



# THE ODYSSEY

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR  
AUSTIN ALUMNAE CHAPTER  
DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY, INC.

DECEMBER 2024

*Presidential Press*

Vol. 4

**"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin." — 1 John 1:7**

- **Presidential Press**  
Page 1
- **Chaplain's Message**  
Page 2
- **Our Prayer Corner**  
Page 3
- **This Month's Highlights**  
Page 4
- **Soror Scrapbook**  
Page 13
- **Happy Birthday, Sorors!**  
Page 16

Tis the season, my sweet, sweet Sorors! As we enter the Christmas season, I can't help but feel grateful for so many reasons. Foremost among them is the fellowship we share with family, friends, and, most importantly, each other. Fellowship, the Fourth Jewel in the Sigma, reminds us of the "common spirit of Sisterhood," for it is through fellowship—one with another—that we experience an abundance of joy and pleasure in every encounter.

I know many of our spirits were heavy as we watched America make choices on election night that run contrary to the principles we hold dear in our sisterhood. Yet, we do not place our hope in man but in God, who is steadfast and faithful. He is our guiding light, and we trust that He will see us through every challenge.

Let us carry this spirit of fellowship into the season ahead. Whether it's sharing a warm meal, attending a holiday gathering, or simply reaching out to a soror who may need a kind word, let's continue to be a source of light and joy for each other. When we unite in fellowship, we not only uplift our spirits but also remind ourselves of the power and resilience that come from our bond.

Let's embrace the joy of the season and lean into the beauty of our Sisterhood. Together, we are a force of light, hope, and love.

**Moving Forward: One Delta, One Bond, One Love - We Are One!**

*Soror Robin J. Blackmon*



**REMINDER:**

Our next chapter meeting will be in person.

**Saturday, Dec. 7 at 10 A.M.**  
**Texas Empowerment Academy**  
5800 E. Parmer Ln.  
Austin, TX 78653

\*\*Jingle & Mingle will be held immediately after Chapter Meeting.\*\*

## Chaplain's Message

Shared by Soror Joan Roberts-Scott

### How to Love Others Well During the Holidays

The holidays are a time of love and joy. So why do we feel so stressed? Today let's take one big stressor off the table, and find smart and Godly ways to love others during the holidays.

The holidays are here, bringing with them the familiar hustle and bustle, the excitement of gatherings with family and friends, and of course an endless to-do list. With all the celebrations and preparations, it's easy to feel stretched thin, leaving us less patient, less kind, and sometimes, less loving. This season, a time meant for joy, gratitude, and peace can somehow become the very opposite. How does this sacred, special time get turned around, often leaving us feeling stressed and worn and often bringing out the worst in us? Do you ever feel more stressed than blessed during the holiday season? I think we all do at times.

Unfortunately, most of us are not going to get rid of our holiday stressors unless we're considering a solo getaway for Thanksgiving and Christmas. There are countless little things that test our patience this time of year, but today, I want to talk about just one: people. The people we love and gather with can sometimes bring a bit of holiday angst despite all our best intentions. While we can't control what others say or do, we can control our own reactions and how we choose to interact.

Setting up realistic expectations is key. Let's focus on connection - the kind that lets us love more openly, build stronger relationships, and create memories that last a lifetime. Start each day with a heart that's ready to be kind and loving.

Finally, my sister, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and see in me - practice these things and the God of peace will be with you. (Phil 4:8-9)

Let's fill our hearts and minds with God's most honorable, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, worthy of praise words and put them into action. So, this holiday let's pray every day for everyone we meet and love hard those we meet and interact with each day. Ask for what you need to love others in Jesus's name. For He freely loves. He has all authority and power, and it's God's will for us to reflect His love more and more. Let's focus on love this holiday and give it freely ourselves. Love your Sorors, family, and friends unconditionally.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A BLESSED NEW YEAR

December  
Omega Omega Assignments

Soror JaNear Villines through  
Soror Robin Zenon



## *Our Prayer Corner*

Members are encouraged to send cards, visit (if allowed by the family), or telephone sorors for additional courtesies. Sorors, please continue to lift the following in fervent prayer:

- Soror Nancy Thompson who recently had knee replacement surgery;
- Soror Pamela Gray's mother who is hospitalized in El Paso;
- Soror April Briscoe for continued strength to navigate health challenges and God's ultimate healing;
- Soror Nola Dilworth who recently had foot surgery;
- Healing of Soror Gipson's sister who recently underwent surgery;
- Soror Elizabeth Morton's son, Dr. Frederick Sailes, who had to have emergency surgery;
- The family of Soror Anita Swain who passed recently;
- Soror Deborah Shaw-Boatner who is mourning the loss of two people: her godmother, Evelyn Heard, and her aunt, Mildred Sneed;
- Soror Autumn Caviness whose mother, Soror Gwendolyn Caviness, passed away recently; and
- The family of Soror Toni Gums who passed away recently.

Sorors, tap the enclosed link to submit your prayer requests and bereavement notices, <https://dstatx.org/contact-page/pb-request-form/>

## *Soror Robin's Reminders*

Sorors, please note that our December meeting will be held at Texas Empowerment Academy. After the meeting, we'll come together for fellowship during our Annual Jingle and Mingle event. This is also the season when we spread cheer to our Sorors who are unable to get out, through our White Christmas caroling. I encourage you to sign up and join us in bringing joy to them.

Most importantly, we will host our annual scholarship fundraiser in partnership with the Austin Delta Foundation. Please remember to purchase and sell tickets—we need everyone's support to make this a success!

# This Month's Highlights

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

### *CHRISTMAS TREE SAFETY*

Ensuring your Christmas tree is safe is essential for a joyful and hazard-free holiday season! Here are some critical tips for Christmas tree safety:

1. **Choose the Right Tree:** If you're using a real tree, ensure it's fresh. The needles should be green and hard to pull out, and the trunk should be sticky with resin.
2. **Placement:** Keep your tree at least three feet away from heat sources like fireplaces, radiators, candles, and space heaters.
3. **Watering:** Water your real tree daily to keep it hydrated. A dry tree can become a fire hazard.
4. **Lights:** Check all light strings for worn or frayed wires and discard any damaged lights
5. Use lights that have been tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory.
6. **Decorations:** Keep breakable ornaments and small decorations out of reach of children and pets. Avoid using lit candles to decorate the tree.
7. **Exits:** Ensure your tree does not block any exits. In case of an emergency, call 911.
8. **Disposal:** Dispose of your real tree promptly after the holidays or when it becomes dry to reduce fire risk.

### *OUTSIDE LIGHTS*

When it comes to outdoor lights, safety and functionality are key. Here are some tips to help you set up your outdoor lighting safely and effectively:

1. **Use Weatherproof Fixtures:** Ensure all outdoor lights and fixtures are weatherproof and rated for outdoor use.
2. **Proper Placement:** Position lights to illuminate walkways, stairs, and entrances without creating glare or blinding spots. This helps prevent accidents and improves visibility.
3. **Motion Sensors:** Consider using motion-activated lights for added security. They can deter potential intruders and save energy by only turning on when needed.
4. **Avoid Over-lighting:** Too much light can cause glare and light pollution. Use the right amount of lighting to ensure safety without wasting energy.
5. **Regular Maintenance:** Check your outdoor lights regularly to ensure they are working properly and replace any damaged or worn-out fixtures.
6. **Energy Efficiency:** Opt for LED lights, which are more energy-efficient and have a longer lifespan than traditional incandescent bulbs.



