

Jennifer Miller Rinehart

Epsilon Theta and Atlanta Alumnae Chapter

I have always been surrounded by lights—literally. I grew up helping my dad painstakingly wrap every tree in the front yard with holiday lights and later studied technical theater, which included theatrical and event lighting. Now, I work for a company that designs and installs lighting for professional sports teams and concerts and is responsible for decorating Atlanta every winter.

When I see confused families standing in the department store debating between parallel and series lights, I see my purpose. I loudly overexplain to my husband how happy I am that we chose parallel. If one bulb in a series circuit goes out, they all do. Each bulb must then be checked individually to see which one lost its glow. If one light fades in a parallel circuit, the rest will still glimmer brightly.

Tri Sigma is a parallel circuit. If a member is going through a hardship, their light may dim, but our circuit allows the rest to still gleam. Of course, the lights of our organization will always shine brighter when every member is active, but the community we have built is strong enough to allow members to take a breath when they need it.

I know this with absolute certainty because my light waned considerably as a collegiate member—it practically turned off. Life handed me adversity I was not nearly equipped to handle, and it consumed my very being. Fortunately, the members of Epsilon Theta Chapter could shine more intensely during my dark period and handed me the tools to fix my light. Because of our parallel circuit, they also immediately saw it was my light that needed to be restored. I was empowered to ask for support and received it in abundance.

Because of them, my light grew brighter, and I have the skills to help others who begin to dim. I now have the chance to be the very luminary I once needed, and I am able to be myself again. I am back to paying it forward when I can, back to surprising others with “just because” gifts when the mood strikes, and back to driving up to my parents' house every year to help my dad with his ever-growing holiday display.

But I still belong to the parallel circuit that is Tri Sigma. I know that if I ever find myself facing a challenge I can't yet measure up against and my light flickers, I am surrounded by the radiance of our organization. There will always be light in the world—and so much of it is found in the hearts and homes of Tri Sigmas.