

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

Alumnae Profile

by Shannon Williams

Gabie Craig Frantz '10
Owner & Event Coordinator
Junction West, Raleigh, N.C.

A Homegrown Entrepreneur

Raleigh native Gabie Craig Frantz '10 attended Saint Mary's School where she developed self-confidence, knowledge, skills for success, and created lifelong friendships. Feeling called to use her creative side, Gabie and her husband, Rob, established a local business that fosters a sense of community and creativity, and echoes the spirit she found at Saint Mary's School.

Finding Her Girl Power

"It's fun to think about what brought me to Saint Mary's," recalls Gabie. "The second I set foot on campus, I fell in love with this grand and beautiful place. It has a great vibe; it was an easy decision."

Gabie grew up in Raleigh with younger sister, Ellee Craig '12HS, who also chose to attend Saint Mary's, and says, "Nowhere else clicked for me like Saint Mary's did. Both of my parents were North Carolina transplants. Our extended family members lived far away, and I appreciated the close-knit community that Saint Mary's fosters."

Gabie felt like she was a part of something bigger, and not just another student or a number. "Deep roots are unique for a high school and are part of what make Saint Mary's special. The history of the campus and the timeless traditions are just two of the things I treasure about Saint Mary's," she explains. "To think that women stood in the same place we still stand today, and they sang the same songs, wore the same ring. It's pretty amazing. I still gets chills when I hear the school hymn."

Gabie also felt Saint Mary's set her up for success. "I received an education that provided me with the tools I needed then and still use today," she says. "Saint Mary's empowered me to be fearless and made sure I wasn't afraid to SPEAK UP and ensure my voice is heard."

Her teachers' commitment to students and their education did not go unnoticed by Gabie. "The classes that sparked conversation and gave students opportunities to openly share their thoughts were inspiring. In fact, Randall Lathan was one of my favorite teachers," she says. "His celebration of our understanding was so moving, it actually motivated me to read those books and dissect them. Mr. Lathan taught us HOW to appreciate the content and the meaning behind it, which made learning enjoyable. Most importantly, I learned not to be afraid to give a wrong answer, because that just leads you one step closer to the right one."

When Gabie's artistic side began calling to her while at Saint Mary's, she found opportunities to think, create, and engage openly through art. "I never felt restricted or judged for my work. The potential to create freely was unlimited, and I needed that," she explains. "I think I spent every free second in Bratton Hall."

Saint Mary's empowered Gabie to feel strong and self-confident. "We all have different understandings of what success means. For me, success is doing what makes your soul feel fulfilled."

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An Entrepreneurial Spirit

After graduating from Saint Mary's, Gabie attended East Carolina University for two years. Upon moving back to Raleigh, she worked her way up at a women's clothing boutique, followed by a job in marketing for a local shopping center. It was through this exposure that she discovered a passion for creating unique experiences for others to enjoy—whether that be through events, social media or tending bar.

"That discovery led me to where I am today," she says and smiles. "I accept that my path may look different than that of others, but Saint Mary's gave me the opportunity to decide for myself what my journey would be."

Gabie and her husband decided to open a bar and event venue in downtown Raleigh's Warehouse District called Junction West (www.junctionwestnc.com). The couple loved the idea of restoring a building that was part of old Raleigh and because the project revolved around their interest in community, collaboration, creativity, and good craft beer. They also find time to grow together as a couple while working to develop the business.

"This journey has been all-consuming but rewarding!" she says. "It is so cool to see our vision for Junction West evolve. As a business owner, I battle with the fear of failure on a daily basis. Instead of 'I can't believe we ran out of toilet paper, we have totally failed.', I have had to tell myself (with the help of my amazingly positive husband), 'Wow! We served so many guests, we ran out of toilet paper!' For the record, this change in mindset does not come easy for me. I'm pushed out of my comfort zone daily."

As an alumna, Gabie stays in touch with a lot of her classmates, whether over social media or grabbing a drink after work. "Saint Mary's exposed me to a special type of sisterhood. I still proudly wear my Saint Mary's ring, because it has become a connecting force and a great way to cultivate new relationships and promote conversation."

She strongly believes that Saint Mary's is more relevant today than ever.

"We need strong, educated women as leaders and community builders. It's critical that women's voices are heard, and I feel strongly about supporting Saint Mary's School because I want to ensure it continues to help women flourish for generations to come," she says. "Today's young women are our future: leaders, mothers, doctors, teachers, artists. We are all sisters who need to lift each other up."

Gabie believes there are many ways women can demonstrate leadership. "There are so many opportunities to lead. I believe Saint Mary's provides opportunities to set women up for success, and I am proud to see how my alma mater continues to accomplish that."

Although she claims she is not qualified to give advice, Gabie hopes that her story might resonate with today's students and other young alumnae.

"I've learned not to measure or define success as others often do. As a young woman, I believe that you should set your own pace and do what sets your soul on fire. Find what you love and figure out how to do more of that. Why not take a leap of faith? You've got nothing to lose!"

Gabie Craig Frantz '10 embodies the creative community spirit that Saint Mary's has instilled in its alumnae since 1842. By following her own path and finding success on her own terms, she leads by example. We are delighted to share Gabie's story, which further demonstrates the power Saint Mary's women have to be entrepreneurial, intelligent, passionate, resourceful, and Raleigh is better for it.

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