

# *Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.*

ΔΣΘ

A Service Sorority Founded in 1913

Tucson Alumnae Chapter

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Sept. 15, 2009

For Immediate Release

## Deltas support the arts through book club and theater outings

Tucson members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority borrowed a page from Oprah Winfrey's playbook when they started a book club approximately 10 years ago under their Arts and Letters Committee.

The national sorority, based in Washington, D.C., launched its Arts and Letters Commission in 1973 to promote and celebrate the works of African-American women in the arts. The sorority's Tucson Alumnae Chapter took a broader approach when it started its book club, choosing to read works from authors of all ethnicities.

Some of the books read by book club members include "The Bluest Eye" by Toni Morrison; "The Da Vinci Code" by Dan Brown; "The Secret Life of Bees" by Sue Monk Kidd; "The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" by Alexander McCall Smith; "Their Eyes Were Watching God" by Zora Neale Hurston; and "Dreams from My Father," President Barack Obama's memoir that was first published in 1995.

"We meet once a month, usually on a Friday night, in each others homes. Everyone brings a dish so we're able to enjoy dinner and the discussion of the book," said Rosanne R. Neal, chapter president. "We usually try to plan the menu around the theme or location of the book. If a book is set in the South, the host, who leads the discussion, will ask members to bring southern dishes," said Neal.

Chapter members are taking their adventures from the written page to Downtown Tucson on Saturday, Sept. 26, when they will attend the Arizona Theatre Co.'s showing of "The Kite Runner" at the Temple of Music and Art. Book club members read "The Kite Runner" by Khaled Hosseini in 2005. Cheryl Sims, who chairs Tucson Alumnae's Arts and Letters Committee, said 24 chapter and/or book club members will attend the show, then enjoy a catered Afghani-style dinner at the Temple's Art Gallery. "The dinner discussion will be lively," said Sims, adding that members traveled to Phoenix in January for a showing of "The Lion King."

The book club, which does not meet during the summer, will resume its regular schedule on Friday, Oct. 9, with the book "The Best of Everything" by Kimberla Lawson Roby. "Native Son" by Richard Wright and "The Love Child's Revenge" by Nicole Bailey-Williams also are on this year's reading list.

The Tucson Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2007. The national sorority is a service organization that was founded on Jan. 13, 1913, by 22 young women matriculating at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Today's membership is more than 200,000 women throughout the United States, Africa, Europe, Japan, Korea and the Caribbean. The sorority's Five-Point Program of public service emphasizes economic development; educational development; international awareness and involvement; physical and mental health; and political awareness and involvement.

Tucson Alumnae's commitment to community service has been demonstrated through support of organizations such as The Dunbar Project; the YWCA's Your Sister's Closet program; the Tucson Community Food Bank; the Tucson Urban League; the Tucson Branch of the NAACP; the United Negro College Fund; Casa de los Ninos; the Educational Enrichment Foundation; Arizona Daily Star's Send-A-Kid-To-Camp program; the Tucson Unified School District Clothing Bank; Habitat for Humanity Tucson; Tucson Blast Soccer Club; and others.

Tucson Alumnae members adopted a "green" attitude for a public-service project in March 2008, as part of the chapter's Founders Day celebration. More than 20 Deltas, in addition to family members and friends, planted 10 15-gallon trees in the back yard of a mental health facility in Sahuarita, AZ, approximately 15 miles south of Tucson.

"Tucson Alumnae wanted to do something positive for the environment," said Pamela Busch, chair of the Founders Day public-service project. "So much attention is focused on the Green Movement, we thought we could impact our local environment by planting trees, as well as helping to enhance the beauty of a nonprofit mental health facility," said Busch.

Desert trees were planted in the bare back yard of The Oasis Home, a transitional home for individuals with substance abuse problems or mental disorders that was established in 2007. The home serves between three and five clients at a time.

Deltas and their friends dug big holes – 3 feet wide by 2 feet deep – to accommodate the assortment of trees delivered to The Oasis Home by Doug Koppinger, coordinator of the TREES for Tucson program. Trees included Black Mission Fig, Blue Palo Verde, Velvet Mesquite, Texas Ebony, Willow Acacia, and Pomegranate.

Other examples of the chapter's service to the community includes its Betty Brown Scholarship Program for graduating high school seniors, through which approximately \$100,000 has been awarded; and Delta Academy and Delta GEMS, mentor programs for girls between the ages of 11 and 18 years, which are designed to instill in students the importance of education and academic excellence. Through Delta Academy, chapter members work with girls ages 11-14 during the school year to involve them in service learning and community service opportunities. Delta GEMS: *Growing and Empowering Myself Successfully*, for young ladies between the ages of 14 and 18, is designed to help them develop into strong, confident and respectful individuals while preparing them to take active roles in their communities. Tucson Alumnae started its Delta GEMS program in October 2006.

Since 1967, Tucson Alumnae Chapter has contributed approximately \$250,000 to Tucson's nonprofit organizations, community programs, and individuals in need.

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