

Embracing our Legacy

FOCUS

Fulfilling Our Promise



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FROM THE AREA DIRECTOR

Spring is in the air! As we anticipate the beauty of the spring season and look for those newly budded blooming flowers, nice long green blades of grass and of course more sunshine and warmer temperatures, we should also look forward with anticipation to the promise of exciting newness and adventurous opportunities for fun!

For four years, I have enjoyed working and serving with you as your 19th Southern Area Director. In our "season" together, we enjoyed a fruitful time, sharing our victories and challenges. I trust that you are as proud as I am of all of our collaborations together. I extend a heartfelt Thank You!

Thank you, members of the Executive Committee for your support and hard work in serving our chapters and our communities. Thank you, Chapter Presidents, for taking the leadership role and engagement to keep your chapter informed and active; thank you, chapter officers and committee chairs, for taking part in webinars, utilizing our toolkits and sharing knowledge; thank you to each member for your supportive efforts to make your chapter phenomenal; thank you partners and sponsors for sharing our vision and working with us to transform the lives of others and finally, thank you to the communities, families, schools and neighborhood centers throughout our Area who allow us to share our vision.

My dear sisters, I cannot thank you enough for all that you have done! There is so much that we can be proud. We successfully undertook three Signature Initiatives that built upon the great legacy of service we inherited from those before us. Our success in our Southern Area Loves HBCUs initiative provided direct support to 59 third year STEAM students; in One Mission, One Love we impacted those across the diaspora from orphans in earthquake-ravaged Haiti to the entire community surrounding Watford Hill School in Jamaica; and in our Links Winning the War on HIV, we campaigned to reduce the number of HIV infections and the stigma associated with this infection. Awesome! Together we impacted lives and transformed the communities that we served!

There is so much more that we can recount as we take a look back on our season of achievement during the 2015-2019 Administration; and yet, there is so much more that we can look forward to achieve. With your continuing support, The Southern Area will thrive in new leadership dedicated to pursue excellence. We are Southern Area Strong Indeed (SASI) in all seasons!

Remember to keep it moving forward for the good of the Southern Area.
Peace and Blessings,


Link Anne



MIND BODY SPIRIT



RECLAIMING OUR TIME TO REST

Link Elizabeth Jackson, Southern Area Chair, Mind Body and Spirit

Links sisters, oftentimes, as mothers, sisters, wives, caregivers, advocates and career professionals, we become so wrapped up in being everything to everyone, that we forget the most important person in our lives: ourselves...YOU!

We must learn self-care first. Yes, before the kids need a ride to the mall for the new phone; before the husband needs a romantic evening; and before the business needs a new plan, we must

make sure that we are refreshed and healthy. We must RECLAIM our time to REST. Experts say we need it, but don't get enough of it. We say that we get it, but all we do is slow down enough to pick up something else; our mates tell us that we need to arrange a time for some of it; and we envy our girlfriends because they tell us they get it every chance they get.

Webster defines rest as "to cease work or movement in order to relax, refresh oneself or recover strength." Psychologists suggest rest is "to be free from anxiety or disturbance; to remain confident." Medical Doctors urge us to sit or lie fixed or supported to rest. Lawyers resolve rest is "to bring to an end voluntarily the introduction of evidence in court." Just as there are different interpretations of REST, there are different ways that we acquire this - sometimes elusive - necessity. It is God's intent for us to have REST to balance the MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT.

1) MENTAL/EMOTONAL REST - Find quiet time alone to clear your head of responsibilities. Stop making others' "emergencies" your own. Stop people-pleasing. Let go of little things. Let the Word of God wash over you as you relax your mind. Don't take everything personally. Laugh often.

2) PHYSICAL REST - Slow down, lay down and put down. Get in your favorite spot and listen to calming music and do absolutely nothing. Detoxify your body of foods that make you feel too hyper or too sluggish

3) SPIRITUAL REST - Meditate regularly; pray; be grateful. Cut major sources of stress out of your life. Philippians 4:6-7 - "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God, and the peace [REST] of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Finally, my Link sisters, don't let anyone make you feel guilty because you have made a healthy decision to take time to REST. God RESTED on the 7th day after working to create the world in 6 days. We no longer have to say, "Don't put off for tomorrow, what you can do today." Go ahead and put it off and make no apologies! Allen Cohen said, "There is virtue in work and virtue in REST. Use both and overlook neither."

Get away from the "hustle and bustle" of life and RECLAIM ALL OF THE TIME you have missed out on with your favorite girl...YOU!

My sisters, be strong and REST in the Lord!



Strategic Planning: Using Resources You Have to Accomplish Your Chapter Goals

Link Letitia C. Wall, Southern Area Chair, Strategic Planning Committee

Greetings Links Sisters from the Southern Area Strategic Planning Committee! As the program year comes to an end, each chapter will soon be assessing and updating their strategic plans. This can seem to be a daunting task, but it can be done with ease, with the commitment and assistance of your chapter. We would like to share some tips to help with the process from the valuable strategic planning resources available to all Links members. In 2018 an updated Strategic Planning Manual was launched. An easy to use checklist was also launched to help chapters navigate the planning and evaluation processes. There were some key information shared in the manual:

Chapter Strategic Planning Requirements

Each chapter of The Links, Incorporated shall have an active Strategic Plan. The chapter plan should align with the National Strategic Plan by the following:

- Each chapter should identify at least one goal for each priority
 - Each chapter should also identify and use one output measure from National for each of its aligned priority goals. While the measure should be identical, the actual targets will be different
- Strategic Plan Template

