

**NEVADA***Las Vegas Alumnae Club*

The Las Vegas Alumnae Club kicked off their club year with an evening of real-life how-to's. Insurance agent **ROSALIE GONZALEZ**, California Kappa, spoke about buying, purchasing and changing insurance. Founder of a nonprofit golf tournament **MOLLIE SCOTT STEWART**, North Dakota Alpha, spoke about starting her own foundation and how it has grown over the years. Photographer **MCKENZI TAYLOR**, South Dakota Alpha, provided discounted headshots for club members for their personal or professional use.

**OKLAHOMA***Oklahoma City Alumnae Club*

The Oklahoma City Alumnae Club decided to have each of its meetings coincide with its yearlong theme, Angels All Around Us. The theme is dedicated to the club members who exemplify Pi Beta Phi's core value of Philanthropic Service to Others. The club's October meeting honored Whiz Kids, an organization promoting literacy, learning and mentorship through after-school programming at local churches. Oklahoma Alpha **BETH POST HAMMACK** has served as a Whiz Kids coordinator for 13 years. At the meeting, club members donated books to the program.

*Members of Oklahoma Alpha Reunion*

In August, four Oklahoma Alphas from the pledge class of 1986 reunited at Lake Tahoe in Northern California. The women enjoyed the beautiful weather and the opportunity to reconnect after so many years.

**OREGON***Members of Oregon Beta Reunion*

In September, more than two dozen Oregon Betas gathered in Portland, Oregon, for a reunion. One highlight of the weekend was a circle where each sister had the chance to share her thoughts in two areas: which of her dreams as a

Below: Oregon Beta reunion.



20-year-old had come true and what she had experienced in the last 40 years that she never expected. The responses generated many heartfelt discussions about how important Pi Phi membership has been to the women.

*Lake Oswego-Dunthorpe, Oregon, Alumnae Club*

The Lake Oswego-Dunthorpe, Oregon, Alumnae Club held a heritage meeting entitled "It's All Greek to Me." The women enjoyed a delicious Greek food dinner, looked at historical displays from the club's early years and shared Pi Phi memorabilia from the past. Three of the club's founders were in attendance, and those founders who were unable to attend were honored through photographs.

**SOUTH CAROLINA***Columbia, South Carolina, Alumnae Club*

The Columbia, South Carolina, Alumnae Club held a meet-and-greet to connect alumnae of different generations. During the event, the women held the alumnae *Leading with Values* seminar "Speed Date My Arrow" to encourage meaningful conversation. The event concluded with the Pi Phis gathering in a circle and passing a candle while singing "Pi Phi Lights." When the candle reached a newly engaged sister, she blew out the candle and shared her engagement story.

**TENNESSEE***Nashville, Tennessee, Alumnae Club*

In October, the Nashville, Tennessee, Alumnae Club's Arch Angel interest group gathered for a Halloween celebration. The interest group is for women who are age 55 and older. More than 30 women attended the event, which included a murder mystery game, luncheon, costume contest and lots of laughter with Pi Phi sisters.

**VIRGINIA***Members of Ohio Delta Reunion*

Seven Ohio Deltas from the pledge class of 1959 have kept in touch for 57 years through an annual group letter and in-person reunions every other year. This year, the women met in Charlottesville, Virginia, and enjoyed touring the historical sites in the area.

*Richmond, Virginia, Alumnae Club*

Members of the Richmond, Virginia, Alumnae Club's Out and About interest group visited the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts to see the Fine Arts and Flowers special exhibit. More than 75 garden clubs across Virginia interpret masterworks from the museum's permanent collection for the exhibit, resulting in a dazzling array of beauty and creativity throughout the museum's galleries.

in my stomach grew larger by the minute, but my mom told me no matter what, we had to be thankful we were all safe, and we would get through this together.

LSU decided to push back primary recruitment to give students and faculty time to recuperate before the start of the semester. Once the water finally receded on Wednesday morning, I met my family at our house, only to open the warped and jammed door to the most gut-wrenching sights and smells. Load by load, we hauled everything out to the street. From little things like clothing and bedding to the big things like furniture and cabinets, we made piles upon piles. I felt numb. I couldn't comprehend what had happened. My parents are my rocks and to see them in such distress and worry made me sick.

