

NATIONAL SORORITY OF PHI DELTA KAPPA, INC.

EASTERN REGION

www.nspdkeasternregion.org



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Dr. Patsy O. Squire, Regional Director

JANUARY 2021

**HOW
ARE MY
SISTERS DOING?**



Sister, you've been on my mind

Sister, we're two of a kind

So Sister, I'm keeping my eye on you.

Count on me through thick and thin

A friendship that will never end

When you are weak I will be strong

Helping you to carry on

Call on me, I will be there

Don't be afraid

Please believe me when I say

Count on me.



NSPDK, Inc.

Theme: “Follow the Light! Grow the Legacy! Empower the Sisterhood!”



January 1, 2021

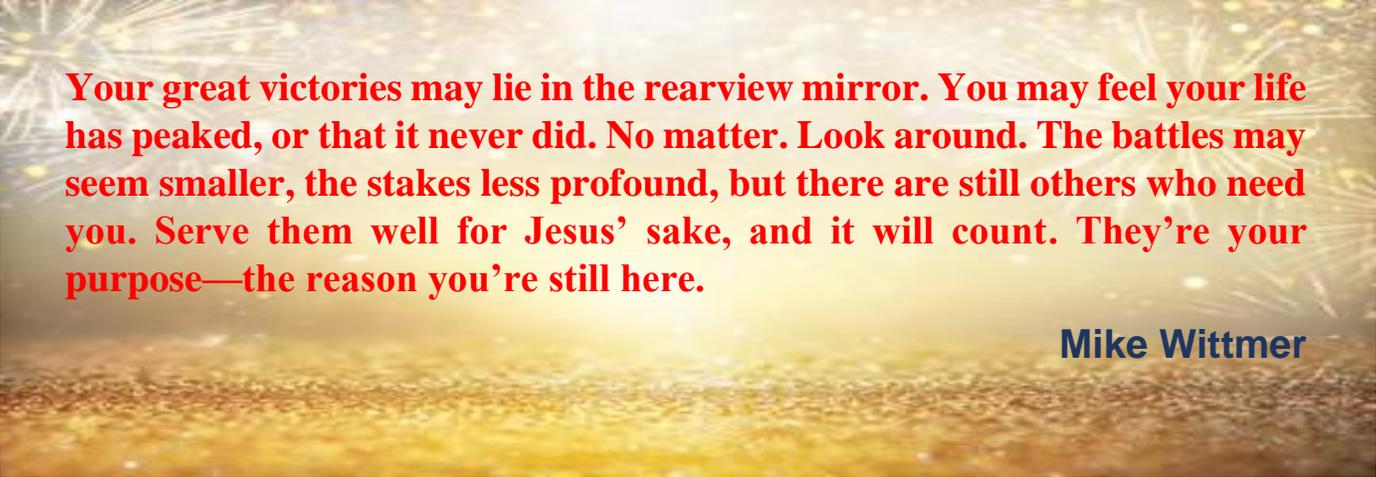
Greetings,

Thank you to Basilei and Sorors for the many beautiful cards and gifts received during the holiday season. Your thoughtfulness certainly put a sparkle in my eyes. I can only hope you were blessed beyond measure with peace, joy and love. Again, we’re forever grateful for your gifts and talents. 2020 was a tumultuous year. As we reflect on our gratitude for the past year, we can definitely agree it has truly brought us closer. Because We Care, love was demonstrated by Sorors calling and checking on Senior Sorors, sending special notes of encouragement and holding our hands to ensure we are all on the same page. Hopefully, you were able to relax and take some time for yourself during the holidays. And please know that it is okay, to say I’m not okay. We’re here to make sure none of us stay in that space. **Empower the Sisterhood!**

A new year is a powerful occasion allowing us to focus on our hopes for the future. And, it’s also a chance to welcome a fresh start to reinvigorate our enthusiasm for chasing goals and dreams. May the New Year bring many opportunities your way to explore every joy of life and turn all your dreams into reality while your efforts bring great achievements. Thank you for continuing the soul of our organization as we engage in teaching and educating others to Live! **Follow the Light!**

2021 is already promising. We are excited as we walk into history on January 20, 2021 to celebrate the inauguration of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. Together, we will wear our Pearls and Converse Tennis Shoes! Hopefully, states will provide the Covid-19 vaccination as soon as possible. Last but not least, we will continue to have a seat at the table to address Racism, Inequities, and Poverty as we **Grow the Legacy!**





Your great victories may lie in the rearview mirror. You may feel your life has peaked, or that it never did. No matter. Look around. The battles may seem smaller, the stakes less profound, but there are still others who need you. Serve them well for Jesus' sake, and it will count. They're your purpose—the reason you're still here.

Mike Wittmer



For I'm convinced that the pandemic we're currently living through is both a manifestation of and a mere interruption in the relentless march toward an interconnected world, one in which peoples and cultures can't help but collide. In that world – of global supply chains, instantaneous capital transfers, social media, transnational terrorist networks, climate change, mass migration, and ever-increasing complexity – we will learn to live together, cooperate with one another, and recognize the dignity of others, or we will perish.

**President Barack Obama
(Preface) "*A Promised Land*"**





Are You Okay?

I was recently asked if I was okay. It's a question I am very used to answering as well as asking. Lately I have found myself thinking about the question and wondering if I was the only one feeling the usual duration of feelings that have recently plagued my soul. I find myself wondering off, not being able to focus and being in a high state of fear, anger, confusion and sadness. The climate of our social environments has changed and these emotions are to be expected. They are not only expected, but shared amongst many individuals. Because of social injustice, a polarized election season, COVID-19 and everyday life, the human race has experience collective trauma. We are truly in this together.

Having negative feelings from time to time is a normal happening, but for those feelings to linger beyond the point of normal barriers brings more than discomfort. It pressed educators to utilize all of the social and emotional coping tools we have taught our students all these years. We have taught our amazing children to press through as they hear of unimaginable social injustice with a list of names just like theirs. We have asked them to practice self-control while they witness political leaders behaving in a manner unbecoming of an official. We have required our children to wash their hands constantly while their loved ones become ill and sometimes pass away to an unseen virus. Yes, we are all truly in this together.

As an educator, I am reminded of the things I was taught as well. I find comfort in the teachings, guidance and social emotional support I was provided. My teachers, parents and mentors did not call it social and emotional learning, they called it the "God-Knows-Truth"! I am confident in the things they taught me, because as I have put them into practice in my own life, it has been proven to be the truth; the God-Knows-Truth. I was taught to balance my feelings with confession. In other words, talk about it. So I have been talking about how I feel about social injustice everywhere I go. Another thing that was taught to me was that laughter is medicine, it's good for the soul. So I searched out and found ways to laugh in the middle of this bizarre election season. Lastly, I was taught to take a deep breath and call it like it is. So, I took a deep breath, called a pandemic a pandemic and put my mask on like everybody else.

Life is not always easy. It is not always what we want it to be. However, it is up to us help ourselves and others get to the point of being okay. We are keepers of each other. We must remain diligent in teaching others to come to terms with life and know that they will be okay on this side of glory or otherwise. We will be okay because we are in this together. We are fighting together and we will win together. Soon we will be more than okay, we will thrive.