A typical strategic plan shall include the following elements, with appropriate adjustments that fit the needs of your chapter

- Mission (identical to the National Mission)
- Vision (specific to the chapter, but may adopt National Vision)
- National Priorities
- Key Community Service Dynamics and Implications
- Chapter Assessment and Implications
- SMART Goals (aligned to the National Priorities)
- Objectives/Strategies to accomplish the goals
- Output measures/Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
- Implementation/Action Plans

Leadership Transition

Smooth transition of responsibilities from one administration to another is paramount to ensuring that the organization continues to run smoothly and that nothing falls through the cracks. All work of the chapters and areas must be transitioned when new officers and chairs come on board. The operation of The Links, Incorporated is based on the overall organization (chapter, area, national), not individuals. The strategic plan of the chapter is the responsibility of the chapter, not one individual. It

It should not be interrupted because new officers are elected.

Smooth transition in strategic planning includes:

- The outgoing strategic planning chair updating the strategic planning tracking system with the latest changes and accomplishments prior to handing the system over to the new strategic planning chair.
- The outgoing strategic planning chair scheduling time with the new strategic planning chair and new president to brief them on the chapter strategic plan and process, providing detailed training as needed. Reviewing the tracking system, and any other detailed training as needed.
- The outgoing strategic planning chair turning over all documentation on strategic planning, including presentations and the final plan.
- The outgoing strategic planning chair and chapter president passing the user ID and password for the Strategic Planning Tracking System to the incoming strategic planning chair and new chapter president
- All contact information for strategic planning, including the email for national support, strategicplanning@linksinc.org, should be passed on to the new chair and new president.

In addition to reviewing the national and area bylaws on strategic planning, the new president and strategic planning chair should familiarize themselves with the toolkit on the national website and the national strategic plan, ensuring that the chapter is in compliance.

The chapter president and parliamentarian should ensure that the chapter bylaws are in compliance with national bylaws regarding strategic planning.

Strategic Planning Tracking System

The current strategic planning and tracking system is OPS (formerly Proof Point). The system provides an on-line portal that enables chapters to document their strategic plans by inputting goals and status toward goal achievement. Moreover, the tracking system enables us to report, monitor and track our goals, and to assess how goals align with our National priorities. Additionally, the portal creates an archive of chapter progress toward achieving our organization's National priorities.

Chapters are encouraged to regularly update their plans within the National Strategic Planning Tracking System. However, only two updates within each program year are required, in the fall by October 31st and in the spring by April 30th.

Please reach out to your Southern Area Strategic Planning Chair for any login and technical assistance. Importantly, do not contact OPS directly or attempt to change your password via the website as this falls outside of The Links, Incorporated's contractual relationship with OPS.

We are your area strategic planning team and we are here to support your chapter!

THE HISTORY OF FOCUS



That first newsletter was devoted to introducing the Southern Area Executive Committee. Chapters were asked to send news regarding their programs, projects and outstanding community contributions accomplished by members, Connecting Links and Heir-o-Links.

This legacy continued with 14th Southern Area Director Joyce Dixon who used the March 1996 edition of the FOCUS to announce the first Southern Area Summit which was held in New Orleans, Louisiana. "Why a Summit? To present chapters with tools for successful day-to-day operations and responsibilities plus methods for program implementation," Link Joyce explained. "By meeting, even for a short period of time, you will have the chance to obtain a better understanding of expectations and prepare for a productive year in Linkdom."

The FOCUS was also the best way to ensure that every member received all information regarding upcoming events as well as chapter news. 15th Southern Area Director Nancy Shade Anderson extended the invitation to the 37th Area Conference in Nassau, Bahamas in 2003 through the FOCUS, using its reach to share the itinerary, registration, election and other important information. "Our world is growing smaller with the help of technology while the world of Linkdom is expanding," wrote Link Nancy. The conference she was discussing had a truly broad reach in that it was held in the Bahamas and welcomed members from the South Africa Chapter which had recently been chartered.

Sixteenth Southern Area Director Margaret Thompson Johnson used the power of the FOCUS to promote important Signature Initiatives to chapters, solidifying their support. The Winter 2004 edition encouraged engaging in an "aggressive scholarship project for all Historically Black Colleges and Universities in our area." Additionally, she requested chapter support of legislation dealing with health disparities at Links Day at the Capitol. "We are all challenged to carry out our responsibilities more effectively and provide better service to our fellowman," Link Margaret said.

Seventeenth Southern Area Director Mary Currie aimed to use the FOCUS not only to discuss chapter work in communities, but to help members become more engaged. In 2008, The Southern Area had 2,750 members. Link Mary saw the FOCUS as a means to build community, deepen knowledge of Southern Area history and articulate values and priorities. She told the FOCUS that concentrating on childhood obesity included all facets, chapters and communities. "Childhood obesity is a serious problem, which is escalating among children and youth in the African-American community. In fact, 10 southern states have the highest percentage of obesity among children and youth in the United States."

Eighteenth Southern Area Director Eneid Francis launched the e-zine, The Advantage, but was featured in the FOCUS as Vice Director tauting the importance of strengthening "sisterly relations." Francis continued by telling members that she wanted to focus on equipping chapters with conflict resolution skills and improving induction and orientation processes. "An informed organization is a strong organization," she said.