# This Month's Highlights

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

### *FIREPLACES*

Fireplaces can be a cozy addition to your home, but using them safely is vital to prevent accidents. Here are some essential fireplace safety tips:

1. **Keep a Safe Distance:** Keep anything that can burn at least three feet from the fireplace.
2. **Use a Screen:** Always use a glass or metal fire screen to keep embers and sparks inside the fireplace.
3. **Inspect and Clean:** Have your chimney inspected and cleaned by a professional at least once a year.
4. **Supervise the Fire:** Never leave a fire unattended. Make sure the fire is completely out before going to bed or leaving the house.
5. **Burn the Right Materials:** Only burn appropriate materials like wood. Avoid burning paper, trash, or other inappropriate items.
6. **Install Carbon Monoxide Detectors:** If you have a wood-burning fireplace, install carbon monoxide detectors in your home to prevent CO poisoning.
7. **Keep Children and Pets Safe:** Make sure small children and pets are safe from the fireplace.

### *CAR SAFETY WHEN SHOPPING DURING HOLIDAYS*

Holiday shopping can be hectic, but keeping your car and belongings safe doesn't have to be a challenge! Here are some car safety tips to help you stay secure while shopping during the holidays:

1. **Lock Your Car:** Always lock your car, even if you're just running into a store for a quick errand.
2. **Hide Packages:** Place shopping bags and gifts in the trunk or keep them out of sight to avoid tempting thieves.
3. **Park in WellLit Areas:** Choose parking spots that are well-lit and close to the store entrance. This can deter potential thieves and make it easier for you to load and unload your car.
4. **Be Aware of Your Surroundings:** Stay alert and be cautious of any suspicious activity around your car.
5. **Use a Cargo Cover:** If you have one, use a cargo cover to keep your purchases hidden.
6. **Avoid Parking Next to Large Vehicles:** Try to park away from vans or trucks that might block your view of your car.
7. **Keep Valuables at Home:** If possible, drop off your purchases at home before continuing your shopping spree.
8. **Use Remote Unlocking:** Use your remote key to unlock your car and quickly get inside.

**Following these tips can help ensure a safer and more enjoyable holiday shopping experience.**



# This Month's Highlights


## EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

# Holiday Health and Safety Tips


The holidays are a time to celebrate, give thanks, and reflect. They are also a time to pay special attention to your health. Give the gift of health and safety to yourself and others by following these holiday tips.

- 1 Wash your hands often.**


Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Wash your hands with soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based product.


- 2 Stay warm.**


Cold temperatures can cause serious health problems, especially in infants and older adults. Stay dry, and dress warmly in several layers of loose-fitting, tightly woven clothing. Check on children, the elderly and pets.



- 3 Manage stress.**

The holidays don't need to take a toll on your health. Keep a check on over-commitment and over-spending. Balance work, home, and play. Get support from family and friends. Keep a relaxed and positive outlook. Get enough sleep.


- 4 Travel safely.**

Whether you're traveling across town or around the world, help ensure your trip is safe. Don't drink and drive, and don't let someone else drink and drive. Wear a seat belt every time you drive or ride in a motor vehicle. Always buckle your child in the car using a child safety seat, booster seat, or seat belt according to his/her height, weight, and age. Get vaccinations if traveling out of the country.





# This Month's Highlights

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

### 5 Be smoke-free.

Avoid smoking and breathing other people's smoke. If you smoke, quit today! Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW, or talk to your health care provider for help.



inside your home or garage. Install a smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector in your home. Test and change the batteries regularly.

### 6 Get check-ups and vaccinations.

Exams and screenings can help find problems early or before they start. Vaccinations help prevent diseases and save lives. Schedule a visit with your health care provider for a yearly exam. Ask what vaccinations and tests you should get based on your age, lifestyle, travel plans, medical history, and family health history.



### 9 Handle and prepare food safely.

As you prepare holiday meals, keep you and your family safe from food-related illness. Wash hands and surfaces often. Avoid cross-contamination by keeping raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs (including their juices) away from ready-to-eat foods and eating surfaces. Cook foods to the proper temperature. Refrigerate promptly. Do not leave perishable foods out for more than two hours.



### 7 Watch the kids.

Children are at high risk for injuries. Keep a watchful eye on your kids. Keep potentially dangerous toys, food, drinks, household items, choking hazards (like coins and hard candy), and other objects out of kids' reach. Learn how to provide early treatment for children who are choking. Develop and reinforce rules about acceptable and safe behaviors for all electronic media.