Tammy Sneed
Beta Zeta Chapter

Leading from a Policy Perspective

Sherri Parmenter, Ed.D.
IOTA CHAPTER



Educational leadership generally refers to school administrators and occasionally teacher leaders. I suggest that there is a different paradigm of educational leadership that bears investigation, and this involves being on the board of education. School boards have three-year terms, with the possibility of reelection for subsequent terms which ostensibly could have school board members serving for long periods of uninterrupted time.

The whole purpose of school boards is to create policy and set objectives. Even though the superintendent is a part of the policy process, the superintendent is also the one who is charged with carrying out the policies set by the boards. Which means that the superintendent is accountable to the school board for adhering to the policies set forth (<https://www.njsba.org/news-information/parent-connections/school-board-basics-frequently-asked-questions/> (2020). The only person school boards evaluate is the superintendent.

Being a member of your local school board provides an optimal opportunity to foster sustainable change, particularly if you are on the policy committee. Policies are not changed a lot. They are generally changed when there is a change in the law or when New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) recommends changes and suggests what the changes should be. Even though NJSBA makes suggestions, districts are not bound by the recommendations. They have the option to make policy consistent with what is important and relevant to their district. While many policies are a part of a district's standard operating procedure, they're not always highly visible. They're on the district's website, where very few people ever look for them or at them. Irrespective, being a policy maker allows you to make the rules for your district. Again, sustainable systemic and systematic change is highly possible in instances like this because the policy positions you make can be made a part of the superintendent's yearly evaluation.

So, when thinking about educational leadership and how you can become an educational leader, consider running for your local school board. This position comes with instant leadership capabilities, especially if you are on the policy committee. Leading from a policy position leads to sustainable substantive change in the school district. This occurs whether you are on the board for one three-year term or if you are elected for multiple terms. Policy makers are rule makers and they shape the district mission, vision, and how the district functions.

KRINON CLUB HOSTS SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

The Serendipity V, the Krinon Club of **Epsilon Chi Chapter**, presented their educational program (December 3, 2020) via ZOOM to an audience of sorors, parents, elementary and high school scholars, and other guests. LaKeshia Brantley, Kimberly Crawford, Fabiola Riobe, Nycole Smith and Peta-Gaye Williams were quite knowledgeable in informing students and adults about the tools and precautions we all should utilize as we find ourselves engaging more and more with online technology. The theme of their program '**The ABCs of Netiquette & Cybersecurity**', stressed best practices and useful tips to make online communication fun and safe for everyone.

Engagement of the scholars and eliciting their participation to read the slides, ask and respond to questions, and to hear and observe the conversations and language skills of other adults and students, was a key feature of this program and served as a great model of student/teacher interaction.

Many great tips were gleaned from this program:

Respect is a two-way street. The way you expect to be respected in person, is the same expectation of respect when you're online.

The participants learned two new acronyms: (for posting and email)

P.R.T. and P.C.T.

Pause - Reflect - Type

Purposeful - Clear - To-the-Point

Other great advice included:

You can't always trust what you see on the internet. Know who you're talking to on the internet. Be careful about using public access to Wifi. Students were reminded to never make contact or communicate with people who are trying to get them to do something they're uncomfortable with. DO NOT like or friend.

Students and adults were advised to become aware of where you are in cyberspace and who you are sharing the room with in order to determine how to address and present yourself to that person or audience.



- 1** Protect all devices with the latest software updates and strong passwords.
- 2** Do not share your password.
- 3** Do not open any link or attachment from any unknown person.
- 4** Do not accept friend requests from unknown people.
- 5** Do not use websites that do not start with a <https://>: (s = secure).



“My Parent, My First Teacher”

**XI CHAPTER Presents Teach-A-Rama Program
December 5, 2020**



Teach-A-Rama Chair, Soror Hope King, and her committee coordinated a program featuring 7 key points of view designed to support families and educators engage with and embrace technology.

1. Parent Involvement
2. The Male Perspective
3. A Student’s Perspective
4. ZOOM and GOOGLE Classroom
5. Being a Teacher and a Parent
6. An Administrator’s Perspective
7. Wellness Breaks and Selfcare / Brain Breaks

Committee Member, Soror Sheena Hudnell, provided parents with great suggestions for supporting their scholars with remote learning while still providing their teachers with accurate information of what the student is capable of doing on his own.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT:

- Try to avoid having students work on their beds.
- Make sure all devices are charged.



- Check to determine that the teacher has your email and cell number.
- Parents should **resist** giving their children the answer(s). Parents encouraged to support and guide, but don’t ‘tell’.

THE MALE PERSPECTIVE (Parent):

Mr. Ricky Taylor expressed high regards and commended educators for their commitment to remote learning. His advice to parents is:

Parents must take it upon themselves to make sure their children are studying and keeping up with instruction.

He suggested that teachers have flexible office hours so that parents can have an open line to teachers.



Zoom Breakout Room Expectations

Before You Go - ASK!

Before going to your breakout room make sure you know what you're doing! If you don't know then ask us; you're probably not alone!



Don't Leave!

Stay in your breakout room & ask for help.

1. Ask yourself.
2. Ask your partner(s).
3. Call for help.



Be Responsible!

Know your role. Do your part - write, type, talk, listen, finish the task and wait to be brought back into the main room.



Participate!

Talk to your partner(s) and practice active listening! You may have to report out what your partner(s) shared!



Stay Focused!

Stay on topic! Only talk about things you were asked to discuss. Complete your work so you have less homework. We are always watching!



Be Respectful!

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Be kind.

Be considerate.



A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE:

High School Freshman, A'lasia Mosley, shared what COVID learning has been like for her. It was refreshing to hear her say that she still has the mindset of being in the school setting, even virtually. She finds virtual learning easier without the usual classroom/building distractions.

ZOOM and GOOGLE:

Soror, Dr. Maggie Grasty gave a quick overview of the requirements and conditions needed when engaging with ZOOM and GOOGLE. Participants were reminded of how to use the various ZOOM tools and features in order to interact with the technology and others. She also let it be known what the expectations and responsibilities are while students are in the 'Breakout Rooms.

Sorors practiced entering Breakout Rooms and following directions.

Parents were shown how GOOGLE Classroom is used and walked parents through the features, and how to access the Stream Page to find their child's assignments and grades, and also leave comments for the teacher.

WELLNESS BREAKS and SELFCARE/ BRAIN BREAKS:

Soror Paula Sammons encouraged sorors to relax and stretch during the day. One technique offered was to set a timer to remind yourself to take a break. Sorors learned about 'a restart chair' – a gaming chair.

Katrina Lawrence, a teacher and a parent, initiated a conversation with sorors to share their teaching conditions and what things are like for students, especially the younger students.

Dr. Karen Jones, provided **An Administrator's Perspective**. Participants were given an overview of what had to be done to facilitate remote and hybrid learning.

