

## 'United for the same purpose' AKA turns 100



*Scott Fraker*

**Larrissa Henderson, left, and Kowetha Davidson discuss their recent trip to Washington, D.C.**



**Local delegates to the AKA Centennial Celebration in Washington, D.C., included, from left, LeChelle Davenport, Angela Threat, Sherry Ali, and Estella Simmons.**



**100th ANNIVERSARY -- Members of the Xi Iota Omega chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha who attended last month's AKA Centennial Celebration in Washington, D.C., included back row, from left, Estella Simmons, Larrissa Henderson, LeChelle Davenport, Angela Threat, Ruby Miller; middle row from left, Sherry Ali, Kowetha Davidson; and front, Edwena Crowe.**

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OAK RIDGE, Tenn. —

More than 25,000 members of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. took the nation's capital by storm last month to celebrate the organization's 100th birthday.

"We painted the town pink and green," said Kowetha Davidson, president of AKA's local chapter, Xi Iota Omega.

"We even had pink and green fireworks over the Potomac River," Larrissa Henderson, secretary of the local chapter, told The Oak Ridger.

Davidson and Henderson were among 11 members of the local chapter who attended the group's Centennial Celebration. Henderson said she participated in a Unity March with representatives from nine African American fraternities and sororities.

"It wasn't to make a political statement or anything like that," Henderson explained. "It just showed that we're all united for the same purpose."

That united purpose includes better healthcare, education and employment, particularly for African Americans.

The Unity March closed Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol, Henderson said. And the event marked the end of the week-long Centennial Celebration.

AKA has been celebrating its 100th birthday for the last several months, with events throughout the country. Those events culminated with the national convention in Washington, D.C., on July 11-18.

Alpha Kappa Alpha, which has more than 200,000 members worldwide, is the nation's oldest Greek-letter sorority founded by African American college-educated women. The organization was founded at Howard University in 1908.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi spoke at the conclusion of the Unity March.

Additionally, Davidson said the celebration included a public meeting and a gala in which 17,000 participants were served dinner in one room.

"There was a lot of history there," Henderson said.

Attending AKA's Centennial Celebration helped Davidson find "a new enthusiasm for our sorority, and the responsibility we have for maintaining the legacy of our founders."

"Our founders did that at a time when women, particularly women of color, were not respected as much," Henderson said.

Alpha Kappa Alpha's programs and activities center on significant issues in families, communities, and government. The local chapter, Xi Iota Omega, strives to support educational initiatives and other programs in Oak Ridge and the surrounding area.

The chapter's next effort, according to Davidson and Henderson, is its annual golf tournament -- to be held Aug. 16 at the Oak Ridge Country Club. Proceeds will be used to provide book scholarships to local college students.

"Each year, we've been able to provide scholarships to eight or 10 college students to help them with textbooks," Davidson said.

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