

## The Girls' Club

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The beginning of my social identity happened at nine years old. In the 4<sup>th</sup> grade I met my childhood best friend, Christy. Mr. McNeil was our teacher. He was six feet tall, a burly man. He wore jackets with corduroy elbow patches and liked to use slight cracks at our personalities to get us to pay attention. Mr. McNeil gave Christy and me the collective nickname of Chit Chatters of America Club, CCAC. We passed notes in class all day. When we were home in the evening there was hours of empty phone conversations leading into plans for sleepovers on the weekend. When we weren't disrupting Mr. McNeil during class, we held tightly to one another outside of school.

When I started college at Frostburg in western Maryland I didn't give much thought to Greek Organizations. What I knew about Greek Life I could fit on a 3x5 card. I would get the urge to discover Greek life at Frostburg, but decided that none of the groups I knew about were of any interest to me. I didn't give up on being social. It's easy for me to make friends but not so easy for me to connect with new people at a point when I feel comfortable and like myself. I conjugated with the girls in my dorm. We would attend parties together and we formed a powder puff football team. I tried making a foundation with my theatre minor classmates, however, there was no specific group that helped me feel a sense of home.

Sophomore year I spent less time trying to find my college niche and more time submitting transfer applications to Baltimore universities. I felt loss in Frostburg. My roommate traveled the 2 and a half hours home to Baltimore every weekend and I was left alone. I missed my friends from home and was unsettled with how

well I was fitting in at Frostburg. I had made a wrong decision and Frostburg was not the place for me.

On a Saturday night, when all I wanted was companionship and a little college fun, I lay across my loft bed trying to fall asleep. I imagined how comfortable I would be in my own bed back home. A few days later I pledge a sorority. My pledging experience was something of an accident and felt similar to a trip and fall. A friend heard there would be free liquor for girls at an off campus party and invited me to join her. After socializing at the party we realized we were in the middle of a rush event. Until then I had never attended a party thrown by a sorority. The girls were fun loving and interested in talking to us. Days after the party we attended meetings where we got to know this girl group. At these meetings I was interviewed and I was introduced to each individual. A room of 25 young women asking about me along with opening up about themselves was comforting. This was the comfort I was searching for while lying in my dorm room alone. I found common interest in these women that was surprising and exciting. They were from all over Maryland and came from different backgrounds, different majors and they varied in style. At the rush event titled Margarita Monday I was surrounded by the biggest group of friends I had ever seen and I learned about their reasons for deciding to join a sorority.

Kappa Beta Sigma is a local sorority, housed only on the campus of Frostburg State University. The sorority was formed in 2002 by 25 freshman and sophomores who pledged under the guidance of Delta Phi Omega fraternity. The reason these 25 founding sisters pledged was because they wanted to build and be a part of a significant group that was different than the rest offered at FSU. Additionally these women wanted to create a home away from home.

Over the course of a week, I attended four more meetings. At the end of the week there was a heartfelt emotional spaghetti

dinner about how this sorority had changed all these young women's lives. Ashley, a founding sister, beautiful blonde, senior from Washington, D.C. began a story of what Kappa Beta Sigma meant to her. While on a car trip, her five year old nephew presents her with the trivia question 'If you could take one thing with you on a deserted island what would it be?' Ashley's response was that she would bring Kappa Beta Sigma with her. Naturally the intrigued nephew continues the inquisition of what is Kappa Beta Sigma? Ashley describes that Kappa Beta Sigma is her sorority which is a tight group of girls, about 60. The nephew is not impressed with her answer. He points out to Ashley that she cannot take Kappa Beta Sigma with her to the deserted island because she must choose just one thing and if Kappa Beta Sigma is a group of 60 girls than that is more than one. After a chuckle from Ashley she assures her nephew that he is right, that 60 is a larger number than one, but Kappa Beta Sigma is different. Kappa Beta Sigma isn't defined by the number of young women that make up the group. Collectively they are one; one big family. It wouldn't be the same if any one sister was missing from the deserted island. Ashley's story of her nephew and the deserted island was a key deciding factor that helped me to join Kappa Beta Sigma.