Great advice for teachers and staff was offered: *Be mindful that instruction and accessibility could be stressful for families and teachers based on the devices the families have access to.*

Also:

Be positive – things will change. Be ready to pivot.

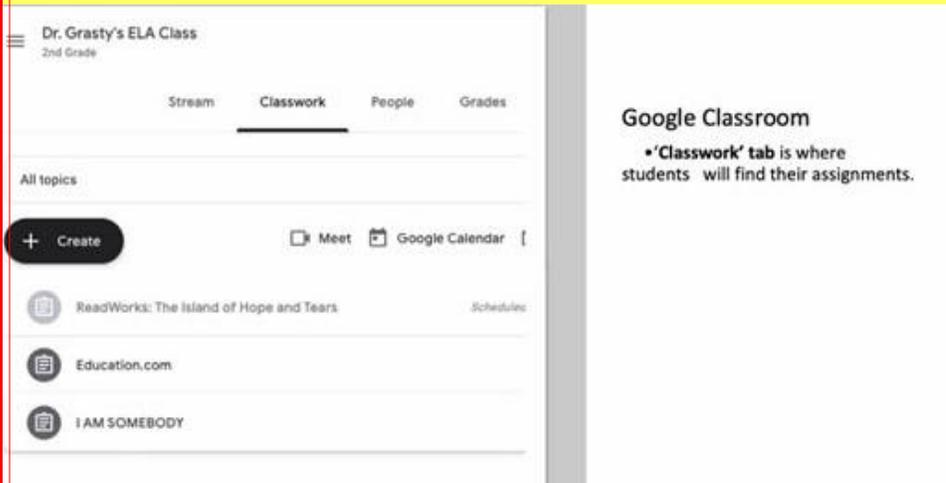
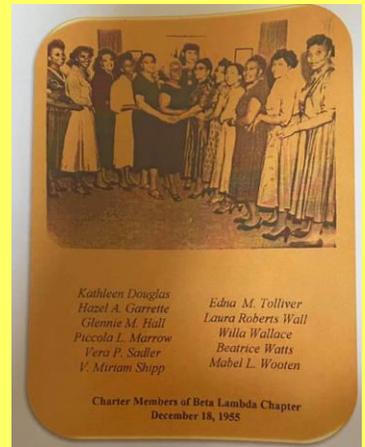
Parents should do emotional check-ins with children.

Check school websites and other technology.

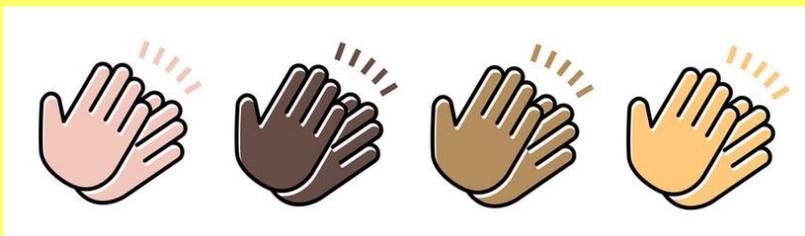
Have students in school daily (this serves as a way to make sure that students are well).



65 BETA LAMBDA



Beta Lambda Chapter Reactivate



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PAR EXCELLENCE



KEYONA COOPER
MSW, LICSW



LESLIE GARRISON
NASA GODDARD SPACE
FLIGHT CENTER and
HELIOPIYSICS SENIOR
OUTREACH COORDINATOR



DREISEN HEATH
RESEARCHER and ADVOCATE
EXAMINING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
PRACTICES

Red Hats off to **ALPHA MU CHAPTER**, Annapolis, MD for planning an inspiring, enlightening, educational, and informative professional development program. The Chair of Teach-A-Rama, Soror Jocelyn Potts and her Committee considered relative topics impacting NSPDK, Inc. as an educational organization. The workshop presenters were dynamic and role models in their own right. A myriad of information was shared on the subjects of:

Theme: “FROM STRIVING to THRIVING – CARING and EDUCATING the WHOLE CHILD”
December 12, 2020

- Ensuring Academic Success for Homeless and Foster Care Students
- Promoting S.T.E.M. for Girls of Color
- Fostering Equity and Empowerment Through Restorative Justice

Ms. Keyona Cooper, a private practice clinician, gave us a glimpse into what we, as educators, can do better to support a student in foster care. She reminded sorors that foster care students are still connected to their biological parents and their parents still maintain educational rights. **The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act** is legislation that

protects youth experiencing homelessness and foster care with policies permitting students to remain in their schools of origin.

As educators, sorors were advised to view the school and classroom as a safe place for students (one place for them that hasn't changed).

Available services and policies are based on how a homeless student is identified or categorized. Homeless Youth are categorized by age groups:

- Young Adults (18-25)
- Youth (13-17)

Educators must respect and ensure the student's privacy including LGBTQ student equity.

Engaging Girls

For hands-on lessons and activities visit

www.nasa.gov

Audience: FOR EDUCATORS

K-12 Educators

College and Universities

Informal Education

NASA STEM Engagement

Engaging girls and women in S.T.E.M., **Ms. Leslie Garrison**, shared her experiences of dismay in quite often being the only African-American at a N.A.S.A. mission or program. Her personal take-away is , "What's important is that you

are a part of the group and bring something to the group." It seems that in the research, girls and girls of color are not encouraged to engage in S.T.E.M. Educational institutions still perpetuate and harbor stereotypes, cultural norms and gender preconceptions. Teachers should avoid letting their own biases and ineptitude influence positive S.T.E.M. experiences for students.

Research supports that when students participate and engage in a project with a person who looks like them, it increases the probability of the student pursuing S.T.E.M. academic and career goals.

Sorors and educators received research observations of the female learner:

- Girls are motivated by projects they find personally relevant and meaningful.
- Girls enjoy hands-on, open-ended projects and investigations.
- Girls are motivated when they can approach projects in their own way.
- Girls' confidence and performance improves in response to specific, positive feedback on things they can control — such as effort, strategies, and behaviors.
- Girls gain confidence and trust in their own reasoning when encouraged to think critically.
- Girls benefit from relationships with role models and mentors.

Workshop participants received many excellent N.A.S.A created websites that educators are encouraged to visit in their efforts to deliver S.T.E.M. opportunities for girls and students of color.

S. T. E. M.

Ms. Dreisen Heath shared how educators should be intentional about equity and empowerment — there are still ways to build inclusivity and safe environments for students.

Sorors were asked to consider that in her research, she found that Black and Brown low-income students, with behavioral issues, also (in the majority) come from *food insecure* homes – which interfered with a student 'showing up' at school.

Educators should be cognizant that we create a space where students feel they belong. We also must examine how we 'show up' to the classroom, without our own biases and judgment. In empowering and creating an environment for learning, we must examine how we approach discipline.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE is grounded in **RESPECT**. A premise for restorative justice *is being honest and preparing for whatever impacts result*. It's how we move to reconciling rather than retribution.

Suggestions were given for addressing 'race' in the

classroom. Ms. Heath pointed out that 'race' also intersects with other 'differences'.

In a Classroom, Every Child Deserves...