### 10 Eat healthy, and be active.

With balance and moderation, you can enjoy the holidays the healthy way. Choose more vegetables and fruit. Select just one or two of your favorites from the host of tempting foods. Find fun ways to stay active, such as dancing to your favorite holiday music. Be active for at least 2 1/2 hours a week. Help kids and teens be active for at least 1 hour a day.



### 8 Prevent injuries.

Injuries from falls and fireworks often occur around the holidays. Use step stools instead of furniture when hanging decorations. Leave the fireworks to the professionals.



Most residential fires occur during the winter months. Keep candles away from children, pets, wallpapers, trees, and curtains. Never leave fireplaces, stoves, or candles unattended. Don't use generators, grills, or other gasoline- or charcoal-burning devices

To learn more, including the holiday song *The 12 Ways to Health*, visit [www.cdc.gov/family/holiday](http://www.cdc.gov/family/holiday)



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Office of Women's Health



# *This Month's Highlights*

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES



**2024  
WHITE CHRISTMAS  
OUTREACH**

**Saturday, December 14th  
9am**

**Meeting Location:  
Parsons House  
1130 Camino La Costa  
Austin, TX 78752**

*We will meet at Parsons House and caravan  
around the Austin Area  
to visit sorors and their families.*

**Please contact Soror Melody Southall or Soror Tanya Rippenkroeger if you have any questions.**



# This Month's Highlights

## ARTS & LETTERS



The Piano Lesson (2024) is a powerful American drama directed by Malcolm Washington, who co-wrote the screenplay with Virgil Williams. Adapted from August Wilson's acclaimed 1987 play, the film explores themes of family, heritage, and legacy through the story of the Charles family. Featuring a stellar cast including Samuel L. Jackson, John David Washington, Danielle Deadwyler, and Erykah Badu, the narrative centers on a heated debate over the fate of a treasured heirloom: the family piano. Tensions rise as the characters grapple with their history and aspirations, weaving a poignant tale of identity and belonging.

# This Month's Highlights

## EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



*Austin Alumnae Chapter*  
DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY, INC.

*in collaboration with*

*Gamma Eta Lambda Chapter*  
ALPHA PHI ALPHA FRATERNITY, INC.



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT  
INSTITUTE

*the*  
**HBCU**  
*plus+*



# COLLEGE TOUR

## MARCH 17 - 20, 2025



- Prairie View A&M University
- Texas Southern University
- Dillard University
- Loyola University, New Orleans<sup>+</sup>
- Louisiana State University<sup>+</sup>
- Southern University
- Tulane University<sup>+</sup>
- Xavier University

