

## What is a P.E.O.?

*This program is meant to encourage chapter members to be comfortable talking about P.E.O., so include time to divide into small groups and practice sharing.*

I *STUMBL*ED today. I mumbled today. I fumbled for the right words and failed. What I said sounded so stiff and so wrong. “It’s a philanthropic educational organization for women,” I explained. “How dull. It’s a bit like a sorority,” I continued. How elitist.

“P.E.O. is something special.” Perhaps this had potential, but I’m still struggling to explain what P.E.O. is and I do want to have the right words when I talk to Debbie. She’s never heard of P.E.O., but she’s truly a P.E.O. in the rough. I can almost see her star shine.

What is it that I want Debbie to know about P.E.O. and the women who are its members? What can I say about this organization of volunteers? Just what is it that makes the P.E.O. corner of my life so special? Just who are P.E.O.s?

P.E.O.s are kind and caring women who love their families and value their friends. P.E.O.s are organized, efficient and willing to face tasks with a smile, a song and a basket full of daisies. P.E.O.s care about each other; they send cards to cheer us up and cook dinner for us when life has become too, too much.

P.E.O.s don’t hang out together; they are not cliquish; they are not one-size-fits-all. P.E.O.s are not possessive, obtrusive or pushy. They do not glare. They shine.

P.E.O.s care about the world and its children, and they value education - for foreign students, for women who want to return to school and for young women - in fact, for all of us, as our education never stops.

P.E.O. provides scholarships, programs, loans and encouragement to make educational dreams become realities. Even more, P.E.O.s care about the elderly and provide for those less fortunate – the homeless, the orphaned, the neglected. P.E.O.s are willing to give time and gifts and love.

Yet in our own lives, P.E.O. does not come first. That place is reserved for family and for God.

P.E.O.s seek out character in others. They know when someone is – or should be – a P.E.O. It's a special blend of ingredients that we recognize - the eyes that smile, the voice that comforts, the life that shares.

P.E.O. is a connection between strangers, a bond between friends, a link between sisters, a golden thread in families. P.E.O.s believe that virtue is important, that ethics still have meaning and that life has a purpose and cannot be lived alone.

P.E.O.s can be found in cities across the United States and Canada and in nations across the world. There are almost 250,000 P.E.O.s worldwide in almost 6,000 active chapters. P.E.O.s range in age across the decades. P.E.O.s blend all class, educational, economic and social levels. They are united by their loving concern for their sisters and by their expressed belief in God.

Now, how can I explain all this to Debbie? How will she know how much I care about these women who broaden my life in so many ways? How will she understand, as her eyes move across the faces, that these women offer the best there is in life – they love back, unquestioning. And they make me so very proud of my star.

This is the joy I want to share with Debbie. I've never proposed anyone for membership before. I've never been sure or secure enough. But this time I know. I want Debbie to be a P.E.O.

I just don't know what to say.