brainerd Mission Cemetery to Cherokee Removal Memorial Park, Port Royal State Park and numerous graves of ancestors, each stop carried weight. For Jenny, Mantle Rock in Kentucky was the hardest. Over 1,000 Cherokee members on the trail spent around two weeks there, waiting for the Ohio River to thaw and become passable.

“No shelter. Barely any food. Below freezing temperatures. People who died couldn’t be buried because the ground was frozen solid. Mothers had to make the heartbreaking choice to give away their babies, knowing they wouldn’t survive in those conditions and hoping someone else could keep them safe,” Jenny shares. “That kind of strength is hard to wrap your head around.”

Muscle throbbing. Eyes sore. Sweat dripping down her back. The last leg felt endless. Then Jenny experienced a shift: familiar

settings and faces came into view. The cyclists passed through her hometown of Stilwell on the way to Tahlequah, and a surge of energy washed over everyone. For Jenny, the excitement bubbled over.

“We biked right by my workplace, and the dental department and other departments of the health clinic were cheering us on and waving signs,” Jenny recalls. “I cried when I saw my coworkers cheering.”

After 18 days of cycling, the team reached Tahlequah. Family and friends had gathered on the sidelines as Jenny and her teammates, proudly wearing the Cherokee Nation flag on their backs, pedaled toward them. She turned to a teammate and shouted, “We did it,” as celebration erupted within the crowd and among the cyclists. Pride surged through her — in herself, her team and the ancestors whose journey she had retraced.

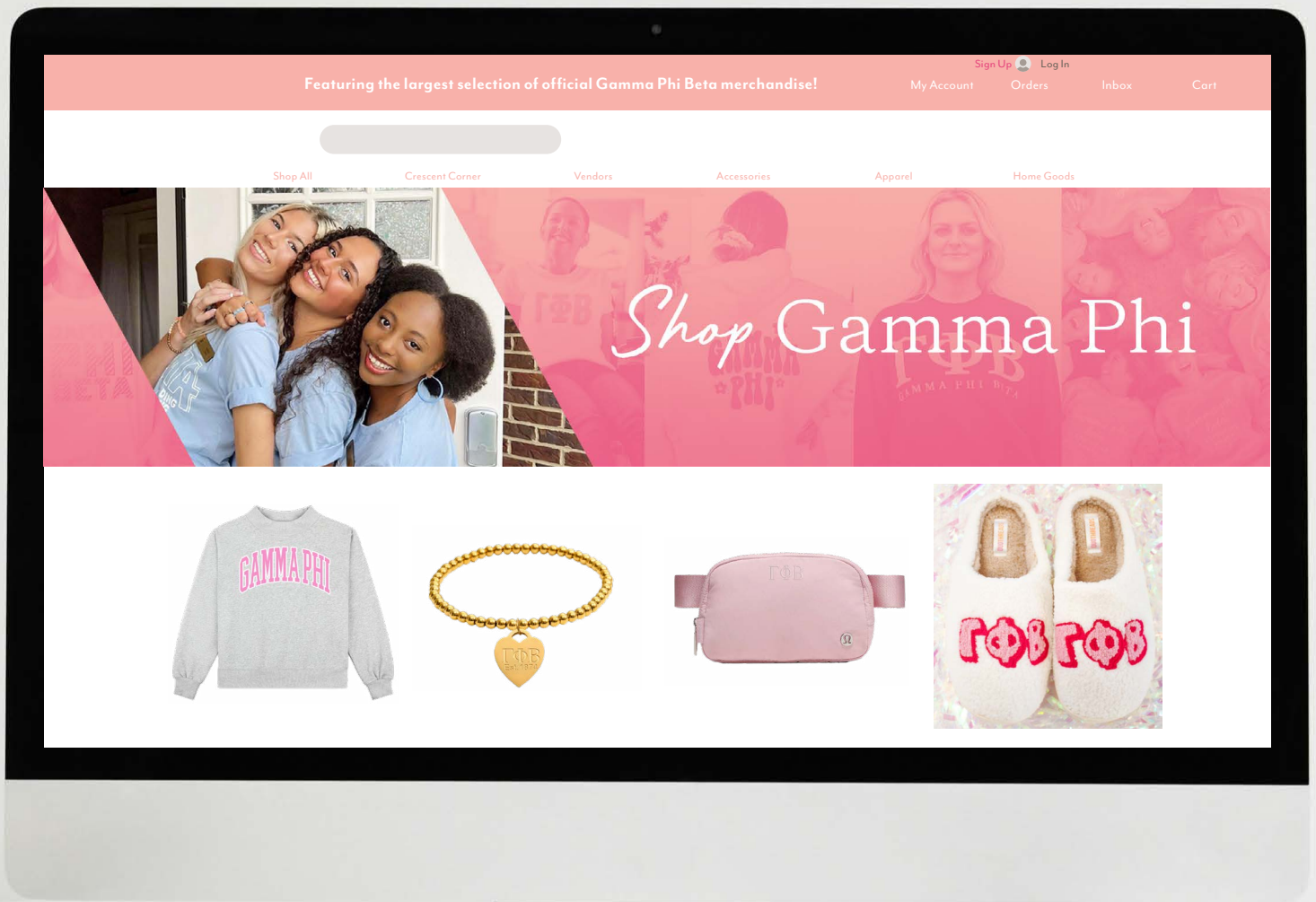
Jenny ran to her family, falling into the warm embrace of her husband and mother. In that moment of rest and reunion, she recalled the powerful phrase “ᎠᎩᏍᏉᏗ” and told herself: “Through all the pain, loss and endurance, I and all the Cherokee people who came before and will come after are still here.”