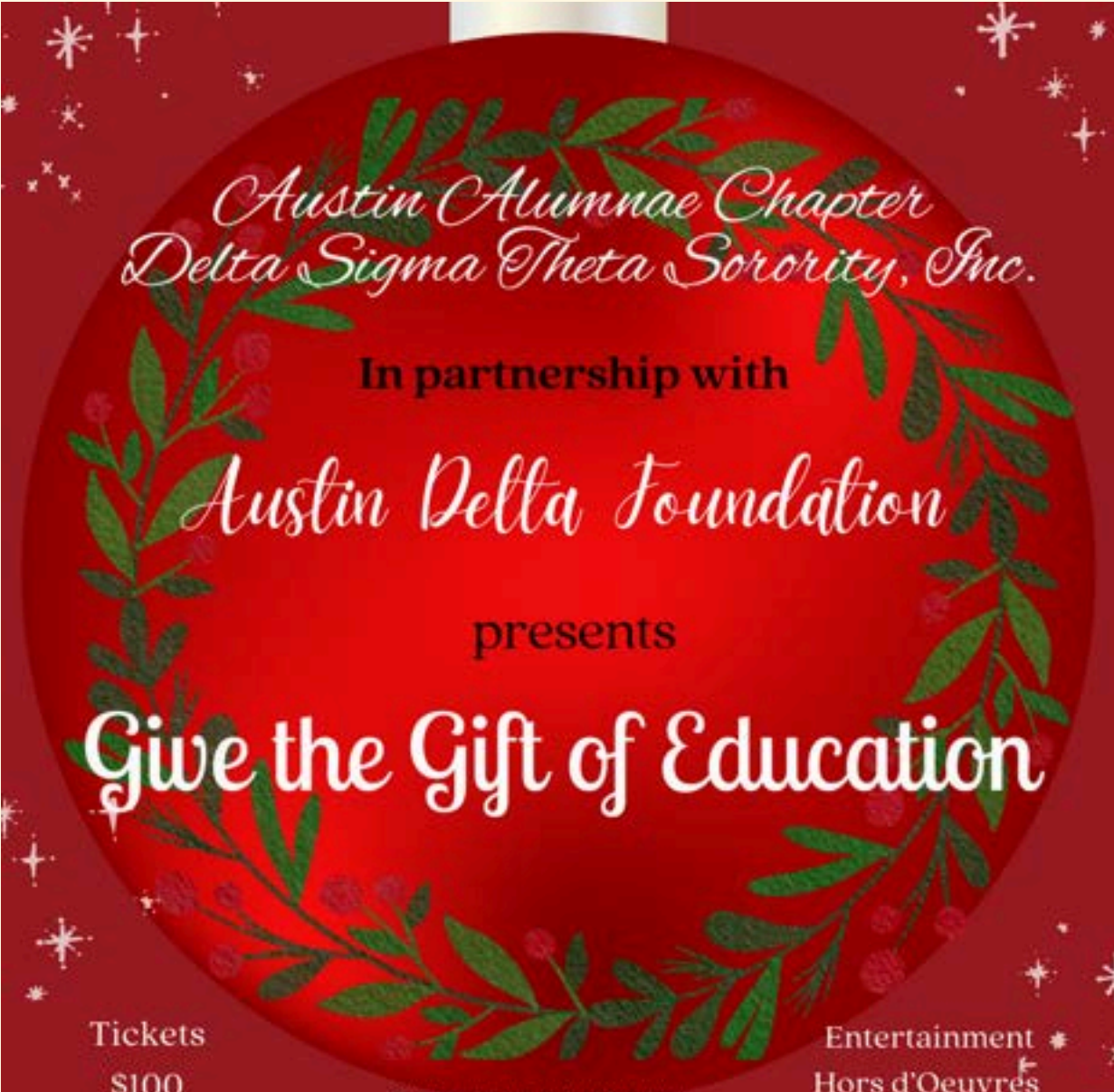
CONTACT  
Latasha Robinson  
dstEdDev@gmail.com  
512.716.9065

<sup>+</sup>Indicates schools that are not Historically Black Colleges & Universities  
<sup>\*</sup>Schools are subject to change



# *This Month's Highlights*

AUSTIN DELTA FOUNDATION



*Austin Alumnae Chapter  
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.*

**In partnership with**

*Austin Delta Foundation*


**presents**



**Give the Gift of Education**

Tickets \$100

Entertainment  
Hors d'Oeuvres

18 YEARS OF AGE AND ABOVE ONLY





2 p.m. to 6 p.m.  
Sunday, December 8, 2024  
VUKA NORTH LOOP 5540 N LAMAR BLVD AUSTIN, TX 78704  
PROCEEDS WILL BENEFIT OUR SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

# This Month's Highlights

## COMMUNITY NEWS

# CTAAFSC

Central Texas African American Family Support Conference

**EMPOWERING RESILIENCE**

celebrating **25** years of

**HOPE AND HEALING**

Abusua Pa



*Embracing the essence of family unity, kinship ties, and family support.*

**February 4-5, 2025, 8am-4pm  
Palmer Events Center**

Together, we can create lasting change and promote mental health and well-being for all.



