



Members of sororities are encouraged to keep their grades up and do volunteer work for their group's chosen philanthropy

## From SUGAR LAND to SORORITIES

Written by Jen Petty

**M**any high school seniors are consumed by more than the graduation ceremonies that will be held in a couple of months. They're also preparing to enter college and make the decisions that go along with that monumental step. Some of the girls in the Sugar Land area are not only considering which college to attend following graduation, but some may also be thinking about joining a college sorority. While collegiate sororities are often stigmatized by news reports of hazing and other less-than-academic activities, the benefits and advantages of sorority life are often overlooked.

### Sorority Benefits

One of the biggest advantages to joining a sorority, says Fort Bend Panhellenic Association (FBPA) President Shelley Whitworth, is the automatic built-in network. "When you go to college you may not know many people, and it's hard sometimes to make friends in the

### What You and Your Daughter Need to Know Before Joining

huge college classes. Membership in a sorority makes it easier for the girls to make friends." In addition, says Whitworth, the sororities hold formal activities involving both the sorority girls and their parents, so parents have a chance to get to know their daughter's friends. Hannah Ostrander agrees, "I just really wanted a home away from home to make the transition easier." The circles of friendship created through sorority life often last years after college graduation.

Another benefit of joining a sorority is the involvement and encouragement to participate in leadership roles in the sorority and around campus, in volunteer opportunities, and in philanthropic activities. "I really like the fact that the girls give back and serve. Service makes you think outside of yourself, and any time you're doing that you become better," says Hannah's mother, Louise Ostrander.

For more information about sorority life and the recruitment process, visit [fortbendpanhellenic.org](http://fortbendpanhellenic.org), [npcwomen.org](http://npcwomen.org), or your college's Greek Life webpage.

### Parental Concerns

As far as parents' concerns about sororities taking time away from academics, Whitworth said all the sororities expect candidates to have a minimum GPA of 2.5 to be considered for membership, and recently, sororities have put more emphasis on scholarships and raising the minimum GPA. Because of these requirements, many sororities offer studying and tutor assistance. "You think they aren't going to have enough time to make good grades, but Hannah got a 4.0 her first semester and fit all the activities in," says her mother.

Concerns parents have about partying and hazing is also addressed by the FBPA: "All National Panhellenic members have 'no hazing' policies and take strict actions against any chapter that participates in any hazing activity. The charge is taken very seriously and not tolerated." Regarding drinking and partying, Hannah says that in her sorority she feels that she can make her own decisions. "They don't force or pressure me to do anything."

### Recruitment Process

Sorority recruitment, which is formally known as "Rush", is the "formal process for potential members to meet women of the sororities and for the sorority women to meet the potential members. This is the time to learn about the values, traditions, and the programming of the individual sororities," states the FBPA.

"You go through the sororities and talk to people and find out who you mesh with and where you see yourself. It's very intense, but manageable," says Hannah, who went through sorority recruitment week last fall. Some sororities emphasize on social activities while others are known to focus more on academics and/or service. Hannah suggests asking other university students about the environment at different sororities.



Caley Dawson and Rebecca Atkins attended a recruitment workshop held by Fort Bend Panhellenic

Photo by Jen Petty



Allison Webb and Michelle Boecker, who are looking into joining a sorority, filled out recruitment registration forms at a workshop

Photo by Jen Petty

“When you go to college you may not know many people, and it’s hard sometimes to make friends in the huge college classes. Membership in a sorority makes it easier for the girls to make friends.” - Shelley Whitworth, FBPA President

Photo by Jen Petty



Friends Ally Roberts, Ashley Crawford, Laura Euell, Chelbi Jackson and Shannon Cook joined sororities at their college campus last year

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At the end of the week, girls are offered a “bid” or invitation to join a sorority. “You’ll most likely be in a sorority if you want to be in one, it just might not be your first choice,” explains Hannah. “Even if in the beginning my friends were iffy about a sorority because it wasn’t their first choice, they love it now and are completely happy,” she adds.

### Start Early

Whitworth urges girls who might be interested in joining a sorority to sign up for sorority recruitment at the college they will be attending as soon as possible. Girls interested in sorority membership need to combine letters of reference, resumes, transcripts, and photos in packets that will be given to the sororities.

Hannah sums up her feelings, stating, “If girls are thinking about being involved in a sorority, they should just do it because it was one of the best decisions I’ve made!”

### Where to Find Answers

The Fort Bend Panhellenic Association (FBPA) is a non-profit organization that represents the 26 sororities included in the National Panhellenic Conference. The Association helps provide information about sorority recruitment as well as the costs and opportunities associated with sorority membership.

Members of the FBPA are always available to answer any questions parents or their daughters may have about the recruitment process and sorority life. “Our job is just to make it a pleasant experience for the girls,” says Sue Fredrickson, one of the FBPA members. Last year, the FBPA helped Hannah learn about sororities when she was applying for colleges. Her mother says, “I didn’t really know what to expect because I wasn’t in a sorority myself. Any concerns I had were totally addressed by the Fort Bend Panhellenic.” SLM

*JEN PETTY recently moved with her family to Sugar Land. She has worked previously as a photojournalist and now does portrait photography.*

Chelsea Carpenter and Hannah Ostrander are members of Chi Omega at Texas Tech University



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