- To know their purpose
- To know their power
- An understanding of self and their home life
- An understanding of their capabilities
- A sense of belonging

Benefits of Restorative Justice

- Reduces recidivism and addresses trauma
- Strives to be respectful to all
- Provides the opportunity for equitable dialogue and decision-making
- Inclusive of all relevant stakeholders
- Addresses harms, needs, obligations
- Encourages all to take responsibility

How Can I Re-Commit to This Work?

- How do I reaffirm who I am and what expertise and skills I bring to the classroom?
- What biases am I bringing that are unseen?
- How can I better center the experiences of my students in the classroom?
- How can I create an even better environment for my students to thrive?
- What strategies can I use?

Four Restorative Justice Strategies that educators might find useful are:

- CLASSROOM CIRCLES
- "PEACE WALKS"
- PEER JURY
- CARE CENTER

Teach-A-Rama programs have been phenomenal thus far. The access to technology has afforded us the means to reach wider audiences and more of our sisterhood.

Basileus Leslie Ridley and the sorors of Alpha Mu Chapter are commended for providing a professionally relevant program with loads of helpful ideas and resources.

NASA Minority University and Research Education Project

<https://www.nasa.gov/stem/murep/home/index.html>

NASA STEM Opportunities for Educators

[Explore STEM Resources for K-12 Educators | NASA](#)

S.T.E.M. Resources

NASA International Space Apps Challenge <https://www.spaceappshsv.com/>

NASA G.I.R.L.S. Giving Initiative and Relevance to Learning Science
<https://women.nasa.gov/get-involved/>

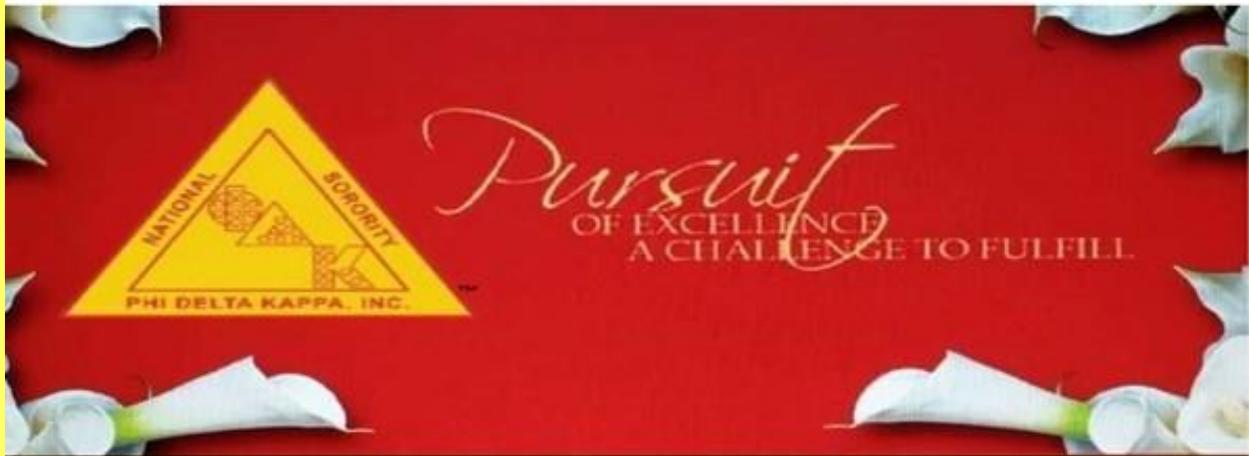
NASA aspire 2inspire <https://women.nasa.gov/a2i/>

NASA SISTER Summer Institute Science Technology Engineering and Research
<https://women.nasa.gov/a2i/>

National Girls Collaborative Project <https://ngcproject.org/>

SciGirls [SciGirls CONNECTSciGirls](#)

NATIONAL SORORITY OF PHI DELTA KAPPA, INCORPORATED



National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa, Inc.
~Interest Meeting~



Dr. Etta F. Carter, National President



Dr. Patsy O. Squire, Eastern Regional Director



Dianne Gary-Jones, President
Alpha Zeta, Richmond VA



Queen Malone, President
Alpha Chi, Portsmouth, VA



Anona Huntley, Member At Large



Andrea Wyche, President
Gamma Mu, Virginia Beach, VA



Pamela Tabb-Boyd,
President
Alpha Lambda, Norfolk, VA



The following characteristics depict educators to be recruited by NSPDK.

- Educators with progressive organizational and leadership experience.
- Educators who are willing to invest time and talent in the National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa, Inc. as an extracurricular priority.
- Educators who are committed to and feel comfortable advocating for all of the components of the YES.
- Educators who represent a diversity of backgrounds, interests, experiences, talent and academic pursuits.
- Educators who foster enthusiasm and dedication to students and the teaching profession. They demonstrate passionately the pursuit of excellence. They express openly their beliefs that all children can learn, and they admit that they themselves are lifelong learners. They believe in teamwork, network and work!
- Educators who demonstrate a charitable and giving spirit-time and money

Eastern Regional Director, Dr. Squire; Anona Huntley, Eastern Region Member-at-Large; and Angela Ringgold, Eastern Region Membership Chair, hosted two virtual interest meetings for prospective members.

The Eastern Region Virginia Statewide Interest Meeting was held on December 5 to recruit members on behalf of Alpha Zeta, Alpha Lambda, Alpha Chi, and Gamma Mu Chapters.

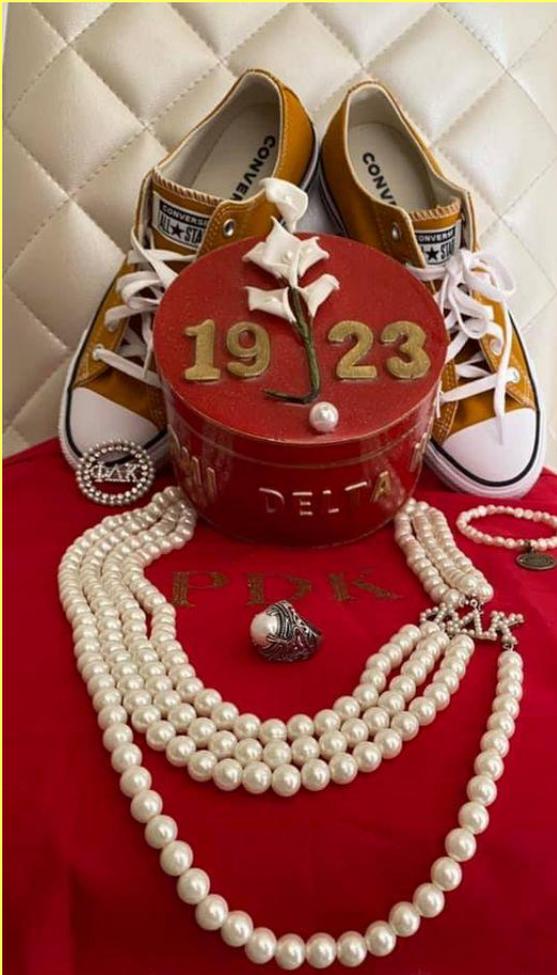
The Eastern Region is excited at the prospect of the formation of a new chapter in Monmouth County, NJ. An interest meeting was held on December 6th.