**LEARN MORE at [CTAAFSC.COM](http://CTAAFSC.COM)**



# Soror Scrapbook





# Soror Scraphbook





# Soror Scraphook





# Membership Spotlight

## Happy Birthday, Sorors!

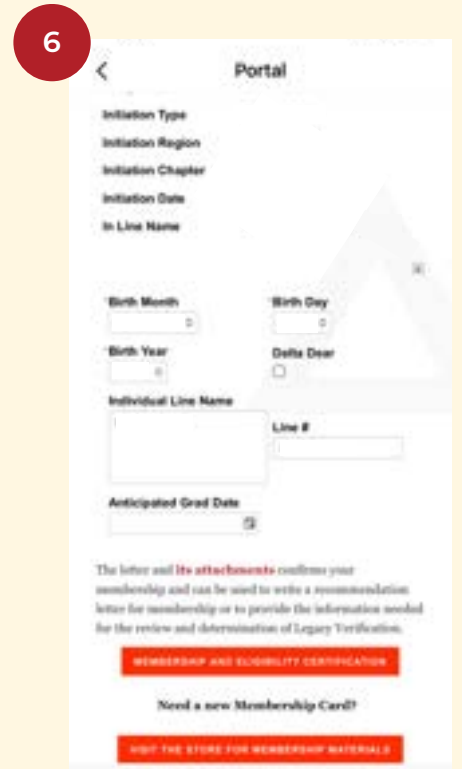
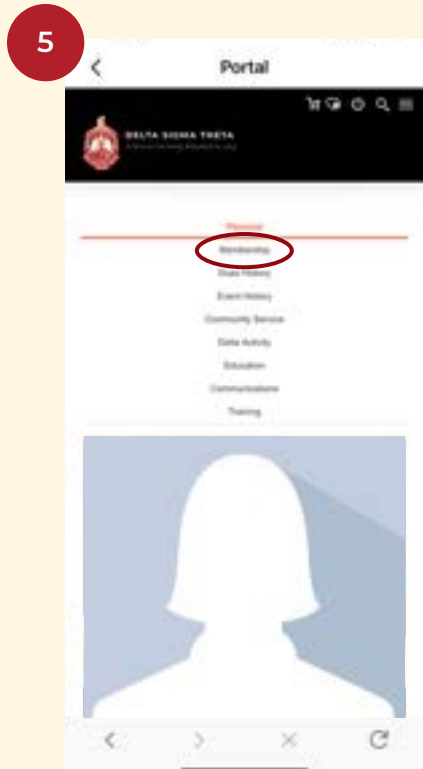
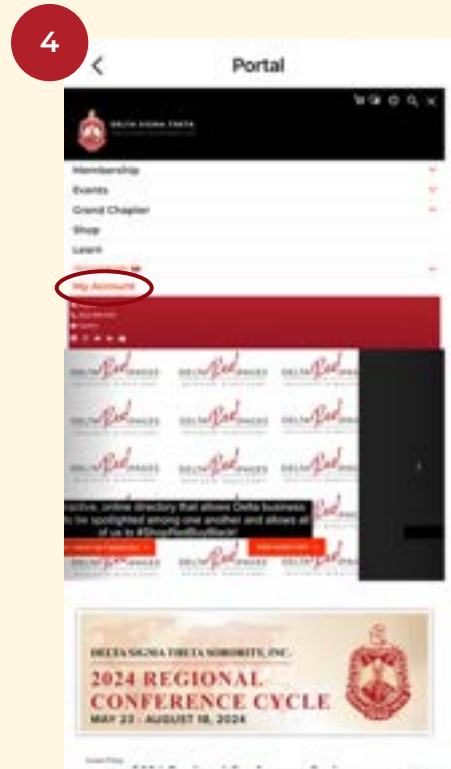
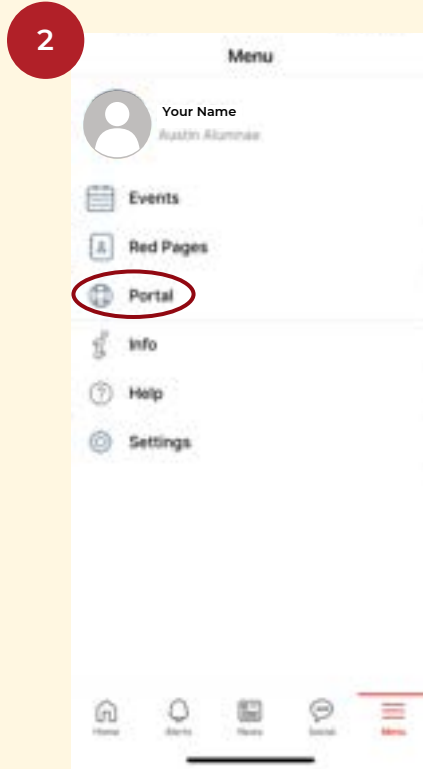
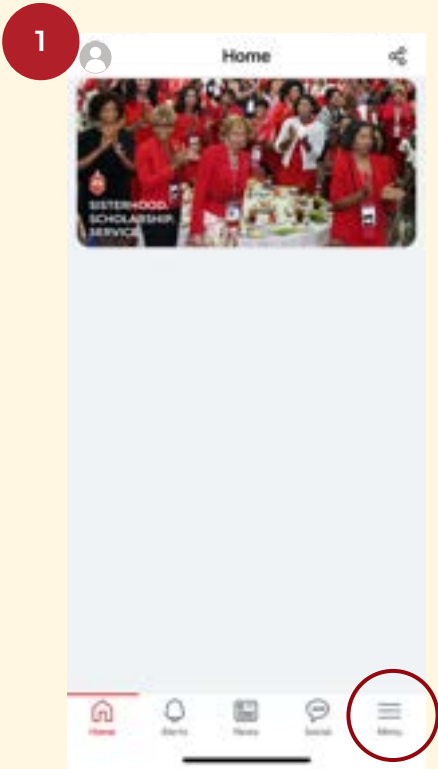
Happy Birthday to our December birthdays!