Photo by Will Chavez/Cherokee Phoenix

Sources: Cherokee.org, Nps.gov

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COLLEGIATE

Chapter Sweet Chapter



RHO (Iowa)

Rho Chapter at the University of Iowa came into this past academic year with a mission: make it their very best. From day one, sisters leaned into our Core Values, cheered each other on and left a mark on campus and in their community. Whether tackling service projects, leading campus events or supporting one another through late-night study sessions, they did it all with heart. By the end of the year, their hard work paid off in a big way: awards, recognition and a chapter-wide sense of pride.

Their dedication was clear to everyone, starting with the Sorority itself. Rho Chapter was honored with the Order of 1874, a prestigious award celebrating chapters that excel in leadership, sisterhood, academics and service. The accolades didn't stop there. At the University of Iowa's Hawkeye Excellence Awards, the chapter scored two wins: Chapter President Mary Kate Dunklau was named Outstanding Sorority Member in Leadership, and the chapter received



Outstanding Community Service by a Student Organization. Mary Kate shares this about her win: “This award means so much because it shows the impact that women in leadership can have on our campus. I’m proud to represent Gamma Phi Beta and our values in the Panhellenic.”

Whether volunteering in Iowa City, organizing philanthropy events or supporting Girls on the Run, sisters spent the year giving back in big ways. The result? Their chapter logged more service hours than any other student organization — and there are more than 600

of them. Panhellenic Affairs Vice President Olivia Guerra reflects on the honor: “This award reflects the passion and commitment our members bring to every service project, big or small. It not only recognizes the hours we’ve given back but also reinforces our mission to lead with impact, compassion and unity within both the Panhellenic and greater community.”

Hats off to Rho Chapter! Here’s to another year of making a difference in your Sorority, on your campus and throughout your community.

1



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1. WHAT'S TRENDING?

All things athleisure. Rho sisters love keeping it comfy (and cute) with leggings, joggers, crewnecks and matching sweatsuits. They also add their own flair with chic accessories, turning cozy, nondescript outfits into editorial-worthy looks.

2. HERKY THE HAWK

Bold. Bright (yellow!). Everywhere. That's Herky the Hawk, the mascot who brings the energy to every campus event. Fun fact: his name comes from John Franklin, the grandfather of the chapter's current facility director, Deb Franklin. John entered "Herky" in a statewide naming contest, and he won!

3. QUEEN CAITLIN

Caitlin Clark — the record-breaking basketball player known for her three-pointers — has taken women's basketball by storm. A University of Iowa alumna, she sparked the "Caitlin Clark Effect," boosting attention, viewership and fan engagement in women's basketball, right on her alma mater's court. Her fellow Hawkeyes couldn't be prouder.

4. HEART OF CAMPUS

Visiting from out of town? Start at the Pentacrest, the heart of campus. Centered by the Iowa Old Capitol Building and surrounded by the main academic buildings, it's a spot steeped in history (it's on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places!).



2



3



4

Summer Reset

New bathrooms, a refreshed vanity room and spa-like touches for Beta Lambda (San Diego State)

For the Facilities Management Company (FMC), summer is prime time for updates. With members away, facilities sit open for both routine maintenance and larger projects — without disrupting chapter life. While Beta Lambda Chapter (San Diego State) members enjoyed their time off with family and friends this past summer, the FMC was busy refreshing the facility's bathrooms and vanity room. And by refreshing, we mean completely gutting these spaces and starting anew.

