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### **ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA’S INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT REFLECTS ON THE SORORITY’S 100 YEARS SUCCESSFULLY SERVING MANKIND**

Chicago, Illinois – December 27, 2007 - With Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority poised to celebrate its Centennial in 2008, the Sorority’s international president, Barbara A. McKinzie, recently reflected on its 100-year journey to greatness. It is, she said, “A phenomenal story of how nine women visionaries conceived an organization that’s endured the test of time because it was founded on the lofty goal of service.”

Added McKinzie: “That we have gone from nine founders and one chapter on the campus of Howard University in 1908 to 200,000 members in 975 chapters worldwide is because of their lofty mission and resolve to remain true to their vision.”

To underscore the Sorority’s potency, McKinzie gave a decade-by-decade chronology, which dramatizes why Alpha Kappa Alpha has emerged as a worldwide power.

McKinzie said that during the decade of its founding, Alpha Kappa Alpha women played a leadership role in the 1913 Women’s Suffragette March. Its members were also at the forefront of the thrust to expose and eradicate lynching.

During the next two decades, Alpha Kappa Alpha women were dispatched to the South where they assisted the Travelers Aid Society to help Southern Blacks who migrated to the North. In their selfless style, Alpha Kappa Alpha women immersed themselves in educational programs by tutoring and donating books and in health initiatives like the highly-heralded Mississippi Health Project. Alpha Kappa Alpha women also ventured to rural areas where they participated in grassroots thrusts that overhauled and helped better the lives of the less well served.

At the end of World War II, AKAs united to work with every phase of the Post War Reconstruction.

In the 1950s, Alpha Kappa Alpha expanded its focus to human rights as it joined the American Council of Human Rights and National Health Office.

The next two decades saw Alpha Kappa Alpha continue to cement its reputation as an organization attuned to the needs of those it serves. During this period, it founded the Cleveland Job Corps, which was funded by the U.S. Economic Opportunity Act as part of the Johnson Administration's War on Poverty. An incubator for providing the bridge to the work-world, thousands of young women came through the Center where Alpha Kappa Alpha staff and volunteers taught job readiness skills and outreached to employers nationwide to place trainees in viable jobs. Young women who were teetering on life's edge credit the program for giving them the skills and confidence that turned their lives around. Many went on to become very successful and testify to Alpha Kappa Alpha's role in their revitalized lives at reunion gatherings.

Alpha Kappa Alpha also strengthened its commitment to health, youth and other areas that bettered the lives of the communities it served. During this period, Alpha Kappa Alpha launched its leadership-building programs by creating two unique programs: The Leadership Seminar and The Leadership Fellows Program. The Leadership Seminar is an intensive one-week course conducted by management experts that teaches skills, strategies and courses of actions to help Alpha Kappa Alpha find the leader in them. The Leadership Fellows program is devoted to cultivating college-age students in an educational and hands-on setting where they learn from their "heroes" and "sheroes." This program also includes males in recognition of the reality that Black males must be guided on their leadership paths.

**In the 1980s**, Alpha Kappa Alpha exemplified its commitment to education by establishing the Educational Advancement Foundation, Inc. This not-for-profit organization is dedicated to providing a perpetual support for lifelong learning. Through a vibrant awards program that includes academic scholarships, mini-grants and fellowships, EAF touches the lives of people from all walks of life. During this decade, Alpha Kappa Alpha moved to its worldwide corporate office in Chicago. This architectural wonder was constructed through the contributions of its membership and is a standing monument to what an inspired membership can achieve. Upon its construction, the "mortgage" was retired even before it was created. This retiring of the mortgage positioned Alpha Kappa Alpha women as powerful, savvy and models of economic wisdom.

During the decade of the **1990s** Alpha Kappa Alpha expanded its international tentacles by founding its first Ivy AKAdemy in South Africa. These schools were built, with AKA funds, to provide schooling to children who had been denied access to education. Alpha Kappa Alpha also created the Ivy Reading AKAdemy to emphasize the Sorority's mission of teaching basic reading skills at an early age. Alpha Kappa Alpha also expanded and revised its Leadership Seminar and The Leadership Fellows Program during this period.

McKinzie pointed out that Alpha Kappa Alpha is attuned to the ever-evolving needs of its members and those it serves. Therefore, with her administration, the organization expanded its service focus to embrace Economics in recognition of its importance in our daily lives. The current programmatic theme, ESP—Extraordinary Service Program—reflects the importance of wealth building, entrepreneurship and forging partnerships that promote economic independence.

Some of the highly-heralded programs launched under this administration that reflect the economic dimension of its program focus include the "Keys to Homeownership" program, a partnership with Chase, and a technology program at over 300 colleges worldwide (11 beta sites) where seniors and community residents master computers skills so they can improve their economic lot.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority—in a dramatic show of concern—hosted its Leadership Conference in New Orleans last July. Originally scheduled as a Hawaiian cruise, the site was changed when members in the area lamented that the recovery/rebuilding effort was not moving along and needed a boost from AKA. In so doing, the Sorority brought 3,000 members to New Orleans and pumped \$5 million into its economy. Most significantly, AKA was the first fraternity or sorority to underwrite the construction of two homes for Katrina survivors: one in New Orleans; the other in Gulfport, Mississippi. In that same service vein, Alpha Kappa Alpha partnered with the international organization, Feed the Children, to give away food and goods to over 400 New Orleans residents.

McKinzie added that Alpha Kappa Alpha is supporting its member, Liberia President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in her quest to restore greatness to her country and hope to young women and girls.

“Our march to the Centennial is punctuated by dramatic examples of how Alpha Kappa Alpha has touched lives and made an impact on every community, every region and on every continent. On the eve of our historic Centennial, we look back on this 100-year legacy of service with pride and with a resolve to continue our record of service into the next century.”

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