



Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority to Converge upon New Orleans July 12-22 to Conduct Business and to Support New Orleans' Economic Mission

More than 3,000 members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority will converge upon New Orleans from July 12-22 to host its biennial Leadership Conference, provide a helping hand to residents, and offer a forum to discuss the Sorority's business as it prepares for its Centennial in 2008.

Originally scheduled as a Hawaiian cruise, the conference location was changed as an extension of the Sorority's resolve to support New Orleans' economic-revitalization effort.

Declared Barbara A. McKinzie, Alpha Kappa Alpha's international president, "While there have been signs of economic life in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans continues to struggle economically. By hosting our Leadership Conference in New Orleans, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority is doing its part to pump some economic life into the city."

McKinzie added that Alpha Kappa Alpha's presence parallels the Sorority's economic vision, which is embraced under the theme of her administration: ESP, an acronym for Economics, Service and Partnership.

"During our stay in New Orleans, Alpha Kappa Alpha expects to pump over \$1 million into the city by dining at its restaurants, shopping, and by supporting its convention and tourism mission," McKinzie said. "Most of all, we will be sending a strong message that Alpha Kappa Alpha is part of New Orleans' economic solution. Hopefully, our decision will encourage other organizations to make New Orleans their city of choice when hosting their special events."

The series of AKA-sponsored activities include:

- International Regional Conference – July 12-14
Members from Europe, Africa, Bermuda, the Bahamas, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Canada, Korea and Japan will hold business sessions, workshops, public meetings and implement community projects to further the Sorority's mission of "service to all mankind." Diane Abbott, the first Black woman elected to the British Parliament and a member of the Sorority, is the banquet speaker and honoree. Other awardees are Florida State Senator and Alpha Kappa Alpha member Frederica Wilson, Dr. Larry Spruill of Mount Vernon, NY; New Orleans bookstore owner Vera Warren-Williams and Chicago Urban Prep CEO and attorney Tim King. They are being saluted for their innovative work with at-risk young African-American men. The conference will also feature health screenings and dialogues about finding solutions to teen violence. The health

screenings and discussion, which are open to the public, will take place Saturday, July 15 and Sunday, July 16 at Christian Unity Baptist Church, 1700 Conti Street from 10AM to 3PM.

- Public Service Day – July 17

Alpha Kappa Alpha will devote the day to its credo: “service to all mankind.” The day will begin with a massive food distribution program where members will pass out the food being provided by the “Feed the Children” organization. The day will culminate with the donation of a Habitat for Humanity House to a New Orleanian who lost her home during Katrina. This significant contribution represents a milestone as Alpha Kappa Alpha is the first sorority or fraternity to sponsor a house with the New Orleans Area Habitat for Humanity. On the same day, the Sorority will present keys to a Habitat for Humanity House to a family from Gulfport, MS who also lost its home during the hurricane.

- Leadership Conference – July 16-22

Held every two years, the Leadership Conference includes five days of intensive instruction by experts on how to be a leader, how to better serve the Sorority and how to equip members with the tools and knowledge to help them serve their communities more effectively. During the Conference, Alpha Kappa Alpha will present awards to State Senator and Illinois Senate President Emil Jones, Jr., and John Tyson, CEO of Tyson Foods. Both have sponsored initiatives that support Alpha Kappa Alpha’s service platforms and are considered examples of “leadership excellence.”

McKinzie said she hopes that the city and its residents will benefit in capital and in the caring that Alpha Kappa Alpha’s presence will represent. “Ultimately,” said McKinzie, “we hope New Orleans will get an economic and psychological lift as a result of Alpha Kappa Alpha’s presence and contributions to the Big Easy.”

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority is America's first Greek-letter organization founded in 1908 by, and for, Black college women. Headquartered in Chicago, IL, it is one of the world's leading service organizations. The Sorority serves all mankind through a nucleus of more than 200,000 women in over 930 chapters in the U.S., the Caribbean, Germany, Korea, Japan and Africa. The Sorority commemorates its Centennial in 1908 with a birthday celebration in January at its founding home—Howard University—and with its Centennial Conference in July, where more than 20,000 members are expected to converge for this 100-year milestone.

- #####-