Link Kimberly Sweet, Southern Area Chair, eCommunications/Archivist

Southern Area Links have been getting their efforts into FOCUS since at least 1991 when its inaugural edition was published.

At that time, 13th Southern Area Director Katie Bell created the office of Area Journalist. The 1st Edition of the FOCUS clearly stated its purpose. "It is the desire of the Area Director to keep all members of the Southern Area informed of the many outstanding programs and projects that are being implemented to improve the communities that Links reside in and to enhance the quality of life for Black Families."



Today's FOCUS under 19th Southern Area Director Anne Turner Herriott continues that original mission. For the past four years, we have aimed to educate members, share their accomplishments and motivate them to continue the transformative work we do throughout the Southern Area and beyond. Its pages have celebrated member accomplishments. Articles have detailed the 3 Signature Initiatives successfully embraced and executed from 2015-2019: SA Loves HBCUS, One Mission, One Love and Links Winning the War on HIV. Profiles have shared the deep diversity of our membership and their lives intersect with our community efforts. Information has been shared from officers, chairs and chapters keeping us all up to date. Our conferences and summits have been highlighted and their critical insights shared. Finally, the Mind, Body & Spirit column has quenched our spiritual thirst, building our spirits and encouraging good health.

Why FOCUS? It's all in the definition. We want every member to know what our "center of interest or activity is." We want our efforts to be the result of "having or producing a clear visual definition." We also want our efforts to have "prominence," not for accolades, but rather to accomplish the true transformative work for which we have been called. Thank you, Link Sisters, for being a part of this journey for 28 years. Keep your FOCUS on making a difference, changing lives and creating a better world for generations to come.



A personal Story: From the heart of a 25 Year Member
Link Linda Jackson Barnes

Twenty five years of Linkdom

Walking in truth: Living The Pledge

I remember the call in 1992, Link Kathy Grant Willis called and invited me to join The Links, Incorporated. She continued to give details of the history of the Links, the programs and friendship. I remember expressing with her my need to think about the invitation, the membership. Think about why I should join one more organization. I was happily

involved with my sorority, spiritually committed with my church, working daily in my demanding and successful career. I have my loving family and friends, I'm totally involved and very supportive of all. So why would I join another organization? I pondered over the invitation and talked to my sponsor and a few friends who were already Links.

You know the outcome, yes! The meaning of friendship, the focus of "friendship and service" made the difference from the others and they accomplished the goal of my acceptance of membership and I started my journey in Linkdom. After the orientation workshops and Induction Ceremony on May 1, 1993 in Chattanooga, TN, I hosted my first committee meeting. I served homemade pound cake with fresh strawberries served with coffee and tea. I recall having my finest of flatware, fine china and the best of it all. During that time we did not have conference calls; therefore, we developed true meaning of friendship. Those strong relationships remain even today because of those long hours and many days of breakfast, lunch, dinner, brunch, and dessert meetings. You name it, we justified a theme meeting with food and drinks. With service, planning and cultivating bonds that



have lasted over time. I also remember chairing my first committee, my first road trips to attend Area and National conference meetings; meeting Link sisters across the country and becoming chapter vice president and Links meetings with heir-o-links as they played around the house or sitting and waiting for the meetings to end. We met Connecting Links as they assisted with folding tables, chairs and other chores to make sure our meetings and gatherings were comfortable and successful. We were all working together, fellowshiping and connected with a strong friendship.

In 2001, I relocated to Winston-Salem, NC to a city where I knew three adults and three children, my husband, his daughters, my cousin and her husband. Wow, what a difference for me! I'm in a city with one family member, no church, friends or associates, I didn't know the difference in Business 40 and Interstate 40.

Although my first organizational gathering was my sorority meeting with my letter of transfer in my hand; Linkdom was on my mind as well. Will I continue in Linkdom? If so, I must transfer, I have to do my 48 hours, I must maintain my one in five so what will I do? The seed of friendship resurfaced with meaning. As a result, I called National and ascertained the contact information for the chapter president and she gave me a welcome invitation to the chapter meeting.

Once again, the rest is history, I was received into a chapter of phenomenal Link sisters with a strong history in Linkdom, chartered in 1950 just four years after The Links, Incorporated was founded. Committee meetings allowed me intimate times to personally meet new friends while chapter meetings gave me fellowship time, chapter information and the fashion show of style that I enjoyed monthly! I have served on the Membership Committee, National Trends and Services Facet, and several other committees. Elected as chapter vice president of membership; vice president of programs and chapter president for two terms, I was honored to serve as chapter president during our 65th chapter anniversary celebration. We partnered with Mayor Allen Joines, the City of Winston-Salem, for several years with his Childhood Obesity Educational Program. Most importantly, receiving National and Area awards and several Best Practices as a result of a very successful Mayor's Garden Project. I was appointed to the National Legislative Issues and Public Affairs Committee under the leadership of our 16th National President, Dr. Glenda Newell Harris; implemented the Inaugural Pumps on the Heel; and participated with the annual NC Links Day at The Capital Committee.

Link Sisters we are at a cross road in our organization and we must choose well. We must choose to remain active in the community, a friend to members and engaged in active Chapter events. We must choose a balance for our challenging life styles with careers, family and other obligations. We must remember our pledge to serve those who need our aid with friendship and service. Today more than ever we must be kind, honest and a true friend. In other words we must commit to sisterly relationships, flexibility and renewed determination to serve Linkdom with honor.

Remember well your call and choose to serve with grace.

Let's keep the Happy Anniversary celebrations coming!