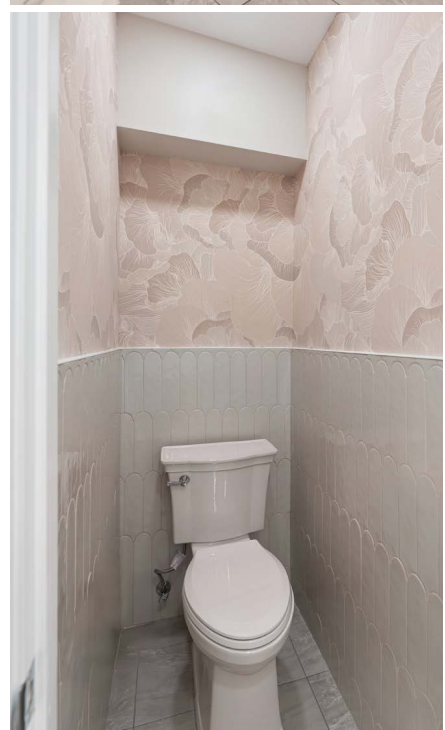
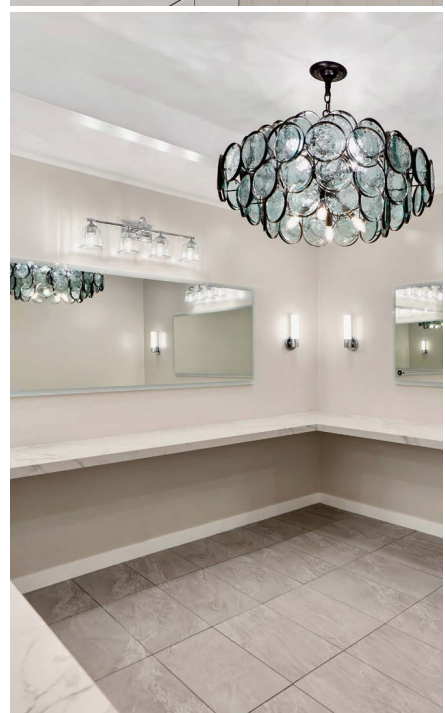
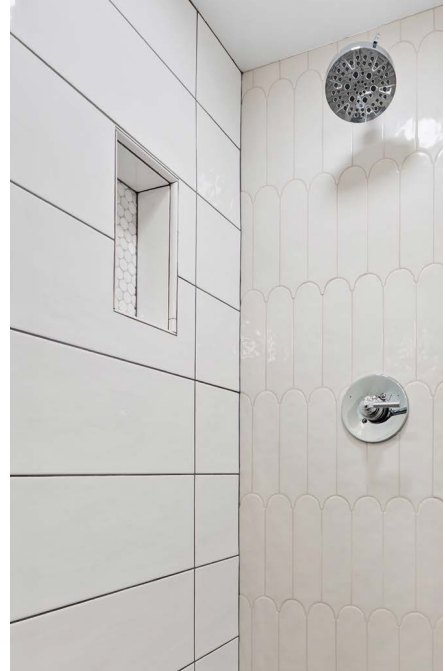
"These renovations were needed due to plumbing issues happening throughout the house," FMC Manager Merimee Von Schipmann says. "We had to get in there and redo all the pipes, which meant tearing down the previously existing bathrooms."