Four agonizing and emotional weeks after the spaghetti dinner, I was sporting a Heather gray sweatshirt with yellow and blue block letters KBΣ. Being a part of this elite group made me feel stable at Frostburg. I kept my pledging experience very secret during and even after I crossed over. I didn't want to be judged by people who didn't know what it was about. Judged by people who didn't know what I was about and why I wanted to do this. The stigmas of Greek Life were plastered into our notebooks by campus administration. Freshmen are told that fraternities and sororities are nothing but drinking clubs. A frat will haze you and make you humiliate yourself for friends. Sorority girls are insignificant air-heads that will spread their legs for anything breathing. Only

desperate and insecure people will pledge and pay for their friends. Unfortunately I find that the last statement is true, well at least for me it was. However, I don't see it as a negative thing. I was desperate to find stability in a place I decided to spend the next four years of a very developmental stage in my life. My insecurities were a reflection of being uncomfortable in most environments around Frostburg.

KBS was more than just a social drinking club as most off campus local organizations were seen. It was my home away from home in a place where I felt like I didn't connect with many people. Practically overnight I acquired over 20 best friends. We were pulled together because of our need for stability. Whether we come from a big family and have never been away from home or we are disconnected from our family, we find what we're looking for in the sorority. I became unashamed and shared my experience with anyone who would listen.

Kappa Beta Sigma reintroduced me to my childhood girl club activities like sleepovers, movie nights and gossip sessions. It gave me firsthand experience with college and Greek life: themed socials, all night study sessions, keg races, gravity bong, activism and being a part of a team. Kappa Beta Sigma gave me a little sister, Alycia. I don't have a little sister in my family, just a younger brother. I always felt I was the big sister type but the things I wanted to experience as a big sister I couldn't do with my younger brother. He wasn't interested in matching shoes with outfits, gossiping about the hottest guys in Hollywood or letting me fill him in on makeup secrets. Giving Alycia advice and being a rescue to her when she's done something incredibly asinine is one of my great joys. I pass on clothes to Alycia and warn her of the dangers of not being intuitive when it comes to boys. Alycia appreciates every bit of my care for her because, as her family's big sister, she appreciates being able to throw caution to the wind and know someone will be there for her.

Being a part of this group allowed me to appreciate my environment. I started to regret my feelings about leaving Frostburg. With my KBΣ letters across my chest, going to class, I was proud to be a Burgian (Frostburg student). When I would come home to Baltimore I would tell all my friends the stories of Kappa Beta Sigma. How people around town know who we are, that I attend parties with fraternities dressed in togas or “anything-but-clothes” and have the time of my life. I never have to worry about being alone if I’m just relaxing in my dorm room or have had a little too many at the bar. If I ever find myself in trouble help is only a phone call away and it’s practically impossible to have only one sister come to my rescue.

I built such strong bonds with my sisters because the majority of my time was spent with them. Getting to know them and informing them of what I was all about. I only had two brief years of being a sister while at Frostburg. In the spring of 2007 I graduated from my beloved second home. During an event called Senior Send Off, much like the spaghetti dinner from rush, there wasn’t a dry eye among us girls because of the idea of leaving our family. I knew I was going to see my sisters again but the place where I established this wonderful friendship would no longer be where I lived. Fortunately as more of my sisters are graduating the bond stays just as strong. We have sisters all over Maryland, some in Pennsylvania, small amount in California, Denver, and even sisters in Ohio. No matter where I may find myself I know that a sister will probably be near if she is not already with me.

My brother sent me a quote that stated, “Friends are God’s way of apologizing for family.” This quote was not only humorous but held true to how I feel at times. My family is wonderful. They have always been there when I need them and I have no doubt they harbor unconditional love for me. Family is everything but, for me, they are not enough. My family couldn’t have saved me from the depression of being young and all alone. Seeking the comfort from

them would have hindered any progress I was to discover. My family would have been a crutch to escape Frostburg and not face the challenges in front of me. I didn’t choose my family I chose my friends. I chose to be a part of an extended family that expressed interest in me. God wasn’t apologizing by sending me in the right direction to meet Kappa Beta Sigma; He was offering me a gift. I appreciate the gift immensely. Kappa Beta Sigma will always be the *one* thing I take with me everywhere.