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**KATIE BROSSY**

**A 2017 REAL. STRONG.  
WOMAN. OF DISTINCTION**

**MEET THE  
2017-18  
CHAPTER  
CONSULTANTS**

**AROUND  
THE WORLD:  
SISTERS  
ABROAD**

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REAL. STRONG. WOMEN.  
of Distinction.

2017 AWARD WINNERS

## *Katie Morgan Brossy*

*E, University of  
Nebraska*

According to Katie Morgan Brossy, to be a real, strong woman, you need a well-defined sense of who you are and where you come from.

Katie's family boasts a long history of female leadership. A member of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska and Santee Sioux, her grandmother was a tribal council member, and her mother has been the executive director of the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs for more than 20 years. Their experiences and legacy helped shape Katie into the person she is today.

As an attorney at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, LLP, Katie advises clients regarding American Indian law and policy, with a focus on representation of Indian tribes, tribal governmental instrumentalities and tribally owned enterprises. She has worked on a number of highly significant tribal issues, including Indian water rights settlements and the largest tribal trust claim settlement, and has also represented tribal clients on issues regarding federal, state and tribal tax laws; Indian gaming law; land into trust matters; and economic development initiatives.

"I have been very fortunate to follow in my ancestors' footsteps in tribal leadership, and to pursue my legal career in a way that allows me to advocate for and protect tribal rights," Katie shared. "I represent and assist Indian tribes to secure important water rights and protect tribal sovereignty. As part of this effort, I helped pass one of the largest Indian water rights



settlements in U.S. history, which has confirmed a secure water supply and funding for a clean drinking water system on the Reservation for the first time.”

Katie feels Alpha Chi Omega was instrumental in helping her achieve these goals. As a first-generation college student, the university environment was overwhelming at first. She wasn't sure about Greek life—no one in her family had been in a sorority.

“I knew the stereotypes. I expected a lot of young, white women, and not a lot of diversity,” Katie said. “But my chapter was welcoming and warm, and quickly became my support system. I gained strength, knowledge and a commitment to lead. I feel confident that I can attribute my success in my professional career to the life skills and friendships I made in Alpha Chi.”

After graduating from the University of Nebraska, Katie received her J.D. from Columbia Law School, where she was the co-chair of the Native American Law Student Association. She has served as the president of the Native American Bar Association of D.C. and currently serves on her law firm's diversity committee. She also serves as a board member of the Notah Begay III Foundation, whose mission is to reduce Native American childhood obesity and Type-2 diabetes.

“I hope other Native American women can see this profile and understand that Alpha Chi Omega and the Greek system are open and welcoming to Native American women,” Katie added. “It was such a positive part of my life, and it helped make me the real, strong woman I am today.”

Katie currently resides in Alexandria, Virginia, with her husband, Jackson Brossy, and their 3-year-old son, Evan. They are expecting another son in early August.



## *Dana Boyd Barr T, Brenau University*

Dana Boyd Barr is a professor of exposure science and environmental health at Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health, Department of Environmental Health.

A real, strong woman leading in STEM education and research, Dana established a state-of-the-art laboratory at Emory's Rollins School of Public Health to assess human exposure to a wide range of chemicals. Throughout her career, Dana has studied maternal-child health, paternal reproductive health, and farmworker safety in Thailand, and she is the author of more than 300 peer-reviewed publications and book chapters.

Prior to joining Emory, Dana spent 23 years at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. She devoted much of her time there to the development of methods for assessing human exposure to a variety of environmental toxicants, including current-use pesticides, phthalates, organochlorine chemicals (pesticides and PCBs), phytoestrogens, diethylene glycol, methyl eugenol, vinyl chloride and others.

Dana is a leader among her

peers, too. She is past president of the International Society of Exposure Science (ISES, 2010-2012) and previously served as its treasurer, and she is the past editor-in-chief and current editor emeritus of ISES's official journal, *Journal of Exposure Science and Environmental Epidemiology*.

As a result of her efforts, Dana has received awards including ISES's Daisey Award for Outstanding Investigator; two Health and Human Services Secretary's awards for exposure-health investigations involving diethylene glycol and methyl parathion poisoning; the 2004 Federal Scientific Employee of the Year; the Center for Disease Control's Mackel Award for outstanding collaboration among epidemiology and laboratory; and the Environmental Protection Agency's Silver Medal for outstanding contributions to the development of protocols for the *National Children's Study*. More recently, she was a 2014, 2015 and 2016 recipient of the Thomson Reuters Most Highly Cited Researcher award, representing the top 1 percent of researchers in ecology and the environment over the previous 10 years.