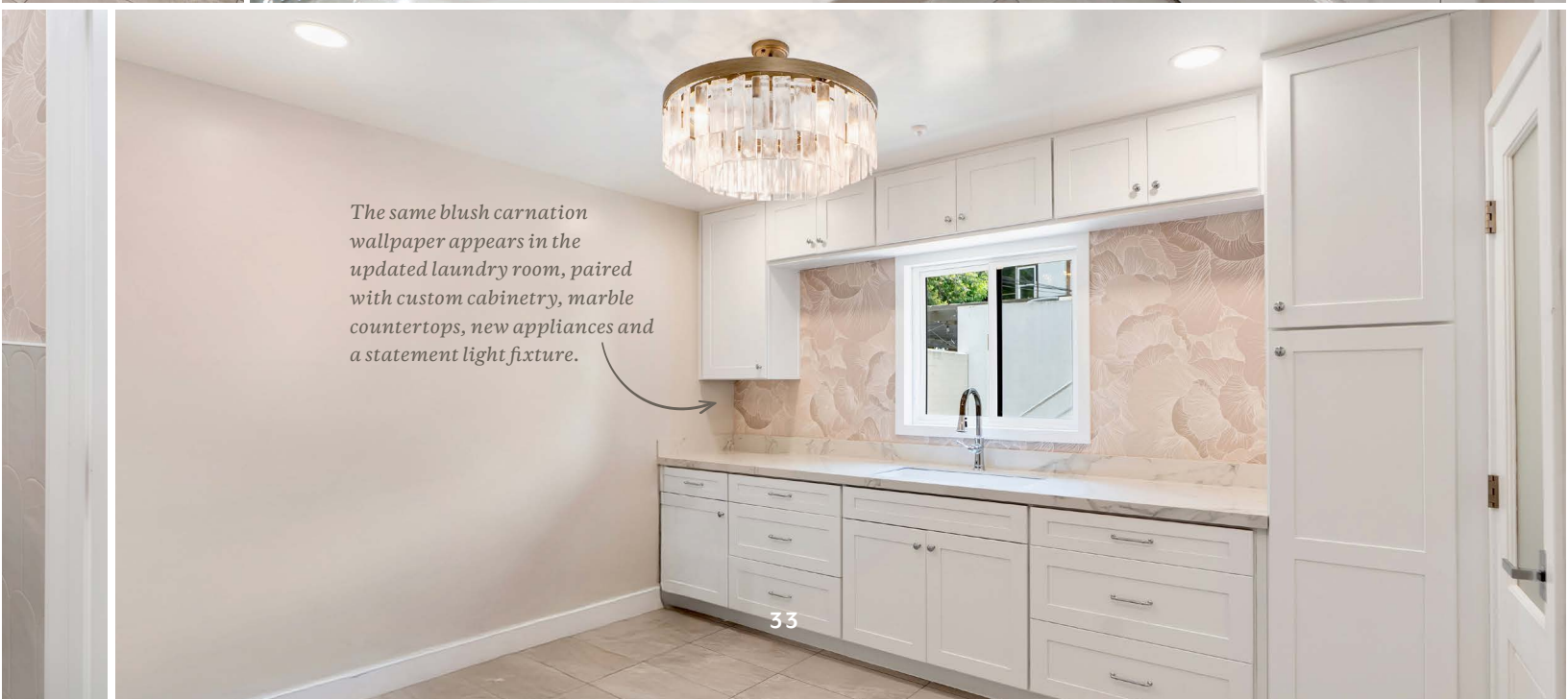
Every bathroom was redone with new cabinets, counters, showers and stalls. Modern tiling and blush carnation wallpaper elevate these everyday spaces into something special. But the belle of the ball is the updated vanity room. Once giving sad vibes, it now sings a whole new tune: current, chic, feminine. With wraparound marble countertops perfect for spreading out makeup, elegant sconces and lighted mirrors, the massive vanity room feels more like a spa retreat than a chapter house.

Members love their new vanity room so much that it made appearances in their recruitment TikToks, drawing glowing comments about its stunning transformation. Here's what some members have to say about their new space:

"The new bathrooms, and vanity room specifically, have made for so many fun memories getting ready for different events with my best friends. We play music, dance and laugh, and it has made our living-in experience just that much better." — Lily Gebhart, facility manager

"All 400 of our members have access to the house; sisters love coming over and using the space as a place to hang out and build sisterhood. The updates have truly transformed the experience of living in as well. We're proud to show our new renovations to others, and every guest has been astonished with how beautiful the space has become. The vanity room is a hot spot for the ladies that live in! The room's pink chairs match the energy our Beta Lambda house brings!" — Grace Johnson, chapter president





The same blush carnation wallpaper appears in the updated laundry room, paired with custom cabinetry, marble countertops, new appliances and a statement light fixture.

Next Chapter, Together

One alumna's generosity launched a new program preparing seniors for life after college.

Senior year of college is bittersweet. It's the final stretch of coursework before that hard-earned diploma is in your hands, and the celebrations around it are monumental. But it's also the close of a familiar chapter. Suddenly, the friends you've seen daily scatter in different directions, and the path ahead feels exciting, yet uncertain.

That's exactly why Gamma Phi Beta recently piloted Remember*, a new educational program designed to help seniors step into their next chapter with confidence, clarity and sisterhood.

The program is a three- to four-hour, in-person experience, led by volunteer facilitators who are alumnae at various stages of their membership, and hosted during a designated weekend at each collegiate chapter. During Remember, senior members pause to reflect on their collegiate Sorority journey, prepare for upcoming life transitions and build a plan to stay connected as alumnae. The program's name and curriculum are inspired by Gamma Phi Beta's ritual song, "Remember," which speaks to carrying the bonds of sisterhood forward.

