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## ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA MOURNS LOSS OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT JULIA BROGDON PURNELL

October 31, 2013 – Chicago, Illinois - Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority mourns the loss of its 16<sup>th</sup> International President, Julia Brogdon Purnell, who passed on October 21 in Michigan. She served as the Sorority’s leader from 1962-1966.

Speaking on behalf of Alpha Kappa Alpha’s 260,000 members worldwide, the Sorority’s International President Carolyn House Stewart, praised Purnell for her steadfast devotion to human rights and women’s rights, for being a stalwart in the war on poverty, and for her particular focus on cultivating youth leaders.

“Julia Brogdon Purnell was the ultimate humanitarian,” stated Stewart. “Her action-oriented resolve was mirrored in the programs she inspired that were dedicated to eradicating poverty, promoting democracy, crusading for civil rights and living up to Alpha Kappa Alpha’s commitment to service. With her commanding presence and eloquence, she was a catalyst for change. She was much admired and revered and her courage, perseverance and indomitable resolve represent her ever-lasting legacy. She was an international treasure who will be sorely missed.”

Julia Brogdon Purnell’s leadership journey in Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority began when she was initiated into Beta Zeta Omega chapter in Orangeburg, South Carolina. Her leadership and tireless devotion to the Sorority’s service mission were immediately recognized and rewarded when she was elected to a number of leadership roles within the chapter including Parliamentarian, Vice President and President.

Her magnetism, innovative ideas and leadership attracted regional recognition and acclaim. She successfully ran for South Eastern Regional Director where she led the Sorority’s chapters and activities in Alabama, Tennessee and Mississippi.

Combined with her charisma and proven ability to lead, she was elected 16<sup>th</sup> International President during the Sorority's international convention in Detroit in 1962. With her unbridled energy and ability to arouse passions and galvanize the sorority around service-oriented causes, she catapulted the Sorority to heights that expanded its service reach and global scope.

During her administration, Alpha Kappa Alpha secured a landmark \$4 million contract from the US Department of Labor to operate the first federal residential Job Corps Center for women in the United States; opened the first National Program Office in the nation's capital, initiated Alpha Kappa Alpha Day in Congress and convened the first National Undergraduate Leadership School in Zion, Illinois in 1955. The Sorority also established the second international chapter in Nassau, Bahamas – thereby broadening AKA's global presence.

Her leadership gained international recognition when she was invited by President John F. Kennedy to the "White House Conference of Three Hundred Women" in 1964. In this capacity, she played a significant role in furthering civil rights, which resulted in the passage of the Civil Rights Act. Her profound influence led her to be invited to several other White House meetings to discuss human rights and women's rights.

After her term as international president ended, she continued to leave her imprint as an agent of change. In 1978, she was elected president of the Links, making her the first woman to serve as the chief leader of two notable organizations.

She was a passionate advocate for education, which is central to AKA's mission. She graduated with honors from Allen University at Columbia, South Carolina where she received numerous honors. She later earned a master's degree from Atlanta University and launched her career as a teacher. She was a professor of education at Southern University in Baton Rouge and retired from this position in 1984. Prior to this, she was a teacher at Avery Institute in Charleston, South Carolina State College in Orangeburg, and Morris College in Sumter, South Carolina. She also was the recipient of nine honorary doctorate degrees. Her achievements and commitment to service earned her numerous honors, awards and tributes.

In her later years, she remained active in a host of associations including the National Council of Negro Women, of which she was a lifelong member; the League of Women Voters, Women in Politics and the NAACP. In her adopted hometown of Baton Rouge, Louisiana she continued her activism with the Baton Rouge YWCA, Women in Politics, The Blundon Home for Orphans, the local Girl Scouts' Executive Board and the Steering Committee of the Status of Women in Louisiana. She earned many accolades for her service to the city including an honor from the Women's Greater Council of Baton Rouge.

She was also a tireless worker in her church, Bethel A.M.E. Church in Baton Rouge, where she made an indelible imprint. As part of her Links' mission, she founded a Service Center at the church. She immersed herself in this Center by serving as its first director. In this capacity, Julia became a beacon of hope to the city. She was honored with awards for her church leadership and was featured in a March 1991 feature article in **Louisiana Woman Magazine**.

Julia Brogdon Purnell was the widow of Clifton A. Purnell, Sr., long-time athletic director at Capitol Senior High School in Baton Rouge. She is survived by two grandchildren. She also leaves to mourn one sister, Sadie Brogdon Blackwell. Her son, Clifton, Jr. and sister Christine Brogdon Gilchrist preceded her in death. Both sisters were members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

Her life will be remembered in a way that celebrates her stature as a leader of the Sorority and the world. On November 1, Mrs. Purnell will lie in state at Gamma Eta Omega Sorority House, 1605 Harding Blvd., Baton Rouge, Louisiana from 3PM to 7PM. Members of the Sorority will honor her in an Ivy Beyond the Wall ceremony that will be held on Saturday, November 2 at Southern University's F.G. Clark Activity Center's "mini dome" beginning at 9:00AM. The memorial service will immediately follow this ceremony.

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