However, we were absolutely blessed with the sweetest angels ever. My Pi Phi sisters showed up to my house ready to help in any way they could. They tore up floors, busted sheetrock, pulled moldy insulation out of the walls and did it all with smiles on their faces. Never once did they complain that it was hot or that they were exhausted. They were there for me in so many ways, and I am forever grateful for all their help. I also had many alumnae reach out to make sure I was okay and to let me know I was in their thoughts and prayers.



The most valuable thing I learned from this experience is that things, while they may have special significance, are only material. It is the people in our lives who are the most precious. With the help we received, my family is in the rebuilding process, and we are hoping to be back in business after the holidays. There is nothing that could prepare anyone for a situation like this, but I do believe everything happens for a reason and with prayer, faith and a whole lot of Pi Phi love, one can overcome any struggle.

## The Light at the End of the Tunnel

By Oregon Alpha MISSY GERBER

My husband, Steve, and I had been living on our houseboat for six years in Spring 2011. We loved everything about living on the water, especially the calm, peaceful environment the community provided. When nighttime rolled around, the only discernible sounds were the small waves cresting beneath our feet.

One Friday night, I woke up to use the restroom. As I was sleepily dragging my feet back to bed, I tripped and fell, hitting my head on the bedframe on the way down. When I tried to get up, I couldn't move. I started to panic: why couldn't I control my body? I didn't know that my fall was worsened by a condition called cervical spinal stenosis, which had been compressing the nerves in my neck. The collision inflamed the stenosis, closing

off my spinal cord and instantly paralyzing me from the neck down.

Steve frantically called 911. The ambulance arrived and medics brought a gurney down the wood-planked pathway to our houseboat's doorstep. The ambulance transported us to the hospital and surgery followed the next day. Shattered vertebrae were fused together by metal plates and a cadaver bone replaced part of my cervical spinal column. I spent a full week in the hospital without regaining any feeling in my lower extremities.

Unsure what my healing would look like, I was sent to the Rehabilitation Institute of Oregon (RIO), which specializes in rehabilitation for patients with traumatic

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brain, stroke and spinal cord injuries. I was a patient at RIO for three months and completed physical therapy three times a day during my stay. I had weekly sessions with my doctor, physical therapist, occupational therapist and psychiatrist. The days were physically, mentally and emotionally exhausting, but I was determined to find the light at the end of the tunnel.

At first, I could pull myself up with a walker. Then, I could stand on my own. Finally, I could walk. I still had a long way to go, but I was going to get there, one foot in front of the other. That August, we had many things to celebrate: my health, my homecoming and my 57th birthday.

During my journey to recover, my Pi Phi sisters encouraged me every step along the way. It was often a member of my alumnae club who drove me to physical therapy or to the grocery store. One sister even organized meals to be delivered to our house those first few weeks after we returned home. Though my health was improving, it would be some time before I could return to work. Steve and I were unsure what the future held for us financially as we watched medical bills pile up.

That's when one of my Pi Phi sisters encouraged me to apply for a grant from Pi Beta Phi Foundation's Emma Harper Turner Fund, a fund designated specifically for sisters in dire financial need. Shortly after applying, I learned I would receive a grant and immediately used the funds to cover our expenses.



Above and below: Oregon Alpha **MISSY GERBER** spent three months at the Rehabilitation Institute of Oregon after hitting her head during a fall. The injury was worsened by a condition called cervical spinal stenosis, which had been compressing the nerves in Missy's neck. Missy and her husband were able to cover medical expenses thanks in part to an Emma Harper Turner Fund grant through Pi Beta Phi Foundation.

I was grateful when my close Pi Phi sisters raised their hands to help, but I was overwhelmed by the support I received from the unnamed sisters who made the grant possible. It was the last bit of support I needed to feel fully confident in my recovery.

One thing I've learned is that healing of great magnitude cannot happen on its own. From the moment I was wheeled through the hospital doors, every physician, caretaker, family member and friend impacted my recovery. And while I couldn't have done it without them, it was truly the support of my Pi Phi sisters that helped me stand on my own two feet again. Now that I am in a physically and financially healthy place, I have made it a priority to give to the Emma Harper Turner Fund, so I may provide relief to sisters who are also determined to find the light at the end of their tunnels. ←