Signature Initiative Notes



Now more than ever before we have remained committed to serving our communities in a manner that truly transforms lives. Our work bears witness to that promise.

The Southern Area and her chapters have joined in the promotion of healthy heart lifestyles. Through Heartlinks, we are sharing the message that we must decrease our rate of heart disease diagnosis which is largely preventable. We've celebrated with winning chapters whose members have built Jamba Juice gardens to educate our youth about the value of growing and plowing our land for its health sustenance while teaching the power of organic healing. We've raised awareness regarding the number one health disease impacting our children (tooth decay) by performing dental screenings and educating parents and children on how to prevent decay through our Colgate Initiative. We are Coding in the Arts and building new career bridges through our NSBE jr chapters.

We have accomplished a change in educational status of HBCU students who were on the verge of sitting out a semester of school by helping them meet their 3rd year educational financial obligations. Southern Area Links provided significant support directly to these students so that they could continue their STEM educational track.

Our Southern Area program objectives have raised awareness and funds to support families in the African Diaspora where the need is greater now more than ever. We have children without running water, limited facilities for proper hygiene and physical care, a lack of proper nutrition and children forced to walk miles if they are to have a chance to learn. In these countries, Southern Area Links have built bridges with government officials. We care for these children who look like us by placing boots on the ground and working to transform their lives now. We have faced the hard challenges of healthy sexual education, protection for human trafficking victims, and the steady frightening rise of HIV/AIDS diagnosis within the Black community. Now, we have successfully reached our target and done so with excellence in programming by developing new initiatives unique to our population (Stigma and lack of knowledge regarding PreExposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) education).

Now, more than ever before the efforts of our members in the Southern Area have been focused on the Power of Transforming Lives. As an HBCU alumna, I fondly remember my university's student government motto, "power concedes nothing without a demand," and our Link sisters have stepped up to demand change.

We hope members will lend their hands at the 45th Southern Area Conference community service event where we will create educational kits for pre-schoolers to better prepare them for success in school. Southern Area Links, we have worked together, played together, and taught our neighbors to live together. We have continued in the quest of our Founders to move forward and make a positive change each day by greatly improving the lives of those we serve.



THE POWER OF TRANSFORMATION

Link Janet McDowell-Travis, Southern Area Chair, Program

Now more than ever we face the most detrimental assault on family lives and the nurturing of African American health, safety and well-being in our country. Over our past 4 years we've moved from the political advantage of healthcare for all to a lifestyle of the protected privileged that exalts the rich and famous.

Now more than ever, the programming fortitude of The Links, Incorporated is essential to the preservation of African American health, education, rights, privileges, and equal protections under the law. Your Southern Area Program team has remained committed to ensuring the balance of change. Our words are evidenced by actions we believe make a difference throughout the Southern Area and beyond.

We've outlined to precepts related to promote healthy lifestyles and disease prevention. We've championed the case for fair voters' rights and protections. We've raised awareness about the need for preventing the assault on our children, and battery against our elders. We've followed the pursuit of deterring gun violence and seeking healthy activism agendas.

Links Day At The Capitol



LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS CHAIR Link Sharla Jackson, Southern Area Chair, Legislative Affairs

"It's not about supplication, it's about power, it's not about asking, it's about demanding. It's not about convincing those who are currently in power; it's about changing the very face of power itself." This quote by Kimberlee Williams Crenshaw, Professor of Law at UCLA and Civil Rights Advocate summarizes the advocacy initiative of the Southern Area's Legislative Affairs Committee.

Our initiative, Links Day at the Capitol, is an advocacy project embraced by chapters in each of the seven states in the Southern Area. Link members visit state capitols and bring to the attention of legislators and other state officials the legislative and public policy issues of critical importance to the Southern Area and our National organization.

The legislative policy agenda of the Southern Area aligns with strategic policy goals of The Links, Incorporated. Our aim is to create access to full educational and health care opportunities for the communities we serve. Our transformational programs work toward this goal and address a broad range of issues including lack of access to healthcare, childhood obesity, STEM education, mentoring, anti-bullying initiatives and more.

Here is what we addressed in this state-by-state wrap-up:

Alabama

Alabama Links will supercharge their advocacy efforts on the theme of, "Our Voice, Our Vote, Our Power." Chair Deborah Thomas, Montgomery (AL), surveyed Links throughout the State of Alabama to determine their advocacy preferences. Accordingly, two multidisciplinary panels will educate Link sisters on the issues of Justice Advocacy and Education in preparation for their advocacy efforts. Three Link/Legislators will join the nine chapters of the Alabama Links in their advocacy efforts.

Florida

Florida Links Day at the Capitol (FLLDAC) 2019 took place on March 14-15 with over 60 members and 20 chapters from all across the State of Florida. The two-day event began with the Southern Area Director Anne Turner Herriott addressing the participants. Yolanda Cash-Jackson, of the Greater Miami (FL) Chapter, led an Advocacy 101 & Legislative Agenda Boot Camp. Afterwards, the Link delegates engaged their elected representatives on issues that affect women and children of our community. These conversations included, but were not limited to, STEM, HBCU, Healthcare, and Criminal Justice. Many of the elected-leaders express their gratitude and support for the efforts during the event's Day 2 Advocacy Breakfast. The Co-Chairs, Lisa Moore, Bold City (FL) Chapter and Dr. Darice Richard, Tallahassee (FL) Chapter, captured the purpose and the principal of FLLDAC when they designed an agenda filled with engagement, advocacy, and non-partisan communications.