Remember is more than a program — it's a promise that members will carry Gamma Phi Beta with them long after they cross the

commencement stage. Championing that promise is Deborah Bartels Snead (Missouri-Columbia), whose generous gift to the Gamma Phi Beta Foundation made it possible to launch this new and exciting opportunity for senior members.

"The [program's name] was the first hook. 'Remember' will always be my favorite Gamma Phi Beta song," Deborah says about why she contributed to the program. "Then after reviewing the program material, I was convinced that this program offers a wonderful opportunity for collegians to appreciate that Gamma Phi is more than a college experience."

Deborah's collegiate journey with Gamma Phi Beta began as a sophomore when she was initiated in the fall of 1967 at Alpha Delta Chapter at the University of Missouri-Columbia. She served her chapter in leadership roles, including vice president and treasurer. Those early experiences, however, were just the tip of her membership iceberg.

Now, nearly 60 years later, Deborah has remained deeply connected to the Sorority: she is a Life Loyal member, an annual donor, a contributor to the Alpha Delta Capital Campaign and has served as both an alumnae chapter president and chapter advisor. And, of course, she



Champion Gamma Phi Beta Like Deborah

Donate today to continue investing in our sisterhood, supporting the programs, initiatives and legacy that help our members thrive. Visit GammaPhiBeta.org/Donate to make your gift.

loves connecting with sisters. In fact, she and five other sisters from different initiating classes — all living across the U.S. — meet up several times a year. Some of their reunions take them back to where it all started: the Alpha Delta Chapter facility, where they meet new members and revisit their old stomping grounds.

But why maintain such a strong connection after six decades?

“Gamma Phi Beta holds a special place in my heart,” she says. “I support organizations and programs where I have a personal connection and believe in the purpose of the specific program or project.”

It’s no surprise, then, that the Remember program aligns so well with Deborah’s values. She sees today’s college women as exceptionally talented, with limitless potential and opportunities beyond graduation. For her, the program will help members refine their goals, explore new possibilities and prepare for life after college. It also gives alumnae facilitators a chance to share their experiences, offer guidance and mentorship and hone their own leadership skills. Most importantly, Remember shows that Gamma Phi Beta sisterhood extends far beyond college friendships.

For this Gamma Phi, supporting Remember was an easy decision: “I am honored to help grow love for Gamma Phi Beta in collegiates and alumnae.” In doing so, Deborah is helping members step confidently into the next chapter of their lives, while keeping Gamma Phi Beta close.

**The Remember program was piloted this fall at 14 collegiate chapters. A final report on the pilot’s effectiveness is currently under review to guide improvements for future programming. An official rollout of the program will be announced to members once the review is complete.*



in our HEARTS

We acknowledge the passing of the following members and celebrate their part in our circle of sisterhood. This list reflects notifications received at International Headquarters between April 25-October 15, 2025. First, maiden, last names and year of Initiation are listed for each deceased member.

To report the death of a sister, please email thecrescent@gammaphibeta.org with her first, maiden and last name and chapter of Initiation. Reported sisters will be honored in a future issue of The Crescent's "In Our Hearts" section.

Honor a sister with an In Memory Gift. To make an In Memory Gift, visit GammaPhiBeta.org/Donate or call 303.800.2890. View Memorial gifts online at GammaPhiBeta.org/InMemory.

KAPPA (*Minnesota-Twin Cities*)
Dianne Cox Olsen, 1957

LAMBDA (*University of Washington*)
Marcia Leigh Moriarty, 1981
Aldalee Simonson Nugent, 1950

NU (*Oregon*)
Emma Vallandigham Williams, 2010

PI (*Nebraska-Lincoln*)
Amy Colburn Hoffman, 1942

RHO (*Iowa*)
Janice Anthony Mickelson, 1951
Nancy Luthans Olson, 1955
Carolyn Stauffer Stevens, 1956

SIGMA (*Kansas*)
Joyce Reusch French, 1953

PSI (*Oklahoma*)
Suzanne Berry Crabtree, 1958
Kristie McKee Kelly, 1976
Margee Hawks Minter, 1951
Elise Hodges Weed, 1952

ALPHA BETA (*North Dakota*)
Norma Gilbertson Johnson, 1950

ALPHA GAMMA (*Nevada*)
Janice McAuliffe Clausen, 1969

ALPHA DELTA (*Missouri-Columbia*)
Laverne Raining Anderson, 1946
Sue Dorsey Durrett, 1959

ALPHA ZETA (*Texas-Austin*)
Maureen Mooney Jenkins, 1960
Marijo Williams King, 1958

