



Contact: Melody M. McDowell – Chief Information Officer – Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority 773-660-2001 – Office – 312-371-8917 – Cell – e-mail: melodyaka@aol.com

## ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA/UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY UNITE TO EDUCATE UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES ON ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS

Collaboration will promote environmental and green awareness

Chicago, Illinois – November 25, 2011 - Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have joined forces to protect communities from environmental health risks through an aggressive and proactive educational offensive outreach effort. The campaign's overarching goal is to address environmental issues within underserved communities where citizens are most vulnerable. Driven by this mandate, the Sorority's members and EPA officials will mount awareness campaigns in the 958 global communities where AKA has chapters.

Alpha Kappa Alpha's International President Attorney Carolyn House Stewart, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency's Administrator Lisa P. Jackson made the partnership official during a ceremony where a Memorandum of Understanding was inked. The official signing was held at the EPA headquarters in the nation's capital and was witnessed by members of AKA's board of directors.

In signing the pact, President Stewart and Administrator Jackson vowed to mobilize their combined resources and passions "to expand the environmental conversation, spread the EPA message and dispel myths that have served as barriers in communicating and executing its mission."

The multi-pronged partnership has four goals that align with their joint environmental missions. They include 1) creating a green presence within AKA through sustainability and stewardship; 2) creating academic excellence through environmental education, stewardship and STEM for young girls; 3) building national, regional and local green partnerships, and 4) creating, improving, and establishing capacity-building in underserved and disadvantaged communities that AKA serves.

The Sorority will also commemorate Earth Day, Arbor Day and other milestones that celebrate the environment and eco-friendly initiatives.

Attorney Stewart said the agreement supports AKA's global priorities as embraced in its Emerging Young Leaders<sup>SSM</sup> program. The mission also parallels the Sorority's initiatives on Health, Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability, Global Poverty, Economic Security, and Social Justice and Human Rights. All of these programs are embraced under the Sorority's programmatic theme: "Global Leadership Through Timeless Service."

The agreement has particular significance in advancing the Sorority's commitment to its Asthma Prevention and Management Program since the symptoms are directly related to the environment. Through the EPA's resources, AKA will strengthen and accelerate its efforts to inform and educate the communities it serves on how to address the health risks, identify the toxins that trigger this condition and mitigate the effects of a compromised environment.

AKA's Asthma Prevention and Management Program is a partnership with the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) of the National Institutes of Health.

The collaboration also supports AKA's overall commitment to health prevention since diabetes, heart disease, cancer and respiratory diseases are all challenges that are related to the environment. Alpha Kappa Alpha has forged partnerships with the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, and the American Diabetes Association to grapple with these diseases.

To facilitate the collaboration, representatives from the EPA will train, speak and educate members on environmental education and environmental justice topics at AKA's regional conferences and national convention. They will also identify ways to generate their message on the chapter level.

The Sorority will place special emphasis on educating its undergraduate chapters on environmental issues through its different communication vehicles, including through social media.

President Stewart hailed the agreement as "a Document of Action for AKA." She noted that the impact of the joint offensive would reduce the number of hospital visits and slash the billions of dollars in medical costs that can be traced to environmental issues. To that end, she pledged to put the Sorority's "full support and energies behind this partnership."

"Environmental education is the foundation of environmental action and health protection," said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. "This is an important opportunity to show communities of people who may not think of themselves as environmentalists, exactly how issues like clean air and clean water play a role in their lives. These things have an impact on people's health, the local economy and the future of their communities, and this partnership will help send that important message to people who may not have heard it before."

The signing capped a weeklong Public Policy Conference that Alpha Kappa Alpha sponsored in the nation's capital. During the Conference, members attended White House meetings where officials briefed them on current issues and programs and lawmakers updated them on a myriad of issues, including on the environment.

- ##### -

### **About Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority:**

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated (AKA) is an international service organization that was founded on the campus of Howard University in Washington, D.C. in 1908. It is the oldest Greek-lettered organization established by African-American college-educated women. It is comprised of 260,000 members in 958 graduate and undergraduate chapters in the United States, the U. S. Virgin Islands, Bermuda, the Caribbean, Canada, Japan, Germany, South Korea and on the continent of Africa. Its membership includes distinguished women who boast excellent academic records, proven leadership skills, and are involved in the global community through advocacy and service. Alpha Kappa Alpha has dedicated itself to improving the quality of life for citizens worldwide and promoting peace. The organization is led by its 28th International President Carolyn House Stewart of Tampa, Florida whose administration's programmatic theme is "Global Leadership Through Timeless Service." For more information, log on to [www.aka1908.com](http://www.aka1908.com).