Georgia

Georgia Links observed their Links Day at the Capitol by focusing on Election Equality and Reform. Freddie Powell-Sims of the Albany (GA) Chapter, who is a member of the Georgia Senate, and Carolyn Hugley of the Columbus (GA) Chapter, who is a member of the Georgia House, served as honorary co-chairs of the event. The timeliness of the topic drove the event's attendance to record numbers of nearly 200 Links. Panelists, including the first African American female to serve as Secretary of State, Robin Crittenden and members of the Georgia Elections Commission, highlighted their recommendations for elections reform. Steering Committee Chair Shenila Rodriguez of the Azalea (GA) Chapter led an Advocacy Committee, which engaged Links from throughout the State of Georgia to take part in a letter writing campaign urging state legislators to support elections reform.



Louisiana

Louisiana is focused on a full day of advocacy. Charlotte Henderson of the Baton Rouge (LA) Chapter is the Chair of the Louisiana Links Day at the Capitol Committee. Members are calling for teacher pay raises, standing up against human trafficking and focused on specific state budget issues. Louisiana LDAC begins with a legislative orientation at the State Capitol, followed by visits with their elected representatives and attendance at committee meetings. Louisiana legislators will present resolutions in support of their efforts. The day ends with a Friendship mixer.

Mississippi

Mississippi Links focused on Criminal Justice Reform. The Links Day at the Capitol Committee chaired by Dorothy Thompson of the LeFleur's Bluff (MS) Chapter hosted 125 guests, including 58 Link Sisters. Pelicia E. Hall, the first female Commissioner of Elections, was a featured speaker on the advocacy topic of Criminal Justice Reform. The Committee also provided attendees materials to support further their ongoing advocacy efforts.



The State of Mississippi was recently at the center of election controversy with their recent senatorial election. The Mississippi Links mobilized using a two-part approach to ensure a record voter turnout for this historic election. First, they collaborated with the NAACP, which already had an existing "Get out the Vote" initiative directed at those who rarely voted in midterm elections. Links supported their efforts by personally calling thousands of voters to remind them about the election. The also worked to engage high school seniors about voting. Holding discussions on voter rights, registering them to vote, and handing out sample ballots helped to show young voters the importance of our most cherished constitutional rights. Because of their efforts, and others, 55,000 more residents voted in that election than in the historic presidential election of 2008.

North Carolina

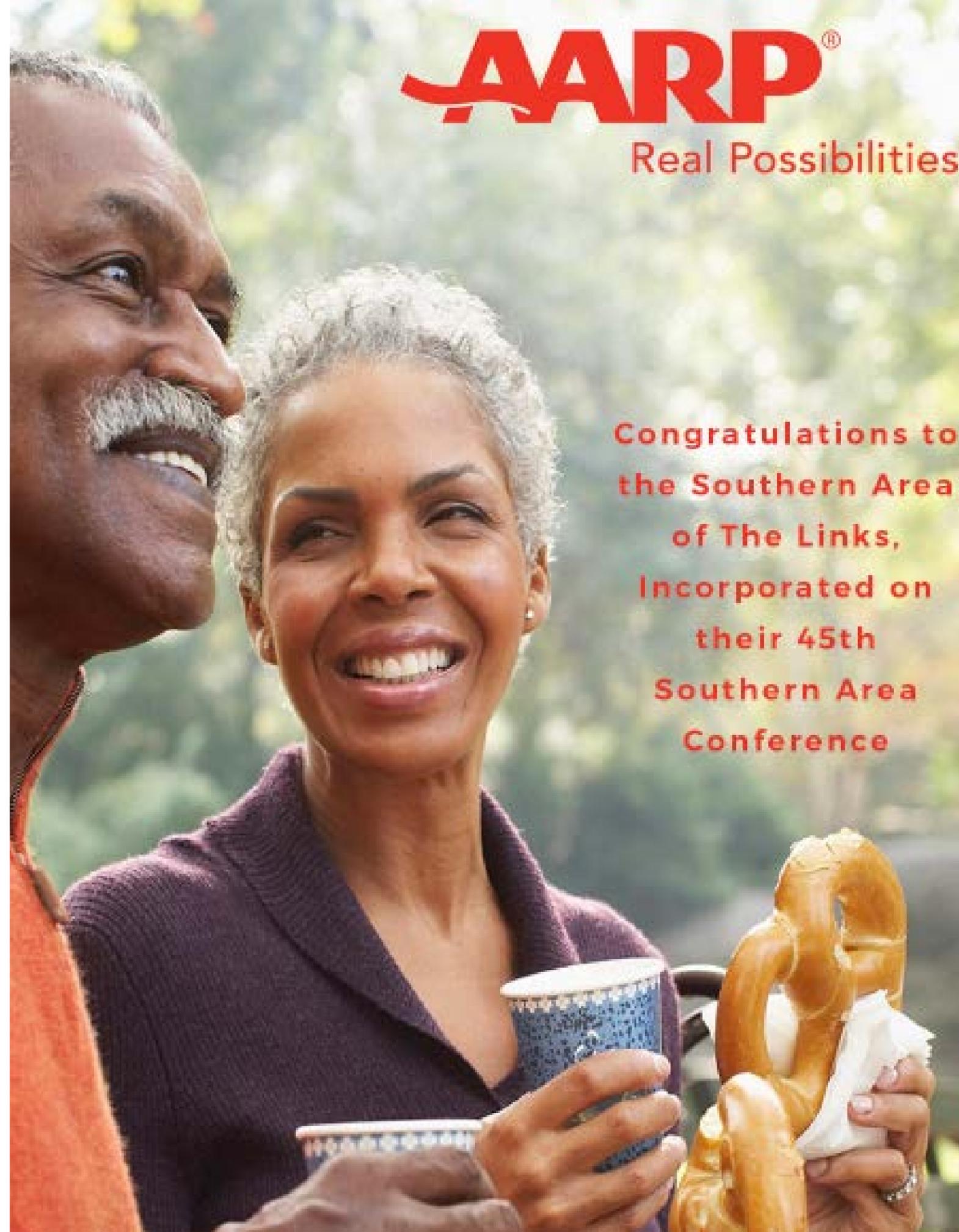
The upcoming 2020 Census is the main focus of North Carolina Links for their Links Day at the Capitol themed, "2020, Moving Forward with Knowledge and Purpose." In addition to panel discussions and legislative visits, Links want their legislators to attend a networking reception. Their ongoing advocacy efforts led by North Carolina Links Day at the Capitol Chair Kay Webb of the Triangle Park (NC) Chapter address North Carolina's Special Election and the formation of the Human Trafficking Commission.