Dana says Alpha Chi Omega had a direct, positive impact on her professional path.

“Through Alpha Chi Omega, I found a voice. I discovered that women could make a difference in altruistic, academic and even political success,” she shared. “Chapter leadership opportunities and learning how to working together for a common goal ultimately helped me to become more competitive in my field.”





## *Safeena Mecklai II, University of California - Berkeley*

Safeena Mecklai grew up with strong female role models who taught her that there is nothing more powerful than the love and support of a sister.

“When I joined Alpha Chi Omega, I immediately felt not only support, but also a challenge from the women around me to be the best version of myself,” she shared. “By pushing me to seek out leadership roles outside my comfort zone, give my all to selecting and recruiting the best sisters to join our community, and always having tough conversations about what it means to be a woman in a sorority in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the women of Alpha Chi were the most influential people in my college experience.”

Today, Safeena is a lobbyist at Capalino+Company, a top lobbying firm in New York City. Her work includes nonprofit lobbying—getting nonprofit organizations funding from the city government; corporate social responsibility—helping organizations have a meaningful impact on the local community; and minority- and women-owned business (MWBE) consulting.

As part of her MWBE practice, Safeena invented a mobile app that

connects minority- and women-owned small businesses with city and state government contracting opportunities. In New York City in FY16, just 4.8 percent of city contracts went to MWBEs. This app will help increase the number of MWBEs finding and winning city and state contracts.

Safeena’s work often includes tough conversations about ethics, relationships, presentation and leadership.

“The way I think about each of those things is in many ways shaped by my experience as an Alpha Chi Omega. In my work, a big part of my day-to-day is convincing people of the importance of participating in conversations that might affect their businesses’ success. As an Alpha Chi who was involved in local government outside the chapter, I repeatedly engaged in this kind of advocacy within our community. The most important part of that experience was learning how to build coalitions, seek out allies and learn from diversity of experience.”

Safeena also serves on the young professionals committee of the New York League of Conservation Voters and is chair of the associate board of local nonprofit The LAMP.

“Both in college and now in NYC, I seek out my sisters for support. When doing difficult work, there is nothing more important than a community of people who support and challenge you to make you the most effective you can be,” Safeena concluded.



## *Ellen J. Foster, Ph.D. IP, Texas Tech University*

When Ellen J. Foster joined the Gamma Rho chapter, she was a shy sophomore 400 miles from home.

“Alpha Chi Omega gave me the tools to come out of my corner with confidence and determination,” Ellen explained. “The skills I learned in Alpha Chi Omega were invaluable as I headed down my career path as an educator. I never dreamed of leading a classroom, a department meeting or a national organization.”

Ellen’s career has put her in a position of leadership in those forums and more. From the high school geography classroom in rural south Texas to teacher preparation programs at an SEC flagship institution, the skills she learned in Alpha Chi Omega have endured, and continue to help her foster change in our world.

After graduating from Texas Tech, Ellen earned a Master of

Arts in teaching from Trinity University and taught high school social studies in south central Texas for six years, moving from novice teacher to co-lead geography teacher of a group of 13 geography teachers. Ellen coordinated the Texas Alliance for Geographic Education's 2001 Geography Awareness Week (GAW) program and traveled to Washington, D.C., to work with other GAW coordinators at the National Geographic Society. She earned her Ph.D. in geography-geographic education from Texas State University - San Marcos in 2006. Ellen was named runner-up for the National Council for Geographic Education's (NCGE) Natoli Dissertation Award in 2007 for her research on underrepresented students' perceptions of careers in geography.

She participated in the Praxis II National Advisory Committee for geography and was a table leader for the Advanced Placement human geography exam. In 2009, Ellen earned her first leadership role with the NCGE. She served as recording secretary, followed by vice president of curriculum & instruction and, in 2016, president of the NCGE Board of Directors. Additionally, the Mississippi Geographic Alliance Steering Committee nominated Ellen for an NCGE Distinguished Teaching Award in 2012, and the geography department at Texas State University named her a Distinguished Alumnus in 2016.



## *Victoria Conner Nibarger*

### *IZ, Kansas State University*

Victoria Conner Nibarger is a real, strong woman abroad, serving our nation as a foreign service officer.