- 12/02: Sophia Williams
- 12/05: Joyce Turner
- 12/06: Dorothy Baker, Shawna Clouser, and Lora Livingston
- 12/10: Shannon Stephens
- 12/13: LaDeitra Lee
- 12/14: Kierra King
- 12/15: Cynthia Robinson
- 12/16: Lisa Newman
- 12/17: Janet Burton-Hall and Jonna LaGrone-Haynes
- 12/18: Estelle Brooks
- 12/19: Joella Brooks and Kimberly Savere-Mabry
- 12:20: Polly Street
- 12/23: Erika White and Robin Zenon
- 12/24: Alicia Childs
- 12/27: Ashli Hawkins and Patricia Hicks
- 12/28: Darralyn Johnson and Darla Mayse
- 12/30: Cassandra Mims Ringer and Nakita Shelton
- 12/31: Alana Brown



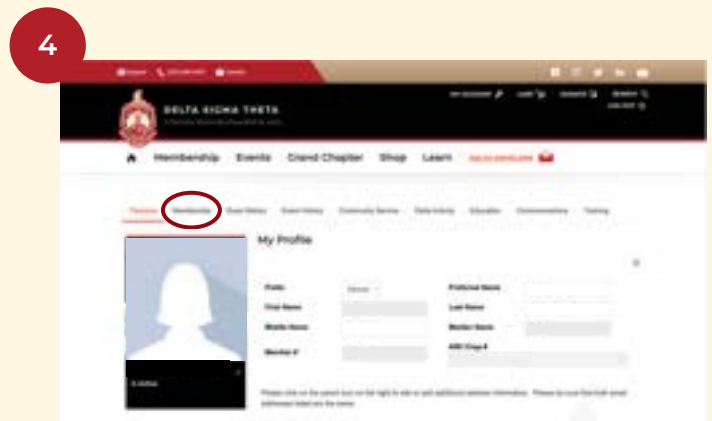
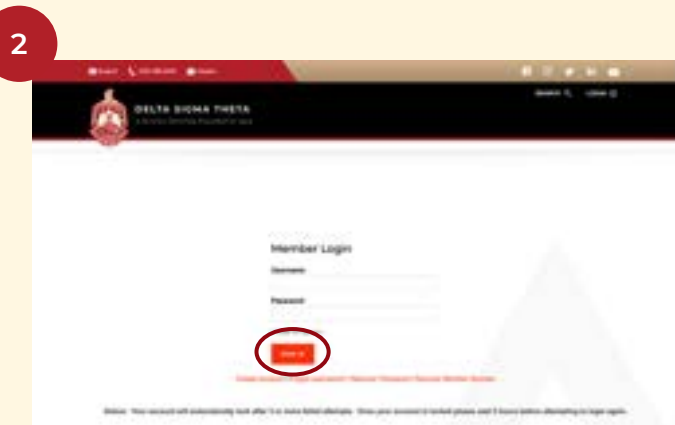
# Did We Miss Your Birthday?