South Carolina

"Education across the State" was the theme for South Carolina's Links Day at the Capitol. Seventy-five Links attended the event, which was a call to action to address factors affecting education in their state. Under the leadership of South Carolina Links Day at the Capitol Chair Barbara Williams of the Orangeburg (SC) Chapter, members collaborated with the state's Education Association and continue to call for increased teacher pay in South Carolina and other related causes.

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AARP®

Real Possibilities

**Congratulations to
the Southern Area
of The Links,
Incorporated on
their 45th
Southern Area
Conference**

Chapter Notes



Magic City (AL) Chapter Cultivates Student Love of Art

Magic City (AL) Chapter members hosted lunch at the Birmingham Museum of Art with Ramsay High School Freshman Jasmine Freeman and her mother LaShandra Freeman. The ladies also enjoyed tours of the various art galleries as one installment in the chapter’s mentorship activities with Jasmine as part of the its Arts Facet’s “Classics Through The Ages” program.

The chapter is helping cultivate Jasmine’s growing interest in becoming an artist by purchasing art supplies and sponsoring her participation in arts events around the Birmingham Metropolitan Area. Pictured in the group photo below are (left to right) Vice President Donna Lawson, Arts Facet Chair Kecia Chapman, Jasmine Freeman, LaShandra Freeman, Chapter President Cecilia Mixon Crenshaw, and Chapter Member Terri Gardner.

Birmingham (AL) Chapter Encourages Excellence in STREAM (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts, Math)

The robotics teams at Parker High School and Oxmoor Valley Elementary School were established three years ago by the Birmingham (AL) Chapter of the Links, Incorporated to educate and enlighten our students in STEM areas and provide them with enhanced skills and interest in STEM careers. That goal has been expanded to include the establishment of NSBE Jr. (National Society of Black Engineers) chapters and continue to support the NSBE Jr. Chapter at Ramsay High School. We seek to enhance STEM by creating student excellence in STREAM (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts, Math) to reveal each student’s hidden talents.

Our Parker High School Robotics Team meets weekly. They have recently built solar powered cars and wind turbines, and coded their own apps using the Hour of Code website. The last two years we have provided laptop computers for the graduating seniors on the Parker High School Robotics team.



At Oxmoor Valley Elementary, Wonder Workshop’s Dot and Dash robots are used to teach the students coding skills. Blockly Games are used to teach programming by using visual blocks that link together to make writing code easier. Blockly Games is a Google project to encourage tomorrow’s programmers.

In April, schools are brought together for the ‘Electrathon’, a robotic car competition sponsored by Alabama Power Company at a nearby motor raceway. Parker High School’s robotics team will enter the electric car they designed and constructed at the weekly robotics team meetings.

We will employ the help and guidance of the National Society of Black Engineers Jr. chapter established at the school to encourage participation in engineering topics, seminars, and will participate in their national STEM competition and convention in Detroit. Chapter Program Chair, Debra Nelson, was chosen to participate in the STEMulating Young Minds Institute, sponsored by The Links, Incorporated and The National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) along with 30 other Links members during the NSBE’s 47th Annual Convention in Detroit.

New Orleans (LA) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated sponsored Bethune students to participate in Camp Congress



The New Orleans (LA) Chapter sponsored five students from Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary to participate in New Orleans' Camp Congress. Camp Congress is a national leadership program hosted by the Girls in Politics Initiative, that introduces girls ages 8 - 15 across the country to the political process. The camp began with a lesson on the structure of the U.S. political system. Each girl chose to run for a seat in the US House of Representatives, the US Senate or for the presidency, creating a campaign with a platform, developing a campaign finance plan and a political ad. All campers voted in a mock election and learned how to introduce a bill, debate the merits of the bill, lobby fellow legislators, collaborate with the Executive branch and vote on the proposed bill.

The Bethune team enthusiastically contributed to the events of the day, commenting that the process "prepared them to become more active in politics." They learned about the branches of government, the electoral college, requirements of being a public official and voting age. "It was really informative and engaging," said one of the students, "and helped us to understand why it is important for women to be active participants in the political process."

