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Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority to Host Grand Re-Opening of International Headquarters



Chicago, Ill. — In its largest renovation project in almost 30 years, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated has completed a \$6.2 million upgrade to its international headquarters, The Ivy Center®, in Chicago.

To mark the milestone, a ribbon cutting, and open house will be held on May 4, 2018. The building was last renovated in 1992 when a third floor was added after the Sorority outgrew the then 16,800 square foot headquarters overlooking Jackson Park on the South side of Chicago.

“This is an exciting day for the Sorority as we reopen our crown jewel,” said International President, Dr. Dorothy Buckhanan Wilson. “It has been an extraordinary journey and the culmination of a dream to complete this building project in the same neighborhood that will soon house the Obama Presidential Center. This facility is now a state of the art corporate environment for our staff who support the service initiatives and mission of our nearly 300,000 members.”

City officials are expected to join Wilson and sorority members, including the Board of Directors and former International Presidents at the grand-opening. A program and reception will be followed by an open house and tours.

The Sorority launched a three-phase project in 2016 to redesign the Ivy Center®, which was built in 1985. A Corporate Office Renovation Team led by Wilson oversaw the project, which took more than a year to complete, on time and under budget.

During construction, the administrative staff that handles the day-to-day operations of the sorority, packed up and moved to a temporary location. The renovations include a new grand entrance, a legacy museum that will display Sorority artifacts, mementos and memorabilia, restoration of the “Ivy Tree of Honor” mural, and installation of new heating and air conditioning systems.

In recognition of the leadership of Wilson and former Presidents Barbara Kinard Phillips, Faye B. Bryant and Mary Shy Scott, who were instrumental in the renovation project, historical markers were erected in the courtyard.

The project was completed by the Bowa Group, a minority-owned construction management and general contracting firm in Chicago with a majority minority construction crew that included 25 sub-contractors. The sorority, the oldest organization established by black college women, has a long-standing commitment to support businesses owned by minorities and women.

“There were no accidents or lost man-hours, which is a feat considering over 27,500 man-hours were logged on this job,” said Priscila Tyree Williams, the sorority’s Building & Property Committee Chairman. “We have fine-tuned and transformed our world-class headquarters into an executive oasis to carry out the Sorority’s important business.”

Founded in 1908 at Howard University in Washington, D.C., the Sorority opened its first National Office to Chicago in 1949. It purchased its first permanent location in 1952, a four-story building at 5211 South Greenwood Ave.

As the membership grew, the Sorority began a \$1 million campaign in 1978 to purchase land and construct the Ivy Center on South Stony Island Ave. The two-story building, named by Lavinia Norman, one of the Sorority’s Founders, was debt-free when it opened in 1985.

Last spring, when the renovation project was nearly completed, the blessing of the Ivy Center® was livestreamed on Facebook. The Corporate Office houses the sorority’s professional and administrative staff of 38 employees who oversee the Sorority’s day-to-day operations and Educational Advancement Foundation.

Media welcome to attend the Ribbon Cutting on May 4. Interviews available upon request.

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About Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

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 letter organization established by African-American college-educated women. Alpha Kappa Alpha is comprised of nearly 300,000 members in more than 1000 graduate and undergraduate chapters in the United States, Liberia, the Bahamas, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Germany, South Korea, Bermuda, Japan, Canada, South Africa and in the Middle East. Led by International President Dorothy Buckhanan Wilson, L.H.D., Alpha Kappa Alpha is often hailed as “America’s premier Greek-letter organization for African-American women.” For more information on Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and its programs, visit AKA1908.com.