ALPHA THETA (*Vanderbilt*)
Lucille Corkran Nabors, 1954

ALPHA IOTA (*California-Los Angeles*)
MaryAnn Russ Olsen, 1956

ALPHA NU (*Wittenberg*)
Laura Shipley Evilsizor, 1956

ALPHA XI (*Southern Methodist*)
Penelope McPhail Cleveland, 1960

ALPHA UPSILON (*Penn State*)
Julia Hill Flinchbaugh, 1961

ALPHA CHI (*William & Mary*)
Nancy Jo Eller, 1971

BETA ALPHA (*Southern California*)
Frances DeLallo Dean, 1958

BETA DELTA (*Michigan State*)
Charlene Herndon Bozarth, 1955

BETA ZETA (*Kent State*)
Norma George Petit, 1968

BETA ETA (*Bradley*)
Mary Ann Taft, 1951

BETA XI (*Ohio State*)
Sally Dienstberger Hurt, 1955

BETA OMICRON (*Oklahoma City*)
Maytha Wagner Mead, 1954

BETA PI (*Indiana State*)
Marianne Lough Volpert, 1962

BETA RHO (*Colorado-Boulder*)
Elizabeth Wallis, 1958

BETA UPSILON (*Kansas State*)
Linda Achten Steinbrink, 1968

BETA PHI (*Indiana*)
Shirley Flolo Bahde, 1957

GAMMA GAMMA
(*Wisconsin-Milwaukee*)
Judith Fularczyk Jasna, 1960

GAMMA EPSILON (*Puget Sound*)
Betty Breiten Hassler, 1962

GAMMA ZETA
(*Texas A&M-East Texas A&M*)
Vicki Burk Smith

GAMMA LAMBDA (*Louisiana State*)
Kay Waggenspack Smith, 1968

GAMMA CHI (*Texas State-San Marcos*)
Sandra Boteler Boyett, 1987

DELTA GAMMA (*Nebraska-Omaha*)
Trudy Harris Abboud, 1973

DELTA ETA (*California-Irvine*)
Roxane Harumi Kazama, 1983



LINDA "LYN" ERSKINE BURNS
Alpha (Syracuse, 1953)

Linda "Lyn" Erskine Burns lived a long, joy-filled life doing the things she loved with the people she loved. Born in Boston and raised in Watertown, Massachusetts, this Gamma Phi always called New England home. She later traded one cold-weather state for another (and even colder) one when she attended Syracuse University, where she joined Gamma Phi Beta at the first-ever collegiate chapter: Alpha. Lyn built a successful career as an insurance underwriter, but her greatest joy came from her roles as wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. She also found peace and happiness in the water — whether through water aerobics or by catching the waves at the shore. Lyn's warmth and kindness will be dearly missed by those who were lucky enough to know her.



KRISTIE MCKEE KELLY
Psi (Oklahoma, 1976)

"Go big or go home" is Texas' motto — and it perfectly captured how Kristie McKee Kelly lived her life: boldly, joyfully and with an open heart. Born in Denver City, Texas, Kristie called Houston home for most of her life. She traveled widely, laughed loudly and loved deeply, leaving a lasting impression on everyone who knew her. After high school, she attended the University of Oklahoma, where she became a proud Boomer Sooner and a member of Gamma Phi Beta. Kristie enjoyed a rewarding career in accounting spanning more than three decades, primarily in the oil and gas industry. Her greatest joys, however, were her family. Kristie is survived by her children, McKee (Amanda) and Ryan (Makayla), and her three grandsons, Beau, Oliver and Dalton. Known affectionately as "Koko," she treasured every moment spent with her grandchildren. Kristie's generosity, warmth and zest for life continue to shine through her family, who remember her as a bright light in every room she entered.



A CAMP CARETAKER TO *Remember*

George Lamb Watt, devoted caretaker of Gamma Phi Beta's Camp Sechelt, brought joy, warmth and humor to every summer.

Long before our partnership with Girls on the Run (GOTR) and focus of Building Strong Girls, the Sorority dedicated its philanthropy to camping programs for girls in need, a commitment officially adopted in 1929 and continuing until 2012, when we partnered with GOTR.

A Tribute to Camp Sechelt *Now a Treasured Memory for Gamma Phi Beta*

by Lottie Nilson | Outgoing Editor

More than a half century ago Gamma Phi Beta added a tradition to its camping legacy with the purchase of Camp Sechelt in British Columbia. Today, that legacy lives on in the memories of former counselors, staff members, devoted volunteers and the campers whose hearts were touched by Gamma Phi Beta.