As a U.S. diplomat, Victoria has helped citizens facing natural disasters, developed new bilateral economic ties after years of political disagreements and reported on the humanitarian needs of a country at war.

First, as a consular officer in Jamaica, Victoria helped keep our borders safe and managed the evacuation of dozens of Americans from the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. She then served as an economic officer in Serbia, where she helped the Serbian government improve aviation safety, opening the door for direct flights between our countries. Currently a political officer in Ukraine, Victoria influences U.S. policy decisions regarding the armed conflict in the country's east.

"For decades, American diplomacy was a male-dominated field. Until the 1970s, women diplomats were forced to retire if they married," Victoria shared. "Today, although the percentage of new female officers is approaching that of males, women remain underrepresented in the senior ranks. I believe that decision-making is strongest when various views and perspectives are considered. To help ensure that female voices are at the policy table, it is vital that women officers build support networks, mentor and help each other succeed."

Alpha Chi Omega modeled such woman-to-woman support during Victoria's collegiate years.

"My Gamma Zeta sisters and I learned to lift each other up," Victoria explained. "Late-night sessions in our study room helped me ace tough exams. Chapter leadership opportunities taught me how to unite a team for a common goal. Dance parties with our jukebox reminded me to prioritize joy. My sisters are my lifelong friends, and they continue to teach me to enjoy the journey."



## *Eileen Wixted* *BE, Michigan State* *University*

After 14 years in television news and climbing the ranks at NBC affiliates across the country, Eileen Wixted had various awards under her belt, including an Emmy. Looking for her next challenge, she decided to start a communications and crisis management firm in Des Moines, Iowa. Over the past 25 years, Wixted & Company has grown and evolved into a nationally recognized firm. And in 2016, Eileen was honored as the Women Business Owner of the Year in central Iowa.

“Leadership is about empowering and inspiring. Building a business takes tenacity and a positive outlook,

and is easier when approached as a unified front—all things I learned as a sister,” Eileen said. “The Symphony has helped guide how I approach life and others. ‘To see beauty even in the common things of life, to shed the light and love and friendship round me’ are words that carry a tremendous amount of meaning. I am thankful Alpha Chi Omega helped shape a wide-eyed collegian into a real, strong woman who is not only successful, but fulfilled.”

While Eileen is proud of her business success, she is equally proud of her roles as wife to Bill and mother to Caroline, Meredith, Alex and Carter. Words from the Symphony – “to send forth the chords of love, unselfishness, sincerity” – have also guided her parenting and her marriage, especially in times of strife.

“My husband, Bill, suffered liver failure and underwent a transplant in July 2016. His recovery has been challenging and uncertain,” Eileen shared. “In times like that, you rely on your inner strength and the strength and love of your friends. Maintaining a close friendship with six of my chapter sisters is among my most cherished successes. I would not be where I am today professionally or personally without Alpha Chi.”



## *Paige Berges* *FX, Stetson University*

Real, strong woman Paige Berges is always trying to find new ways to make a positive difference in the world. Alpha Chi Omega’s domestic violence philanthropy work made a big impact on her: In her legal career, she regularly volunteered to improve the lives of domestic violence survivors in pro bono practice.

Paige also volunteered with Lawyers Without Borders, helping to improve the capacity of foreign lawyers – primarily women – to resolve disputes and communicate more effectively for change. She also worked with the International Criminal Court and International

Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, providing similar advocacy training and guidance on best practices.

Today, Paige continues to teach students remotely as an exam coach for Sponsors for Educational Opportunity. Her legal focus, however, has shifted.

“I have increasingly come to believe that we must address failures in the private sector in order to have lasting change in human rights and development. Corruption and money laundering deprive developing countries of billions in much-needed capital, and allow criminal organizations to thrive, affecting human rights in myriad contexts,” Paige explained. “That’s why I currently focus on financial crime compliance in banking. I work to improve best practice through industry forums and engagement with regulators, and volunteer with charities to help them meet their own financial crime compliance requirements. I rely on my confidence to network between public and private sectors and influence change. I feel very fortunate that I have been able to get the education and opportunity to make a difference in individuals’ lives as well as on a broader scale.”



## *Barbara Brooks Wilkerson*

### *EP, University of Delaware*

Barbara Brooks Wilkerson is a real, strong woman with an impressive list of life accomplishments. Retired Army officer, pediatric nurse, founder of an orphanage in Haiti and mother of nine children, Barbara says Alpha Chi Omega positioned her for future success across the board.