Angela Ringgold, Eastern Region Membership Chair
nspdkaringgold@gmail.com



January 18, 2021



**SNEAKERS
and
PEARLS
DAY**

POURING INTO GENERATION Z



A Recipe for Amazing (BETA EPSILON CHAPTER)

Equal portions of:

- **SELF-WORTH**
- **SELF-CARE**
- **WISDOM**
- **PERSEVERANCE**
- **RESPECT**
- **INTEGRITY**
- **HOPE**
- **PEACE**
- **UNDERSTANDING**
- **KNOWLEDGE**

A generous portion of..... **L O V E**

**To make them educated
and caring citizens of the world!**

#BEReslientBEMightyBEBlessed

XI CHAPTER



- Leading by example
- Practicing patience with yourself and amongst others
- Being open Minded to new Out-of-the-Box Ideas
- Staying true to Yourself
- Showing Support for others, being loyal
- Respect and realizing that it is earned
- A wealth of Knowledge

THETA CHAPTER

1. To promote college and career readiness; to attain and excel academic achievement
2. To promote and acquire life skills, self-confidence, communication and leadership competencies
3. To promote and sustain a health lifestyle by engaging in physical activity, with best nutritional choices and spiritual introspective

ALPHA CHI CHAPTER

- ◆ You only fail when you quit.
- ◆ You can't face tomorrow when yesterday is all you can see.
- ◆ Education is a privilege, take advantage of it. Don't waste it.
- ◆ Encourage communication, especially with older adults.
- ◆ Use mentorship for innovative bonding.
- ◆ Use the internet to watch for motivational people to learn things they did to be

Generation Z

1996 – 2015

Next Cohort

GENERATION

ALPHA



EPSILON CHI CHAPTER

- You are amazing, gifted and powerful!
- The possibilities are endless for you
- This world is totally yours to challenge and change
- You are enough as you are, a unique gift for the world to get to know
- Your voice matters and we are relying on you to remain connected with the rest of the world as a reminder that we are one
- Life is a marathon, it's not a sprint. Take your time to know that everything works itself out

BETA ZETA CHAPTER

- Understand that caring for others is how you ensure care for yourself
- Never lose their passion for what they believe in
- Work to instill love of learning by promoting literacy development
- A growth mindset that they can reach their dreams
- Integrity, honesty, and kindness
- A sense of patience and endurance
- Creativity and dedication
- The power of networking
- The gift of education
- Ideas



GAMMA MU CHAPTER

For Generation Z to focus on making positive change in the rules from a long time ago because the world has changed, such as: the Presidential Election, virtual learning, changing technology, Black Lives Matter – increased racial tension, intolerance, police brutality or injustice and non-acceptance of the status quo.

5 Tips for Teaching Virtual Preschool Classes

While the method of teaching has changed, the kids haven't—and keeping this top of mind can help preschool teachers be successful online.

By [Gerard Visco](#)

December 17, 2020



When people find out that I'm a preschool teacher, the first thing they usually say is, "You must be really patient." I've never believed myself to be more patient than any other person, but in the past eight months, as our preschool swiftly transitioned from in-person to complete virtual learning, I've found a patience that I didn't know I had.

I've come to accept that not every lesson is going to register, and not every activity is going to be a winner. Even eight months in, virtual learning can be unpredictable. If you're teaching 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds, you have to embrace that.

5 THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND ABOUT ONLINE PRESCHOOL

1. Kids have the same needs when learning over the computer as they do in class: If you were teaching preschoolers in the classroom, you wouldn't have them sit and listen to you talk all day. You'd have nap time, outdoor play, and classroom free play. You'd have activities where the kids were up and moving, sensory bins to explore, a writing center to inspire creativity, and lessons where kids were manipulating objects.

The reason so many of those things are mainstays in the world of early childhood education is that they're developmentally appropriate. Your students' needs and cognitive development haven't changed just because they're speaking to you through a screen.

You wouldn't dream of teaching a preschool classroom where your students were expected to be in one spot for six hours with only 30 minutes for lunch. Be understanding of this and plan your day accordingly. Sometimes less is more when it comes to virtual lessons.

2. Your curriculum was not made to be taught virtually: No matter how much you love your chosen curriculum (assuming you have one), understand that it was meant to be

delivered in person and not through a Wi-Fi connection. Sometimes you can modify activities using a few Google slides and that screen share button, but sometimes you'll have to completely rethink a lesson provided by your curriculum.

Here are the questions I keep in mind: What is the objective of the content? Am I teaching rhyming, counting with one-to-one correlation, community helpers, the food groups? Is there a way I can make this objective work differently now that I'm not in a classroom?

3. Embrace age-appropriate distractions: Preschoolers are naturally curious and easily distracted. They're invested in superheroes, the fact that the garbage truck just pulled up to their house, why their stepsister is walking into the family room, and what their cat is eating.

When these things happen, they'll most likely want to tell you about it. Accept that this is age-appropriate behavior and that sometimes you just have to roll with the punches. You obviously want to foster a sense of wonder in your preschool children, so sometimes you just have to accept that encouraging them to ask questions is more important than clicking that next slide.

While talking about community helpers today, for instance, a student of mine randomly took herself off of mute to ask why there were so many pumpkins outside at night. We talked about how it was recently Halloween and how people put candles inside pumpkins, which might make it seem like pumpkins only came out at night. Though apropos of nothing, this was still a worthwhile conversation that flexed some critical thinking skills.

Allow your students time to indulge in their interests—even in the middle of a lesson—to reinforce that you're listening to them and responding to the things they think are important.

4. Be understanding: If I had a dollar for every time I told one of my students to take themselves off of mute (and in some cases ask an adult for help), I'd be able to retire early. However, the same is true for the number of times that I've started teaching when I was on mute. Technology has naturally increased my wait time after asking a question.

Be understanding about the things you can't control—everyone's internet connection is different, preschoolers often hit buttons that cause consequences they don't know how to fix, and you might have to call a lesson early because you've run into a problem you just can't solve. Technology is a wonderful tool, but it also creates a brand new set of wild cards. You are now both a teacher and an IT technician, and you'll have to fill both roles with respect and patience.

Keep in mind that everyone's home situation is different. Don't take things personally if a child seems distracted, misses a day, or works from a room with a lot of background noise. Everyone is doing their best right now. Show empathy and care even when things are frustrating.

5. Take time for yourself: It can be easy to beat yourself up after a lesson goes poorly or to throw yourself into your work for hours after logging off for the day. With many teachers working from home, the line between home and school is pretty much gone.