Although a difficult one, the decision was made last spring to close Camp Sechelt, as it was known, and sell the property because of the increasing challenge in finding qualified volunteers and staff.

While the camp may be gone, its legacy continues. Like a rock thrown into still water, the ripple effects of the special times shared by campers, staff, counselors and other volunteers live on.

The idea to start a Gamma Phi Beta camp for girls in Canada was first explored at the 1930 Convention because the Sorority wanted to establish a second summer camp (the first was near Denver) to serve underprivileged girls. Delegate Dosh Shorney Stafford (British Columbia) announced that the Vancouver chapter "would love to run a camp!"

Within two years a camp was established in an old rented house at Boundary Bay on the Washington State side of the U.S. Canadian border. Twenty campers, five counselors, a cook and a "camp mother" made for very crowded conditions. This was the first of several different versions of the camp that existed before it found its permanent home at Sechelt.

According to a story in the Winter 1983 issue of *The Crescent*, in 1949, Dosh and Eric Stafford noticed a piece of property for sale at Sechelt, British Columbia. The price was low, as specified in the will of the deceased owner, Archbishop de Penzance, who also stipulated that the land be sold to a charitable organization.

Former camp director Beatrice Wilch MacLeod (British Columbia) described the camp as, "on the waterfront, with a long stretch of pebbly beach. Some days there would be huge breakers pounding against the shore, while at other times the water was still as a mill pond. There are some gorgeous fir and cedar trees, and lovely red-barked arbutus on our property."

Gamma Phi Beta jumped at the chance to acquire this property and, in 1950, the

first session was held at Sechelt with 20 campers, three counselors and one camp director. There was an old farmhouse, a few small cabins and a boathouse. Water was carted in buckets from across the highway, and counselors drove a Model T to the Sechelt wharf to pick up ice packed in sawdust that had been delivered by the Union Steamship Company.

In the following years the camp gained some modern conveniences: a larger dorm was built, allowing there to be 36 campers at each session; huge old refrigerators were brought in, eliminating the need for the ice to be hauled; and the camp added running water when a public main was piped past the property.

Every summer Camp Sechelt hosted about 100 girls ranging in age from 9 to 12. There were usually three sessions, each running almost two weeks. Camp attendance required a recommendation from a school nurse, teacher or counselors, after which the potential campers were interviewed by members of the camp board.

The girls came from a variety of homes. Beatrice MacLeod wrote in *The Crescent*: "Some were from homes that would be quite satisfactory if the incomes weren't so low. Some were from definitely sordid backgrounds. Many were girls from broken homes or big families living in very cramped quarters. All of the children had been chosen by the Vancouver school nurses because of a definite need in that child for the experiences camp could give them. Such things as companionship on an equal footing with other girls of the same age, and understanding and affection, security and the sense of being welcome; good food, fresh air, sunshine and rest."

Before each session, the Sechelt staff would prepare the camp and participate in training sessions, including wildlife identification. During their stay, campers and staff were likely to see eagles, seals, sea lions, crows, hawks, falcons, deer and an occasional bear across the highway.

According to longtime Vancouver camp board member Janet Inman Arbuckle (British Columbia), the girls would travel more than four hours from Vancouver to get to camp. When they arrived, many of the girls had caked on make-up, bad attitudes, bad posture and pimples, and some had lice. Most carried a paper bag that included all they needed



Saying goodbye to Camp Sechelt are Heather Dickson Elliott (McDill), Audrey Buchanan Hetherington (British Columbia), Susan Moore Erb (Manitoba), George Watt (caretaker), Margaret Evans Hodgson (British Columbia), Debbie Berto (British Columbia), Lucy Watt (George's wife), Anne McEwen (British Columbia), Doreen Brown Ramsay (British Columbia) and Sarah Shorney (Toronto). The group spans pledge years from 1937 to 1995.



Read the
camp's full
tribute at
GPBArchives.
org → 1990-
2019 → 2003
→ Summer →
Page 30

Crystal Lake in the Denver, Colorado, area was the first camp to open. In 1947, the Sorority opened several more camps, including a five-acre site with waterfront access at DePencier Beach in Sechelt, British Columbia.

With more Gamma Phi counselors and campers arriving each summer, it became clear that the property needed a dedicated caretaker — someone who could oversee the camp year-round. In 1984, that's when George Lamb Watt stepped in.

A proud Scotsman, George was born in Tranent, East Lothian, Scotland. He always spoke fondly of his beloved home country, no matter where life took him, which was far and wide. After high school, he attended the Edinburgh School of Building and Crafts for a year before beginning an apprenticeship as a French polisher. In May 1952, he was conscripted into the British Army for National Service, serving both overseas and in London, where he worked as a cipher decoder and marched in the 1953 Coronation Parade of Queen Elizabeth II.

