

Gamma Psi Omega Chapter History

October 28, 1944 – Present

Gamma Psi Omega Chapter was chartered in Gary, Indiana when Soror Beulah T. Whitby was the Supreme Basileus, and Soror Blanche L. Patterson was the Central Regional Director.

Just like the National Sorority, there were sixteen women with vision who started this chapter. Sorors Clemette Armstrong, Ruth H. Battle, Katherine F. Beckman, Kathleen Bingham, Ferne Browne, Alice Butts, Bennie N. Collins, Margaret Graham, Genevieve H. Gray, Clareon Hinkson, Joyce T. Morgan, Evangeline Morse, Frances Renfroe, Jane L. Schell and Johnnie Upshaw.

Of these sixteen, two became Diamond Sorors with 75 years of service to AKA, Soror Clemette Armstrong and Soror Ruth H. Battle, both now deceased. The only remaining living charter member is Soror Bennie N. Collins who resides in Arizona.

GAMMA PSI OMEGA 'AKA-LIGHTS'

- First chapter chartered in Northwest Indiana. (20th in Central Region.)
- First group of Negro women to hold a conference in the Hotel Gary. April 26 – 28, 1963, hosted the 29th Central Regional Conference
- First and only Northwest Indiana chapter to have a member on the Directorate. Soror Gladys Bufkin Johnson – Supreme Tamiouchos.

First 3 Initiates:

Soror YJean Chambers, Gladys Bufkin Johnson and Thelma A. Uzzell in the autumn of 1945. Both Soror Chambers and Johnson led the chapter later as Basilei.

Soror Chambers wrote and narrated “Thematic Scripts”: for fashion shows we sponsored. This was the pre-cursor to the renowned Ebony Fashion Fair. Soror Johnson led the chapter as it purchased an incubator for Gary Methodist Hospital. And, as previously stated, was Supreme Tamiouchos. We’ve had 26 initiations to welcome 114 new Sorors to our chapter. These Sorors and others who joined our ranks have created a history of which we can be proud.

- Hosted the Ebony Fashion Fair annually since 1959, for 49 consecutive years as our major scholarship fund-raiser, until the show was discontinued by Ebony after the 2008-2009 season.
- Purchased a bus for the Steward Settlement House – a Gary Nursery School.
- Played an active role in 9 Central Regional Conferences, serving as Prime Hostess for three Conferences – the 14th in 1949 at The Campbell Friendship House - Gary, IN; the 29th in 1963 at Hotel Gary - Gary, IN; the 60th in 1994 at The Radisson – Merrillville, IN
- Participated in “News Election Service” reporting voting tallies for various elections for which we received a commendation from The Associated Press.
- Served as Hostesses for the Miss USA Pageant held at the Gary, IN Genesis Convention Center. in 2001 and 2002.
- Hosted Book Signings for authors Randall Robinson, and our own chapter Sorors Dharathula “Dolly” Millender and Juanita Moffett Walker, and Gary native Soror Carla J. Cargle.

- Financed the furnishings for the Katherine Beckman Room at the Gary YWCA
- Assisted West Side Theatre Guild with bringing Soror Coretta Scott King, Comedian Bill Cosby, “Fences”, Singers Ray Charles & Pebo Bryson and a dynamic Tribute to Michael Jackson to their stage.
- Participated in numerous health walks: Breast Cancer, Aids, Multiple Sclerosis, Sickle Cell Anemia; also Power-walking, Zumba Classes and the national Million Pounds Challenge Initiative.
- Advised Undergraduate Chapters:
 Zeta Nu – Indiana University, Northwest 1971-1980;
 Nu Lambda – City Chapter comprised of Indiana University Northwest, Purdue University Calumet, Valparaiso University, and Calumet College from 1980 to Present; Epsilon Rho – Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 2001 – 2004
- Had members of the Directorate as guest speakers:
 Supreme Basileus Eva L. Evans at our 50th Anniversary in 1994, Central Regional Director Dorothy W. Buckhanan at Founders Day in 2001; Supreme Parliamentarian Rachel A. Mallory at our 60th Anniversary in 2004; Central Regional Director Pamela Bates Porch at our Joint Founders Day in 2006; Supreme Grammateus Dorothy Buckhanan Wilson at our Joint Founders Day in 2008; Former Regional Director Peggy Lewis LeCompte at our 65th Anniversary in 2009.

Since 1944, Gamma Psi Omega has awarded approximately \$400,000.00 in scholarships to Gary Area graduating high school Seniors for college matriculation. Annual “Smarty Parties” are held for

graduating seniors where they are given pertinent information regarding classes and life on college campuses along with many gifts.

The chapter's focus on education and mentoring is through Adopt-a-School partnerships with various schools within the Gary Community School Corporation working with & mentoring students of all ages. For our Ivy Reading Akademy, we received a \$1000 AKA Regional Award & also partnered with the Urban League's "Read & Rise" program. We implemented a Young Author's Creativity Program for elementary age students; annually work with the Boy Scouts Troop 53 and Girl Scouts of St. Timothy Church on community projects as well as hold informational seminars on Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday, First Responder Disaster & First Aid Training and Financial Workshops. Computer Technology & Cell phone training sessions also include Senior Citizens, while Tax Preparation service is offered to the community. Girls of the McCullough Academy & boys of the Watson Academy have enjoyed and benefited from our sessions on Beauty, Etiquette, Fashion, Hair Grooming, Debit Cards & other money matters.

Community service is on-going through partnerships and participation with organizations such as Urban League, NW Indiana Money Smart; various Entrepreneurial Endeavors, Empowerment Conferences, Global Poverty, Parades, Emotional Health events & many others.

Our chapter's nationally renowned choral ensemble "The Ivy Notes" was formed in 1994 and has performed for numerous community events, Regional Conferences, Boules and rendered outstanding performances during our Sorority's 2008 Centennial Celebration in Washington, D.C. They are currently recording a CD of some of their songs.