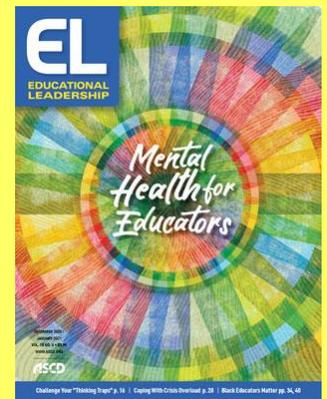
Your students appreciate all your hard work, but they'll appreciate it even more if you're fresh and ready to go every day. Don't forget to take care of yourself. Read a favorite book, go for a run, sit on the couch and watch TV, take up a new hobby, enjoy that cup of coffee without a side of lesson planning for once. You've made it this far, but the pandemic is unfortunately not over. So if you're working through Zoom, make sure you're finding a way to mentally separate your work from your personal life.

From one preschool teacher to another, I encourage you to remember why you got into this job to begin with: to give high-quality education to preschoolers. Things may look different now, but you can still be an effective, caring, and kind teacher even through a computer screen.

The Mental Balancing Act for School Leaders

Baruti K. Kafele

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To be an effective leader, you must be intentional and deliberate about taking care of your mental and physical health.

In my current role as a full-time, self-employed consultant, I'm living a life that is inherently stressful. I stand in TSA lines and sit at airport gates for hours when the inevitable missed connections and cancellations happen. I wait in the freezing cold for rental car facility shuttles, drive for hours into the night, and arrive to hotels without having eaten dinner. There are always unread emails and little sleep, and yet I still have to go into the venue the next morning with the "fire" that the audience expects for a six-hour presentation, knowing that ahead of me is the next state, the next hotel room, and the next presentation.

My previous roles in school leadership were not much easier. I was carrying a great deal of stress, not to mention the effects the long hours and responsibility had on my physical health. There were many days when I forgot to eat, or when my nourishment came only from fast food or the vending machine. I took on a lot of responsibility and wanted to succeed in my goals, regardless of how much time and energy it took. At the time, I was unaware of how much it was impacting my mental health. Although I tried to be intentional about maintaining a balance, it wasn't until I was away from the daily grind of assistant principal and principal positions that I really understood the impact that the situation had on me mentally.

After several wake-up calls, I've learned to be intentional about managing the stress, taking breaks, and having mental balance. But the work of educational leaders is hard and ongoing. I see many education leaders who struggle with the same issues I did, and I am here to tell you from experience that you must strike a balance, you must take time for yourself in order to be an effective leader.



Baruti Kafele speaks to the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders in January 2020.

A Dangerous Year

After seven years of classroom teaching, I became a middle school assistant principal in 1998 and a middle school principal in 1999. Over my 14 years of school leadership, I led three different middle schools and a high school. As it relates to balancing and sustaining our mental health, I want to focus on one of the three middle schools.

In 2003, I took a position leading my third urban middle school as a principal in northern New Jersey. It was the start of summer vacation, and I had two months to prepare. The achievement levels at this school were very low, which made the job particularly enticing for me. I wanted to demonstrate to that city and the state what the children enrolled in that school were capable of achieving.

I was by now an experienced and successful principal, so I thought I was more than ready for this new challenge. I was excited about the prospects for the implementation of culturally relevant instruction and learning to raise the achievement levels and transform this school.

About five days after my start date, I received a letter from my superintendent via the New Jersey State Department of Education indicating that my school had been designated a "persistently dangerous school" under the No Child Left Behind law. This meant that parents had the option of transferring their children out of my new school to a school that was deemed safer.

In an instant, I went from a feeling of excitement of having started this new job to a feeling of panic: "What have I gotten myself into?" I knew for the sake of the school that I had to work to the stigma of being designated a dangerous school. When the local media picked up the story, and it then became a national news story, my anxiety increased. The press called me daily, and parents formed a steady stream at my office door to request transfers for their children.

Needless to say, I was overwhelmed. But I did not let it defeat me. I needed a plan. I studied all of the data I could get my hands on regarding discipline from the previous five years while considering what we needed to do differently. I came to see that the problem was not behavior and discipline at all. The problem was one of school climate and culture, and that became my focus for the entire summer: How do we completely transform the climate and the culture of the school toward removal from the "persistently dangerous schools" list?

That school year was not only unusual, but also very demanding on me emotionally and physically. It required a wealth of my time and my energy. I felt the pressure daily. Because I was so new, I did not know the staff. I had zero relationships in that building. I questioned my decision to leave my previous school. There was more to do than usual, but I convinced myself that it was in fact doable. I felt I was in it alone, that I was on my own. I consistently reminded myself, "If not me, then who?"



Baruti Kafele greets a young person at an ASCD conference. He says that remembering the kids who benefit from his work helps him keep a mental balance when things get stressful.

How I Took On the Challenge

I started building my team as soon as I could. I tapped the help of my newly hired assistant principal, my behavioral specialist, and my dropout prevention officer. Our focus was the climate and culture of the school, as opposed to being more stringent on rules and consequences. We needed students to walk into an entirely different experience.

After hundreds of parents inquired and requested transfers in that first week, I sent a letter to every parent of an enrolled student, asking them to hear me out before they made their decisions. They showed up in droves. I told them that their children were in very capable hands and that there was no need to transfer them out. I talked about my leadership principles and how those translated into my commitment to their children. The parents heard me and agreed to keep their children in my school. All but one stayed, and the one that transferred out asked to be re-enrolled a month later.

We were removed from the list by year's end. This could not have been accomplished had I allowed myself to be overwhelmed. I maintained a balance throughout the year by considering these things:

Relationship building. I developed close, professional working relationships with much of my staff and slowly but steadily won their support. They believed in my leadership. As I typically say to leaders in seminars, the best way to get to know staff is to get to know them individually over time. For me, this was typically during prep periods, where I would stop by their classrooms for short but productive conversations that enabled me to get to know many of my teachers and other staff members beyond their job descriptions.

Learning when to say no. As principals, we must always remember that we are not going to please everyone with every decision we make. For example, I've had teachers who ask to take on a full schedule when there is a shortage of staff. The teacher may need the extra money, but taking on that full load may be at the expense of the teacher's physical or mental health. Looking at the bigger picture, I may need to intervene and say no for the teacher's long term mental and physical well-being. "No" is never a popular decision, but it may prove to be the best decision in that moment. Leaders have to develop confidence in saying no while giving maximum attention to the overall leadership-staff relationships in an effort to not lose anyone due to unpopular decisions.

Making time for family and friends. To have a true balance, you must include your personal life. My family was always important, and I never neglected my time with them. I refused to "make the work my entire life." This meant that I had to discipline myself to unplug and reclaim at least part of my weekends. When I first started my career, for example, you'd often find me watching the Sunday football games in the office while I worked. Or, when I used to run a Saturday morning academic academy from 8 a.m. to noon, I'd often work for hours after the students were dismissed. I slowly learned that I was both misusing time and

neglecting my family, and I conditioned myself to leave when the students left and give myself time to relax with my family on the weekends, without the burden of work.

Doing the Work of Work/Life Balance

It is widely known that in 2015, I suffered a heart attack while delivering a keynote address at a conference in Miami. That day was a culmination of poor dietary habits as a principal that multiplied as a consultant. I had convinced myself that the pressures of leadership and subsequent pressures of consulting left me little time to eat healthily. My career-long fast-food diet almost sent me to an early death. My main artery was clogged 100 percent!

