

AKA forum boosts Emerging Leaders

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MIAMI — The Gamma Zeta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (AKA) hosted a civic engagement and leadership breakfast forum featuring several local female politicians for its Emerging Young Leaders (EYL).

More than 50 students from the Carol City Middle School EYL Club and the Citywide EYL Club, as well as parents and sorority members, attended the forum, which consisted of a lively and animated discussion of the importance of community involvement, education, mentoring and values, at the Carrie P. Meek Entrepreneurial Education Center at Miami-Dade College.

The AKAs' Emerging Young Leaders is an initiative to develop sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade girls in the areas of education, character building, leadership and civic engagement.

Panelists included state Rep. Cynthia A. Stafford (D-109), state Rep. Barbara Watson (D-107), Opa-locka Commissioner Dorothy Johnson and Velma Palmer, former vice mayor of South Miami, who shared their experiences and life stories and encouraged the 24 EYLs to stay focused on academic and personal development while being committed to serve their community.

“It was evident that the girls were empowered from the interaction with us, as well as the responses from their questions,” Palmer said. Watson added that “It was a great experience to interact with these young ladies and to encourage them to understand that education is the key. I was pleased to see how they truly embraced the concept of completing high school and becoming members of a productive society.”

The March 16 forum, also a celebration of Women's History Month, was one of many activities in which the EYLS have participated this school year.

"We have provided our Emerging Young Leaders with workshops on careers, FCAT preparation, healthy relationships, teen dating violence awareness, and personal grooming," said Deborah Varnadore-Simmons, chairperson of the chapter's Citywide EYL Club. "Also, they have performed valuable community service by collecting supplies for military families and presenting a Christmas program for senior citizens."

The Alpha Kappa

Alpha Sorority, Inc. is the nation's oldest Greek-letter organization established by African-American college-trained women. Founded on the campus of Howard University, the sorority has provided community service for 105 years to promote education, social justice, economic empowerment, the arts, and health and wellness and to combat global poverty.

The organization is comprised of 265,000 women in 973 chapters nationally and internationally who work to cultivate scholastic achievement and improve the lives of women, girls and all mankind.

The local Gamma Zeta Omega Chapter has served the Miami-Dade community for 73 years. The Emerging Young Leaders is the signature program of the current sorority administration, and its goal is to positively impact the lives of at least 10,000 middle school girls by 2014.