



Contact: Melody M. McDowell - Chief Information Officer –
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
773-660-2001 – office
312-371-8917 – cell
melodyaka@aol.com – e-mail

ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA USHERS IN CENTENNIAL YEAR Commemoration of One-Hundred Year Milestone Takes Place January 12-15

Chicago, Illinois – January 8, 2008 - When the clock ticked to 12:01 and a new year—2008—ushered in, Alpha Kappa Alpha marked its Centennial year.

This history-making triumph makes the Sorority the first college-educated, primarily African-American female organization to reach this milestone.

To commemorate this 100-year landmark, the Sorority has a host of celebratory activities planned during the year.

Led by its Centennial International President Barbara A. McKinzie, more than 25,000 members will converge upon Washington, D.C. for two major events.

The yearlong celebration begins at AKA’s birth home of Howard University from January 12-15. It was at Howard that nine visionary women founded the organization with the first chapter being Alpha Chapter. Only a few decades removed from slavery, the nine founders made service the core mission of the Sorority. That mission continues today.

In tribute to the first chapter and to Alpha Kappa Alpha’s “birth mothers,” the four-day salute includes a mix of ritual, reflection and congratulations. Luminaries with ties to Alpha Kappa Alpha’s first chapter will be showcased during the four days including incorporators, former national presidents and other achievers initiated in Alpha Chapter.

Among those who will attend are 103-year old Hazel Hainsworth Young, the oldest active member of the Sorority. Actress, trailblazer and Alpha Chapter initiate Phylicia Rashad is expected to attend. Faye Bryant, a past international president and an initiate of Alpha Chapter, will also lead the festivities.

Beginning on Saturday, January 12, members will convene at the Renaissance Hotel for a reception hosted by The College of Arts and Sciences. A high point of the event will be the unveiling of scrapbooks from members that span the 100-year life of the Chapter. The journals will provide a graphic diary of the Chapter’s centennial as they are filled with 100 years of memories.

Sunday, January 13, begins with Alpha Chapter's annual religious celebration. Rev. Calvin O. Butts of New York is the speaker. At the culmination of the service, the Sorority will present a monetary gift to the Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel.

The day will cap off with a gala.

Designated as "Service Day," Monday, January 14, will see members dedicate a library at the Middle School for Mathematics and Science at 2 PM, which is a public school on Howard University's campus. A massive donation of books will be presented to the school as a show of support for its mission. The school is also the site of Miner Hall where AKA was born.

There will also be a dedication of the library at Asbury Dwelling for Senior Citizens. The Asbury Dwelling is a site where Alpha Chapter spent considerable time providing comfort to the seniors.

Monday, January 15 is the actual birth date of the Sorority and the solemn pilgrimage to historical markers on Howard University's campus represents the "climactic high point of the weekend."

Beginning at 9:30 AM, at Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel, there will be a "Blessing of the Pilgrimage," which will set the tone for this invitation-only event.

Following this, a chime will sound and members will walk to a site at Rankin Chapel. The first stop is the Founders' Window, which was dedicated in 1978 and captures in imagery the spirit of the nine founders. The second stained glass window is in memory of Lucy Slowe, first female dean of Howard University and Alpha Kappa Alpha's first president.

After the sounding of another chime, the 1,500 members will continue the march to the next historical marker, the burial plot, a favorite gathering place for AKA members where a tree was also dedicated in 1992. After blessings at this significant site, a third chime will ring. Members will proceed to Moorland Springarn Library, which houses the Sorority's archives. Another unveiling will take place accompanied by words of commemoration.

In quiet unison, and after the chime sounds, the sisters will proceed to the old Miner Hall site, designated as the site of the founding location, where another ritualistic ceremony will be held.

The final stop is Slowe Hall, site of the final dedication.

After the final ceremony, members will move on to Blackburn Center for a presentation of the financial gift to Howard University. The international president and Earnestine McNealey, chairman of AKA's Archives Committee, will present to the Founders' Library the digitized version of *Ivy Leaf*, the Sorority's official magazine. The archives will also be opened up for consumption and research. This is the first document to be opened to the general public.

Following this presentation, the Sorority will present a monetary donation for the Nellie Quander Scholarship. The Sorority will also endow the Founders' Scholarship in the name of the founders. According to McKinzie, the majority of the members graduated from Arts and Science and, in recognition of this, the Sorority will endow a Founders' Scholarship for the Arts and Science.

Following this ritualistic walk and ceremonial presentation, members will convene at Blackburn Center and sing Happy Birthday during a final gala reception. They will also resolve to continue the commitment to scholarship, service, character and standards—bedrock qualities that represent the heart of Alpha Kappa Alpha.

The Alpha Birthday Celebration is the first of two major celebrations to take place during its Centennial year. More than 20,000 members will converge upon Washington, D.C. for its Centennial International Conference from July 12-18. At that time, more tributes and commemorations will take place. The Sorority will use the week to engage in a series of meetings, plenaries and “conversations” about how to deal with today’s pressing issues while charting a course for the Sorority as it enters its second millennium. The public will be invited to some of the events.

-

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority is America's first Greek-letter organization founded in 1908 by, and for, African-American college women. Headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, it is one of the world's leading service organizations. The Sorority's members have made a commitment “to serve all mankind” through a nucleus of more than 200,000 women in over 975 chapters in the United States, the Caribbean, Canada, Germany, Korea, Japan and in the continent of Africa. Barbara A. McKinzie is the 27th International President. Because her term coincides with the 100-year anniversary, she is being hailed as the “Centennial National President.” McKinzie’s administration is marked by the theme: ESP, which stands for Economics, Service and Partnerships. For more information, log on to www.aka1908.com.