I was not only suffering physically, however. I was suffering mentally and was completely oblivious to it. I needed to re-examine who I thought I was. Many of us in leadership think we are indestructible "machines" who can and will do it all, but my wake-up call brought me down to earth and reminded me that I have to take care of myself first before I can begin to help others. To have good mental health and overall mental well-being, you must always make yourself your own number one priority.

Since the heart attack, I have found a way to completely change my diet so I eat healthily and to walk about 15 miles per week. But how have I managed the stress? For me, it boils down to my focus and priority, and—as I've stressed in speeches and articles—reminding myself of my "why." My focus and priority are the students who will benefit from what I present to their teachers and administrators. I need to remind myself why I do this work in the first place.

The power of one's "why" cannot be overstated. With the stresses that accompany school leadership that so often lead to burnout, it is very easy to completely lose sight of your "why" and to instead focus on solely on the "work." As important as the work may be, it is more important that you never, ever lose sight of your *reason* for doing the work. As I always say, when one loses their way, they have probably also lost their will, and in order to retrieve both, they must make a conscious effort to reclaim their why.

After my heart attack (and the Type II diabetes that accompanied it), I had to reexamine my own why. The way I was living physically was a complete contradiction of my why. With my diet and lack of exercise, there was obviously no way I was going to walk in my purpose over the long haul. Refocusing on my purpose was key to transforming myself emotionally, mentally, and physically.

I have also seen the impact of focusing on the why with principal colleagues I train. For example, it is not uncommon for a principal to tell me how empowering the discussion on the why has been to their leadership, toward helping them maintain a focus on what matters most and thereby relieving them of a lot of the stresses they carried previously due to losing their focus.

Yes, the work can be difficult; yes, the work can be challenging; yes, the work can be overwhelming; and yes, the work can be thankless. But at the end of the day, your mindset has to be, "I do this work because the children are my focus and my priority." That is the professional balance that you must maintain toward your own mental wellness in this otherwise challenging leadership role.

Leading in a Time of Upheaval

As I write this, we are in the midst of both a global pandemic and social change, which add an additional set of challenges to the already challenging role of school leadership. I have conducted a plethora of leadership sessions over the past several months on social justice education, maintaining leadership effectiveness through a global pandemic, and managing stress during these abnormal times. Here are some questions you can use to self-reflect on how you're grappling with the pandemic and social change within your school community:

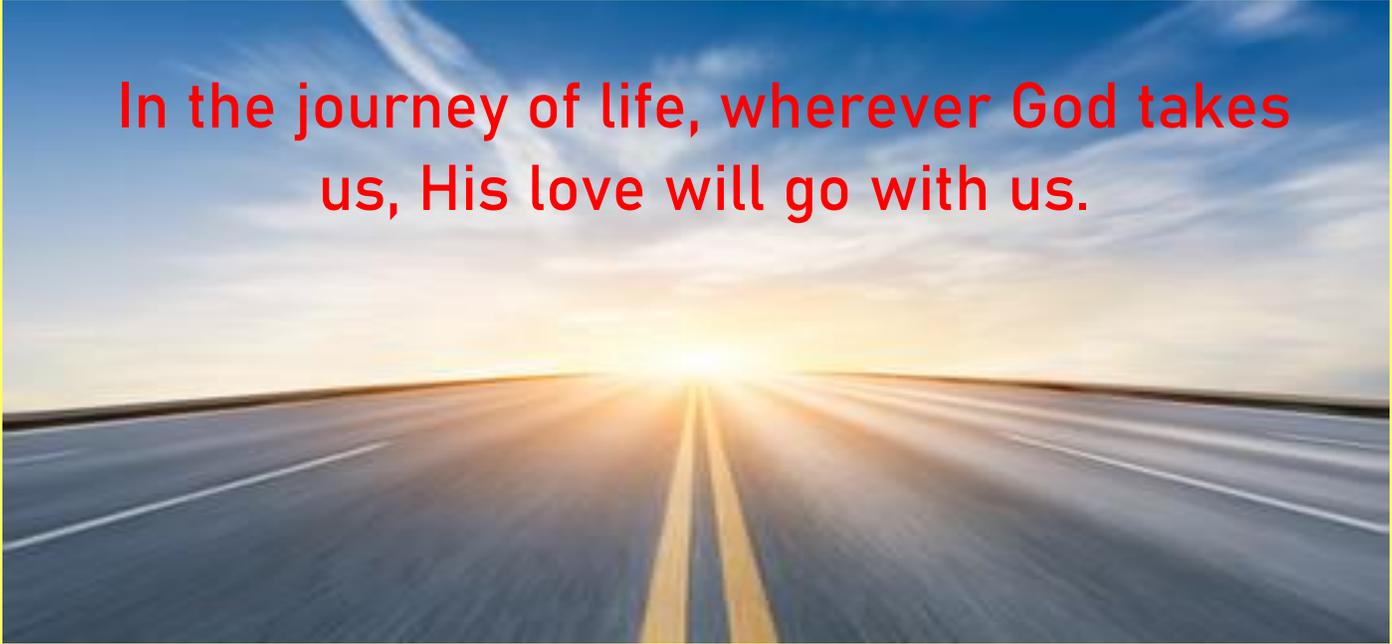
Leading During COVID-19

1. In what ways am I a support to my staff?
2. In what ways am I a resource for my staff?
3. How am I going about maintaining communication with the parents of my students?
4. How am I maintaining a sense of balance between my professional and personal lives?

Leading During Social Change

1. What are the reasons social justice education either exists or doesn't exist in my school?
2. Can my students, particularly my students of color, articulate, beyond emotional reactions, the injustices that surround them?
3. Do the teachers I supervise have the necessary *cultural competence* to engage my students in issues of social justice?
4. What type of PD do I provide staff toward developing a comfort and confidence in engaging students in issues of social justice?
5. How knowledgeable am I on issues of social justice that directly impact my students of color?

[Baruti K. Kafele \(www.principalkafele.com\)](http://www.principalkafele.com) is an award-winning former urban principal in New Jersey and a current education consultant. He is the author of several books, including [*The Assistant Principal 50: Critical Questions for Meaningful Leadership and Professional Growth*](#) (ASCD, 2020) and [*The Teacher 50: Critical Questions for Inspiring Classroom Excellence*](#) (ASCD, 2016). Follow him on [Twitter](#).



In the journey of life, wherever God takes us, His love will go with us.

May God bless and strengthen our Sorors and their families and keep them in perfect peace.

