

Kaitlyn Hansroth Baria

When I think about ACC, I am flooded with so many feelings and happy memories: the sad realization I don't have to be at the University of Charleston every Tuesday and one Saturday a month to lay my feelings out in song and the thankfulness I feel for being a part of something so life changing. I look back and regret all of the times my teenage hormones got the best of me.

My mom can attest to how hard it was to wake me up early mornings for concerts and rehearsals – it's a time we both look back on and laugh at now. I didn't fully appreciate the opportunity that I was a part of, but I know now.

ACC required drive and dedication, a passion for music, and the strength to wake up early on a Saturday and spend all day with a fierce Mrs. Midkiff. Without a doubt, ACC made me who I am today and I think it is just now at the age of 24 that I fully realize and can truly appreciate how big of an impact it really had on me.

At a young age, ACC instilled in me a love for travel and made me aware of how big the world really is. We sang so many pieces, experienced choral techniques, and were exposed to instruments from different cultures from all around the world. It taught me to respect and have a better understanding of the many people that walk this planet. The biggest blessing ACC ever afforded me was the ability to travel. I fell in love with Hawaii in 2007 at the Pacific Rim Children's Chorus Festival. I remember telling my mom, in tears as the plane left Honolulu, that I would go to college there one day. With God's blessing, I got the opportunity to follow through! I married my high school sweetheart who joined the Marine Corps and was stationed there.

Since my time in ACC, I graduated from the University of Hawaii with a Bachelor's degree in English and Political Science. Halfway through college, I started my own home based business and fell in love with the freedom it has afforded me. Traveling the world has become one of my biggest life goals and my business allows me to do that. My husband and I have been blessed to earn trips through my company to travel to Greece, London, Costa Rica, Mexico, and so many other amazing places. I attribute a lot of the success I've seen in my business to ACC. Drive, dedication, and persistence were things that were already a part of me because of choir. I knew what it meant to get outside of my comfort zone and meet new people – two things that must be done every day in order for a business to grow. I have big dreams, but my plans for the future are simple – continue to grow, travel, and eventually work on an MBA.

If I had any advice to give to those in ACC right now, it would be to enjoy every second. Soak up all of the memories you can. Sing a little louder! Grow close to the kids around you because they will still be there years down the road. Try out for that solo you think you're too afraid to try. Don't miss any concert or rehearsal. Take advantage of every opportunity that ACC gives you. I can promise – you won't regret a minute of your time and you'll look back on these memories with pride and realize just how much of an impact those Tuesday night practices had on you. ACC really molded me into the person that I have grown to be & there isn't a day that goes by that I don't miss it and wish I could go back. But memories last a life time & I certainly have plenty to laugh, smile, and cry happy tears over!