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AKA'S EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT FOUNDATION PRESENTS \$25,000 SCHOLARSHIP TO MEMBER WHO ROSE FROM HOMELESS TO HEIGHTS OF EXCELLENCE



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Quiana Childress, (second from right) is presented a \$25,000 scholarship from the Alpha Kappa Alpha Educational Advancement Foundation at its luncheon held during AKA's convention in St. Louis. Presenting her the award are (from left): Barbara Sutton, executive director, Alpha Kappa Alpha Educational Advancement Foundation, Carolyn House Stewart, international vice president, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and Barbara A. McKinzie, international president, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

St. Louis, Mo. – July 14, 2010 - Quiana Childress, a Summa Cum Laude graduate of the University of Arkansas, who was once homeless and forced to live out of a car, received a \$25,000 scholarship from the Alpha Kappa Alpha Educational Advancement Foundation, Inc. during its 30th anniversary luncheon held during AKA's 64th biennial convention in St. Louis.

Childress, who graduated with a 3.935 grade point average – the highest GPA in the University's School of Arts and Sciences, is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

Childress, who majored in biology, plans to attend medical school in 2011 where she will concentrate on lung transplantation research. The \$25,000 scholarship will go toward helping her defray the costs of attending medical school and realizing her long-range goal to become a doctor.

She has been held up as a model of hope because her remarkable journey took her from the depths of despair to the pinnacle of achievement.

One of ten children, Quiana's mother struggled to feed and clothe the family and Childress recalls going to bed hungry many nights since there was not enough to feed everyone. To help support the family, Quiana landed a job as a nursing assistant. It was while she was attending patients that she found her passion was in caring for the sick.

When she was 16, Quiana returned home to see her possessions packed in boxes. Her mother announced that she was overwhelmed with the challenges of life and that Quiana had to find a place to stay. With nowhere to turn and desperate to survive, she lived out of her car. The stress of being afraid and having to support herself took a toll on her and she fought depression and the temptation to surrender and abandon her aspirations. During these low points, Childress said what uplifted her were her patients whom she said "needed me more than I needed to give up."

She appealed to relatives in Little Rock and they offered her a place to live. Her resolve to rise above her circumstances and make a contribution in life inspired her to return to school and eventually enroll at the University of Arkansas. In addition to excelling, and in the spirit Alpha Kappa Alpha's service mission, she became a mentor, tutor and researcher at the University. She also completed the requirements to be a licensed nurse, a capacity in which she has served since 2007.

Her inspirational story has gained worldwide acclaim and she was singled out when First Lady Michelle Obama delivered the commencement speech at the University of Arkansas in 2010. In her speech, Obama praised her "burning desire to rise above her circumstances and her unrelenting belief that she can succeed despite all evidence to the contrary."

Childress was also featured as "Person of the Week" on the *ABC Network News with Diane Sawyer*.

In presenting the \$25,000 scholarship to Childress, Alpha Kappa Alpha's international president Barbara A. McKinzie, praised her for her resilience. "It would have been easy for Quiana to surrender and become one of life's tragedies. It is a testament commitment to excellence that inspired her to rise above the depths of despair to become a woman who is destined to change the world. We are proud to embrace her and help her achieve her dreams through this scholarship."

The Alpha Kappa Alpha Educational Advancement Foundation also awarded a \$15,000 scholarship to Ms. Alexandria Henderson, a senior at Michigan State University. The scholarship is named the Marriott Corporation Scholarship and is awarded to students in hospitality. Henderson is majoring in Hospitality Administration.

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