Condolences:

Dec. 31 (Delta Lambda Chapter) Soror Teresa Moody-Butler (Husband, Vincent R. Butler)

Dec. 22 (Beta Lambda Chapter) Soror Benita Brown (Grandson, Avery)

Dec. 2 (Delta Pi Chapter) Soror Alma Williams (Nephew, Temel Mack)

Nov. 22 (Beta Lambda Chapter) Soror Velma Renae White (Nephew, Alexander Spence)

Nov. 21 (Beta Lambda Chapter) Soror Richardean Miller Whisonant (Nephew, Desmond Rate Whisonant)

Nov. 17 (Beta Lambda Chapter) Soror Blondelia Tucker (Sister, Annie Ruth Watts Jones)

Illness:

Dec. 22 (Delta Lambda Chapter) Soror Brenda Marable Freeman

Dec. 21 (Alpha Chi Chapter) Anthropos Lee McDaniels

TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY



Congratulations
SOROR DR. LAVETTA ROSS
ALPHA CHAPTER
Appointed High School Principal

Delta Phi Chapter Kudos Club and Advisors braving a cold CT afternoon for Marines/Channel 8 Toys for Tots drive-by toy drive



NSPDK, Beta Lambda Educators of W-S, NC celebrating our Anniversary Week by providing Toys to the School Toy Drive to support Children and Adult Benefits!



EPSILON XINOS volunteered their time to ring bells and collecting donations for Salvation Army. We are so proud of our girls.



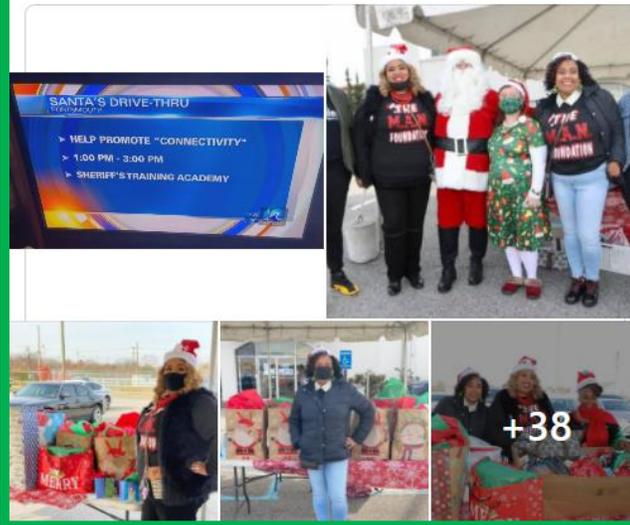
DeltaPhi Xinos and Kudos
Instilling the importance of giving during a time of need.
♥♥♥♥♥



NSPDK, Inc., Epsilon Alpha and Delta Pi Chapters partnered with the Union County Board of Commissioners and the Plainfield and Hillside Boards of Education to distribute Bags of food and turkeys to their communities. Basilei Eleanor Worrill, Epsilon Alpha and Jacquelyn Dean Oliver, Delta Pi with the help of Soror **Angela R. Garretson**, Delta Pi (Union County Commissioner) worked together to make this happen. GREAT JOB AND WHAT A BLESSING TO BOTH COMMUNITIES! Thank you Sorors fo... See More



Alpha Chi supporting their community by being a sponsor to help support 30 families with an incarcerated love one have Christmas for their children.

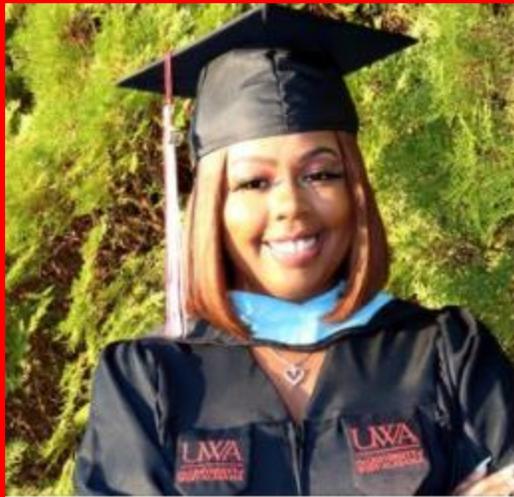


Theta Xinos and Kudos Advisor volunteered on Saturday 12/19/20 to wrap Christmas gifts for children residents of a transitional home supported by the First Baptist Church of Crown Heights, Izetta's Angels. While socially distancing, the youth were very inspired and encouraged.



Delta Pi is on the move(can't stop this) The Ladies in Red/Gold are doing it again. On Saturday December 12, 2020 in Conant Park, the sorors held a clothing drive for Congo Town, West Africa. They know the reason for the season, is Giving. We would like to thank the sorors from other chapters that were in the midst.

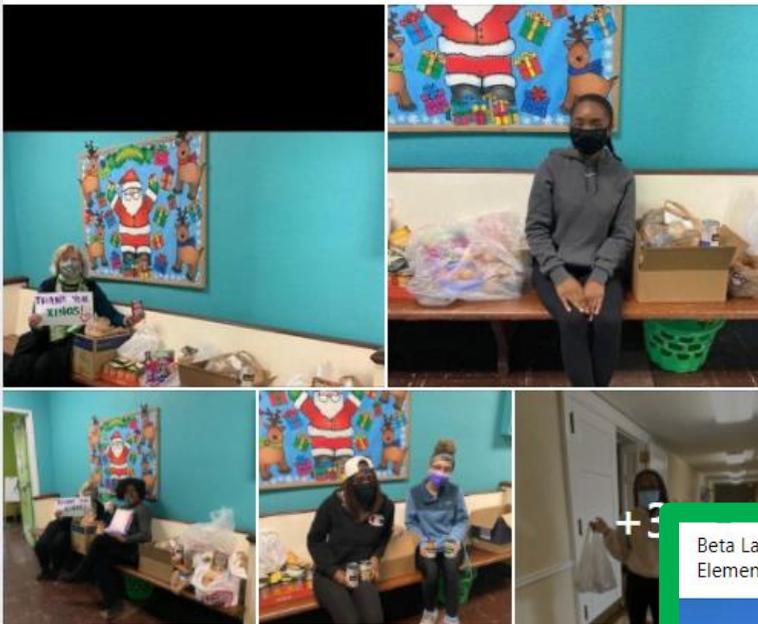




Graduate
**ERICA
 CYMONE BOWMAN
 PONDER**
**UNIVERSITY OF WEST
 ALABAMA**
 Master of Education in
 Library Media

NSPDK (Beta Beta) Success
Congrats Soror Erica Bowman Ponder

Epsilon XINOS donating canned food. So proud of them for doing this in the time of need. Blessings to them. #epsilonchapter



Basileus Donna Mickens, Beta Lambda Chapter and Ms. ER NSPDK-Valeria Edwards keeps on Giving! Gave books to Students at Rupert Bell Recreation Center! Supporting NSPDK National Call to Action-Literacy!



Beta Lambda Educators providing treats for Teachers at Ashley Elementary.





National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa, Inc.
Theta Chapter

Invites you
to join us
on

A Virtual Tour



Australia

Save The Date!

January 22, 2021

Theta Chapter's Virtual Tour Fundraiser



Personal
Tour Guide



Caribbean Sunrise
Pinot Noir



New Zealand

Cocktail Hour
Sorority
Meet & Greet



Cathleen Snyder
Basileus



Book Now!
Price \$25.00 pp
Payment Due by Jan 15

Send Payment to:
Yvette Wilds
(917) 403-5133
ywilds@aol.com

Theta Chapter

For Tour Information
Renee Cook
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reneecook@hotmail.com

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Will be delivered Prior to
Departure Date & Time**