Charlotte (NC) Links Host Anti-Bullying Event with Community Partners

With the increase of bullying incidents affecting students, members of the Charlotte (NC) Chapter are taking action. They have taken on an initiative to increase the awareness of bullying, its long-term effects, tips on identifying the signs of bullying, strategies on how to decrease bullying and ways to effectively manage conflict. As part of this effort, the chapter recently hosted an Anti-Bullying Workshop for students participating in the Big Brothers, Big Sisters program (BBBS) in partnership BTEP (Bringing Together Extraordinary People), a non-profit committed to providing students with an innovative approach to combat bullying through peer-to-peer simulations from the bully, the bullied, and the bystander's vantage points.

"The Charlotte (NC) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated brought a wonderful learning experience to BBBS of Central Carolinas" said Donna Dunlap, CEO of BBBS. "Being empowered to avoid an altercation and take control of bullying situations was a great lesson. The attendees actively participated offering their opinions and suggestions on how to handle different situations. Everyone left prepared and empowered to be a champion against bullying."

Through the partnership, the chapter is focused on reducing low self-esteem, the harmful effects of depression and poor academic performance by working with students, parents and educators to drive

change in behaviors to decrease the number of bullying incidents students experience. "We want every child to feel safe and we're committed to bringing awareness to bullying and its devastating impacts on children, families and communities," said Dr. Daisy R. Walker, chapter president. "Bullying is never okay, and there is much we can do to stop it."

New Orleans (LA) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated hosts Stennis Space Center field trip for Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary School Students

Members of the New Orleans (LA) Chapter sponsored a trip to the John C. Stennis Space Center in Hancock, Mississippi for 25 girls from Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary School. The girls enjoyed the Space Center and discussing the process of building the Odysseus underwater ROV. They were assigned design projects and they collectively problem solved and constructed models to accomplish their tasks. The discussions were lively and the girls dove right in, enjoying the interactive models and examining the Stennis exhibits.



South Florida Chapters

Links members throughout South Florida participated in a live radio simulcast production on domestic violence and human trafficking. The event featured experts who shared empowering information, advice and resources to combat this rising problem. Forty-nine percent of human trafficking victims are minors. Andrea Kelley, former wife of R. Kelley, was featured at the event. She shared her journey from survival to self love in a message she titles, "Shaken But Not Broken." The goal was to empower young girls to know the signs and symptoms of domestic violence and seek help if they are victims.



Magic City (AL) Chapter Hosts Holiday Pajama Party For Human Trafficking Survivors at WellHouse

Good friends who work together to serve their community are an awesome force for good! Magic City (AL) Chapter members put their hands and time together to host a Holiday Pajama party at WellHouse. The event included food, games, music/dancing, and songs. Chapter members even fit a sisterhood mini party in before the event to assemble care packages for the ladies which included toiletries and pajamas. WellHouse is a 24-hour shelter founded to "...honor God by rescuing and providing opportunities for restoration to female victims of human trafficking who have been sexually exploited," according to the organization's Web page. Magic City hosted the event at WellHouse as part of one of its International Trends Facet activities.



Triangle Park (NC) Chapter Members Promote Bright Smiles and Bright Futures

Members of the Health and Human Services Facet led the Triangle Park (NC) Chapter in a collaboration with community partners to bring free dental screenings and oral health education to students at Burton Magnet Elementary School in Durham, NC. Connecting Link Dr. Roger McDougal of McDougal Endodontics screened ninety students in the Colgate Brite Smile Dental Van. Students were very receptive to the screening and education. The school's principal is Dr. Kimberly Ferrell. The activity was covered by ABC TV 11 News as part of the Triangle Park Chapter's integrated program at elementary schools. A second screening is scheduled at another school for April 2019.



The Greensboro Chapter Implements HIV/AIDS Grant Programs



As the recipient of the Southern Area of The Links, Incorporated HIV/AIDS Awareness and Pre-exposure Prophylaxis Grant, The Greensboro (NC) Chapter recently conducted two events to enlighten and educate young college students about issues surrounding HIV/AIDS. The participating students hailed from three Historical Black Colleges and Universities in North Carolina: North Carolina A&T State University, Bennett College (both in Greensboro) and North Carolina Central University (Durham). The chapter's grant, titled "The Empowering for Change Project," kicked-off five events. One joint event "World AIDS Day" at NCA&TSU and the following individual events at each campus: "Fear Factor: What Scares You" N.C. A&T; "Sexpectation" at N.C. Central; "Health from Head to Toe" at Bennett College; and "I Love Myself Enough to Know My Status" at Bennett College.

Students engaged in famed TV show "Fear Factor" themed activities focused on healthy sex habits and the gamble of risky sexual behaviors. A&T Student Health Center staff and chapter members assisted at various health education tables. The day concluded with a panel discussion featuring area healthcare providers and PrEP patients.

At North Carolina Central University (NCCU), Chapter members presented an HIV/AIDS education program titled "Sexpectation". NCCU students were provided important health education materials on HIV/AIDS, its risk factors and prevention measures such as Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). Students participated in safe sex trivia games, ate nutritious food and listened to music. Student Health Center volunteers provided HIV testing, education on consensual sex and safe protection. Each student received a "Sexpectation" pillowcase after visiting various stations. The Student Health Center's Project S.A.F.E. (Save a Fellow Student) students along with the NCCU Women's Center, The NCCU LGBTGA Center, Durham County Department of Public Health, the Durham Crisis Center and Duke University Division of Infectious Disease were all present at the event.