George and his family moved to Canada in 1965, where he worked as a painter until retiring in 1999. Alongside his career, he devoted nearly two decades to Camp Sechelt, serving as its caretaker from 1984 until the camp closed in 2003. In his online obituary, his son wrote, "[My dad] was meticulous, as always, in his work [at Camp Sechelt] and went above and beyond to ensure the safety and fun of the campers each summer."

The work George did extended far beyond caring for the physical site. He interacted with Gamma Phis and campers alike, often joining in their sessions and antics with good humor. The 2003 summer issue of *The Crescent* notes, "[George] would often be the subject of many practical jokes and, during our Christmas-in-July celebration, acted as Santa Claus." His

white beard certainly made him a perfect fit for the role.

Every summer, campers left with smiles — and sometimes happy tears — thanks in large part to the time spent with staff like the Gamma Phi counselors and the camp's Santa Claus, George. His presence and care left a mark on everyone who called Camp Sechelt home for the summer months. When the camp closed in the summer of 2003, George and his wife, Lucy, marked the occasion in traditional Scottish Highland dress — attire reserved for significant ceremonies. For George, it reflected the special place Camp Sechelt held in his heart.

George passed away in Vancouver, British Columbia, on November 19, 2024. We like to imagine his spirit peacefully fishing — one of his favorite pastimes — in his beloved Scotland, while also visiting the old Camp Sechelt site, remembering the laughter, love and legacy he helped create there.

Memories of George

Dr. Judy E. Graham (Oklahoma) spent several summers at Camp Sechelt as a counselor. When asked to share memories of George, Judy fondly recalls: "When George came to the Gamma Phi Beta Camp, the property needed many small repairs. We always ran the camp on a limited budget and watched our expenditures closely. George, in the spirit of the true Scot he was, went about fixing things we never asked him to do. With love and care, he repaired or improved the property using bits and pieces here and there, often leaving it in better condition than when it was new. He reminded me of my own father in that way — showing his love with a quick dash of paint or a repaired door hinge — all done on his own time and beyond what we asked of him. He was truly a GPhi guy, in the tradition of the many husbands, fathers and friends before him. Thank you, George Watt, for sharing yourself and your service to Camp Sechelt. May the crescent moon shine on you as you row home, dear friend!"

LIFE LOYAL

Life Loyal is a special program available for all Gamma Phi Beta members to continue their lifelong support of our beloved Sorority beyond their collegiate years while receiving exclusive benefits. This is just one way to continue your lifetime involvement as a member of Gamma Phi Beta while fulfilling your financial obligations with an easy, one-time payment. The dedication of our alumnae members who continue to be involved and financially supportive helps ensure the future of our traditions and sisterhood.

Thank you to the following sisters who joined Life Loyal between July 25 through October 15, 2025.

ALPHA (*Syracuse*)

Elizabeth Churchill
Heather Coakley
Sophia Hertelendy
Emily Boy Holmberg
Shirley Noakes

BETA (*Michigan*)

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Cathy Dirksen

ETA LAMBDA (*Central Florida*)
Carlee Isenhower

ETA NU (*James Madison*)
Hannah Hass

EXTRA



2 of 4 bunk cabins
boat house in rear



2 of 4 bunk cabins
can accommodate 30 children

1949

Scrapbooking may be a lost art, but thanks to HistoryIT, several Gamma Phi Beta scrapbooks — and the memories within — are preserved for generations to enjoy. After meeting Camp Sechelt's devoted caretaker on Page 38, let's explore the camp itself through the pages of a 1949 scrapbook.

George's house
and workshop
on-site!



caretaker's house +
workshop

HIKES



supper on
beach



Pat Davis
Dolores James
Virginia Brooks
Marjaret Shaw



Sunset
Sunset Beach

Want more nuggets of
Gamma Phi History?

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museum, filled with
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Parents

While our members are in college, their copy of *The Crescent* is sent to your home address — we hope you enjoy reading our magazine, too! If your daughter is no longer in college, or is no longer living with you, feel free to send us her new address by emailing thecrescent@gammaphibeta.org.

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Visit GammaPhiBeta.org/Find-A-Member for a full directory of Gamma Phi Beta members!

GAMMA PHI BETA

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Belonging, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

SUMMIT

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This year's summit will focus on inclusive leadership. To learn more and register, visit GammaPhiBeta.org/BEDISummit.

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