

THETA CHI

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[Assignment: Write an essay in which you define something that resists easy definition, or something you feel qualified by your experience or by your reading to define more precisely, less generically, than the dictionary does. For example, what is high school, really? When for you did childhood end and something else begin? What does the word "home" mean to you these days? What does it really mean when someone says to you that they "just want to be friends"?]

The beginning of the year seems like it was only a heartbeat away, but boy, have things changed. When I got here I didn't know a soul and had a hard time making friends. I hated school because I felt like there was nothing I could call my own, but then I became part of something that would change my view of school, and change my life forever. The thing that I became part of is the brotherhood of Theta Chi.

Theta Chi is something that is very special to me and something that I will give my heart and soul to, to make sure it does not change. It is something that has changed my view of school, and made me grow to love Valparaiso University. It is different from any other type of organization I have belonged to. Throughout my childhood and all the way up until now I have belonged to sports organizations. Sports are the reason I have been successful so far in life, but Theta Chi has taught me to do something that sports teams only talk about doing. The thing that Theta Chi taught me is how to become part of a family.

In athletics coaches preach to their players that to be a successful team there can't be individuals; to be successful you have to become a family. As we all know, athletic fields are filled with individuals and rarely do we see a team where everybody is working towards the well-being of the team. Theta Chi is the first organization that I have been a part of that has no individuals. Theta Chi is one big family. The first time I learned this was through pledging. Everyone in my pledge class was generous and caring. Whenever I needed a helping hand my pledge brothers were there to lend me one. It is truly amazing to me that people who hardly knew each other at the start of pledging could become such good friends by the end. The best friends I have made here at school are my pledge brothers. I'm closer and more open with my pledge brothers, whom I have only known for two months, than I am with my friends from home whom I have known my whole life. I'm sure that the friendships I have made through Theta Chi will last a lifetime.

Family life is something that has always been very important to me. My mom, dad, brother, and sister have all played an important role in my life. They have influenced my decision making and they have been there when I have needed a shoulder to cry on. For these reasons, coming to Valparaiso was hard on me and took a big adjustment. When I got here I really had no one to turn to. Of course, I had made some good friends in football, but there was no one that I really could confide in. I would find myself calling home almost every night, trying to become less homesick and trying to still be part of a family. When I went home for Christmas Break I didn't want to come back because I was once again attached to family life. Now, two

months later I find myself enjoying school, less homesick, and once again a part of a family. My extended family is Theta Chi. It is my home away from home. We have such a strong brotherhood that I know I can go to my brothers with any type of problem I have. One example of this is when I went to one of my brothers because I had just experienced a death in the family. He knew just what to say to comfort me and he was my shoulder to cry on. The brothers will drop everything in order to protect me, and the love that we share extends throughout our fraternity. Whether it means giving a brother a ride to class, or helping him with a homework assignment, they are always there to lend a helping hand. I would not feel shy about crying in front of my brothers or asking for help through a tough time. Theta Chi is truly a family I am proud to be a part of.

Besides being a place that is caring and loving, Theta Chi is also a place where you can get away from the pressures of school. The weekends are a time when I need to get away from my school work and sit back and relax. By going to the house I know I will be able to find that type of atmosphere. Whether it means sitting around playing cards or having a party with a sorority, there is always something to do. When I am at home I am always wondering what there will be to do on the weekend, but being a brother of Theta Chi means you don't have to worry about that. You may think I am talking about going down to the house and getting butt wasted, but I am not. I am an athlete so I rarely drink. When I go down to the house I am able to have good clean fun and meet some great people. It is the ultimate getaway from the strains of school.

Theta Chi is like nothing I have ever experienced before. The brotherhood is based on love and trust. It has changed my life forever. No longer do I constantly think about my family at home, because now I have the family of Theta Chi to turn to.