Sorors, here is a step-by-step for how to update your personal information, including your birthday, in the Red Zone from the mobile app. If you are logging in from a browser on your mobile device, skip to step 3.



# Did We Miss Your Birthday?

Sorors, here is a step-by-step for how to update your personal information, including your birthday, in the Red Zone from your desktop computer.



# Austin Alumnae Leadership Team

## 2023-2024 Committee Chairs

### Economic Development

Sylnovia Holt-Rabb & Avis Gipson

### Educational Development

Paulette Walls & Joan Roberts-Scott

### International Awareness & Involvement

Akeshia Johnson Smothers

### Physical and Mental Health

Sherri Fleming & April Briscoe

### Political Awareness and Involvement/

### Social Action

Celeste Williams & Veronica Johnson

### Arts and Letters

Jonna LaGrone-Haynes & Tamara Diggs-Tate

### Risk Management Coordinator

Nancy Knight-Brown

### Internal Audit

Sophia Williams

### Rituals and Ceremonies

Michelle Scruggs

### Technology

Kathryn Foster & Khaison Reed

### Emergency Response

Ollie White & Tanya Rippenkroger

### Founders Day

Tamela Saldana & Kelly Smith

### National Pan Hellenic Representative(s)

Kim Whitlock & Darralyn Johnson

### Nominating Committee

Carla Grace Scott

### Parliamentarian/Chair of Policies and Procedures

Patricia Shorter

### Charitable Partners

Sonya Harry

### Protocol and Traditions

Cedel Evans & Sandra Marshall

### Records Management and Retention

Darralyn Johnson

### Ways and Means

Alnita Foote

### Communications and Public Relations

Autumn Caviness

### Heritage and Archives

Nancy Thompson, Historian & Tashia Coleman

### Program, Planning, and Development

Kacey Hanson

### Chaplain

Dedurie Kirk

### Strategic Planning

Dewi Smith

## Officers

Robin T. Blackmon, President  
 Jacqueline Habersham, 1st Vice President  
 Kacey Hanson, 2nd Vice President  
 Khaison "Shon" Reed, Treasurer  
 Kimily Johnson, Asst. Treasurer  
 Darralyn Johnson, Recording Secretary  
 La'Kisha Crenshaw, Corresponding Secretary  
 Courtney Nolan, Asst. Corresponding Secretary  
 Anita Daniels, Financial Secretary  
 Tennile Thomas, Asst. Financial Secretary  
 Laronica Moise, Sergeant at Arms  
 Autumn Caviness, Journalist  
 Antonia Crenshaw, Asst. Journalist  
 Immediate Past President Lisa Newman

---

*Sorors,*

**Please don't forget our Chapter meeting is  
is in-person at 10 A.M. on  
Saturday, December 7, 2024  
Texas Empowerment Academy  
5800 E. Parmer Lane  
Austin, Texas 78653**

**Sorors, HOT off the press!**

Sorors, please remember, we have several key documents available on our **Member Only Portal**. Please review the upcoming meeting documents under **Chapter Meeting Docs**, located on our Member's Only portal, <https://dstatx.org/login/>



Austin Alumnae Chapter  
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.  
P.O. BOX 143381  
Austin, Texas 78714