“Alpha Chi Omega gave me a platform to be engaged in student affairs and be involved in leadership throughout my four years of college,” Barbara said. “I learned how to work with others, lead from within and empower those around me. Those experiences helped define my leadership style, which has been a significant part of my life’s journey and accomplishments.”

Alpha Chi was also the origin

of Barbara’s relationship with community service.

“Recognizing the impact of a group of thoughtful, committed sisters to change the world was powerful. We became aware that service to others changed lives.”

This philosophy helped contribute to Barbara’s current labor of love, LOVE Takes Root, a grassroots nonprofit she founded with her husband, Rick, in 2011.

LOVE Takes Root’s first project was to rebuild La Concorde, a Haitian orphanage housing 60 children. Its former home was destroyed in the 2010 earthquake.

“When we met the staff and children of La Concorde, they were in dire straits—no food, no water, no shelter and no future,” Barbara shared. “We went to work. We had the first LOVE Takes Root board meeting July 2011, and by September 2013, we had moved the children to a new location in Haiti with 3 acres of land.”

Over the past six years, a primary school, a secondary school and a medical/dental clinic for the community have also been built by LOVE Takes Root.





## *Rebecca Weaver-Hightower*

### *ΘΑ, Clemson University*

Rebecca Weaver-Hightower has spent much of the 20+ years since she became an Alpha Chi Omega in the university system.

“I jokingly tell my students I loved college so much, I decided to never leave,” said Rebecca. “One of the reasons college was so special was the close friendships and support network I built through Alpha Chi Omega. College was also when I first saw what an organized and committed group of people can accomplish when they work together.”

Rebecca also attributes her path to academia to her time as an

Alpha Chi Omega collegian.

“I remember the idea of a graduate degree becoming real to me when one of my sisters mentioned applying to grad school—something I hadn’t really considered for myself until then,” she shared. “And Alpha Chi certainly gave me my first real exposure to formal meetings and organizations, which has proven to be a large part of my life today.”

Rebecca went on to get not one, but two graduate degrees and is now a professor of English literature and postcolonial studies at the University of North Dakota. She has published three books and many articles, and has won teaching awards for her work with students.

Recently, Rebecca drew on her Alpha Chi Omega experience to guide her involvement in University Senate, including presiding over the new university president’s inauguration and serving on his strategic planning and steering committee as a faculty representative.

“Much of this work I can trace back to my experience as part of an organization with many moving parts and roles for women, as well as to the confidence I gained as an Alpha Chi Omega member,” Rebecca concluded.



## *Julie Crider Wisbrock Φ, University of Kansas*

When Julie Crider Wisbrock left the University of Kansas, she knew her Alpha Chi Omega days weren't behind her. First, she traveled as a collegiate leadership consultant. Then, after moving to Chicago, she became chapter advisor for the Iota Rho chapter at Loyola University - Chicago.

"For years, I led discussions teaching accountability and

responsibility. I focused on recruiting an advisory board and had to balance being the chapter's cheerleader as well as their voice of reason," Julie explained. "The membership experience and successes shared during those years brought those women together, and I can still see the strong bonds they share with each other today. Their lifelong friendships are my success story in working with this chapter."

In 2012, Julie converted her volunteer experience with Alpha Chi Omega into a career as Pi Beta Phi's assistant director of chapter development. In this role, Julie focused on mapping out the organization's risk management efforts, including working with a team to develop a major prevention education program called Critical Conversations. Critical Conversations starts peer-to-peer conversations on topics such as alcohol, hazing, sexual assault and bullying. As a result, more than 6,000 college women have started critical conversations at their chapters.

Now Pi Phi's senior director of

chapter support, Julie is responsible for leading and mentoring a team of 20 women who have a direct impact on thousands of college women every day. She oversees all aspects of chapter support, including extension, recruitment, programming, assessment and risk management, and provides a long-term vision for supporting chapters while building trust internally with the organization's volunteers and externally with campus partners.

"My success is directly related to my mentors, who have provided me great advice and continue to challenge and support me along my professional path," Julie noted.

Professionally, she says Alpha Chi Omega has taught her that when you are truly passionate and dedicated to the work you do, success will follow.

"The work we do challenges me, frustrates me and inspires me. Working with women truly dedicated to the mission and vision of the fraternity movement gives me hope that the sorority membership experience is more important than ever, and that it will impact the world my daughters will live in 10 or 20 years from now."