As the event was the day before Valentine's Day, the Links provided students with a pack of maroon, gray and green M&M's personalized with safe sex messages and The Links name on various candy pieces. In addition, students received a "Just In Case" Mirror Compact and Condom Concealer courtesy of the Greensboro Chapter. Students were shown how to use mirror compact and how to open the secret compartment.

These health education programs informed students about Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). This treatment is prescribed to people who are at high-risk for HIV. It works by lowering a person's chances of becoming infected. According to researchers at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (CDC-P), "PrEP can stop HIV from taking hold and spreading throughout your body."

Magic City (AL) Chapter Member Donates Life-Saving Gift



When Magic City (AL) Chapter member Jarralynne Agee sees a need, she doesn't just throw ideas at it, she goes all in. The City of Birmingham Special Projects Coordinator, educator, wife, and mother is known for being fervent about causes and even more so about her family and friends. That kind of dedication is what motivated the Dayton, OH native to give of herself, literally. Dr. Agee is a "Living Donor" because she donated one of her kidneys to a long-time friend in January at The University of Alabama at Birmingham's University Hospital. When asked why she opted to make the sacrifice of self, she replied, "...I just knew I was supposed to do it." Now Agee is constantly being called by her new names "angel," "hero," "friend," and "the epitome of LOVE."

The Treasure Coast (FL) Chapter Joins with Community and Experts Against Syndrome X



The Treasure Coast (FL) Chapter presented its award winning "Linking Together against Syndrome X, Women's Heart Health" Health Symposium at the Gifford Youth Achievement Center.

The Health and Human Services facet developed this comprehensive program designed to equip women, children and families with essential tools, in making health a top priority in the African-American community. The health symposium focused on nutrition, physical wellness, mental health and a youth showcase on bullying and police encounters. Symposium participants were able to participate in a wide range of free health screenings, offered by representatives from the Florida Health Department.

This year's Health Symposium also featured Mr. Jerronte (Tae) Edmonds- Founder and CEO of Suits for Seniors. Mr. Edmonds shared with the audience that dressing for success is helpful physically, mentally and socially. Over 20 local organizations and businesses partnered with our chapter to make the event a great success and more than 100 community members and over 50 children attended the event.

Birmingham (AL) Chapter Members Fight High Blood Pressure

Members of the Birmingham (AL) Chapter's Health and Human Services Facet rounded out Heart Health Awareness Month with their annual Blood Pressure Screening. The H&HS Facet has conducted this annual screening and informational workshop for over five years. The facet members are keenly aware that the prevalence of high blood pressure (HBP or hypertension) in African-Americans in the United States is among the highest in the world.



More than 40 percent of non-Hispanic African-American men and women have high blood pressure. For African-Americans, high blood pressure also develops earlier in life and is usually more severe. Individuals participating in the screening were given information about their blood pressure, prevention information, as well as a gift bag that included healthy snacks and a pedometer. H&HS members were assisted by chapter member Mia Cowan, MD and her staff as part of the blood pressure screening.

Additional Chapter Notes

Elizabeth City (NC) Chapter welcomes Interim Executive Director

Elizabeth City (NC) Chapter members welcomes Link Gwendolyn E. Boyd, Interim Executive Director for The Links, Incorporated for the Elizabeth City State University (ECSU), 128th Founders Day Convocation Ceremony. Link Boyd was the keynote speaker for the event.



The Nassau (Bahamas) Chapter Celebrates 30 Years

The first international chapter of the Links, Incorporated, is celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2019. The Nassau (Bahamas) Chapter was chartered by the 9th National President Regina Jollivette Frazier and has worked since that time to distinguish itself through its service and friendship.

The chapter has maintained several transformational programs. In its early years, it engaged in a straw program, helping to revive the straw craft industry in The Bahamas. It has worked at a local children's home and helped to ensure that the children who spend their childhoods there grow into adults who are productive citizens. The chapter has also engaged in programming to fight childhood obesity.

To commemorate its 10th anniversary, the chapter embarked upon an ambitious undertaking – to build a facility which would serve as a safehouse for women in crisis in The Bahamas and as a home for former female residents of institutions of childcare enrolled in tertiary level education. Ground on the Links Safehouse was broken in 2000 by the Governor General of The Bahamas, Sir Orville Turnquest, members of the Government, private sector and the Nassau (Bahamas) Chapter. Construction proceeded and the Links Safehouse was officially opened by the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, the Hon. Perry G. Christie, the 13th National President of the Links Incorporated Gladys Gary-Vaughn and the Southern Area Director Margaret Thompson-Johnson on October 17th, 2003. For more than 15 years it has been a refuge for women in crisis and a dormitory for young women, several of whom are now professional women in The Bahamas.

Friendships have deepened over the years. More than one half of charter members remain active or alumnae members and the hand of friendship has been extended to women who chose to pledge themselves to the ideals, purposes and true meaning of the word "Friendship" as embodied in the name "Links" and choose to remain active members, upholding this pledge. The chain of friendship includes four daughters of Links and members are thrilled that another heir-o-link will be inducted in May. The chapter has 30 Active and two Alumnae Members.

At 30 years of service, the next generation is at the chapter's helm. Three heir-o-links serve on the chapter's Executive Committee, including Sharlyn Wilson Smith, the chapter's first heir-o-link to serve as President. Another member, a Scott Hawkins Leadership Institute graduate, also serves on the chapter's Executive Committee. Charter members remain active, making significant contributions to programming and sustaining inter-generational bonds of friendship.

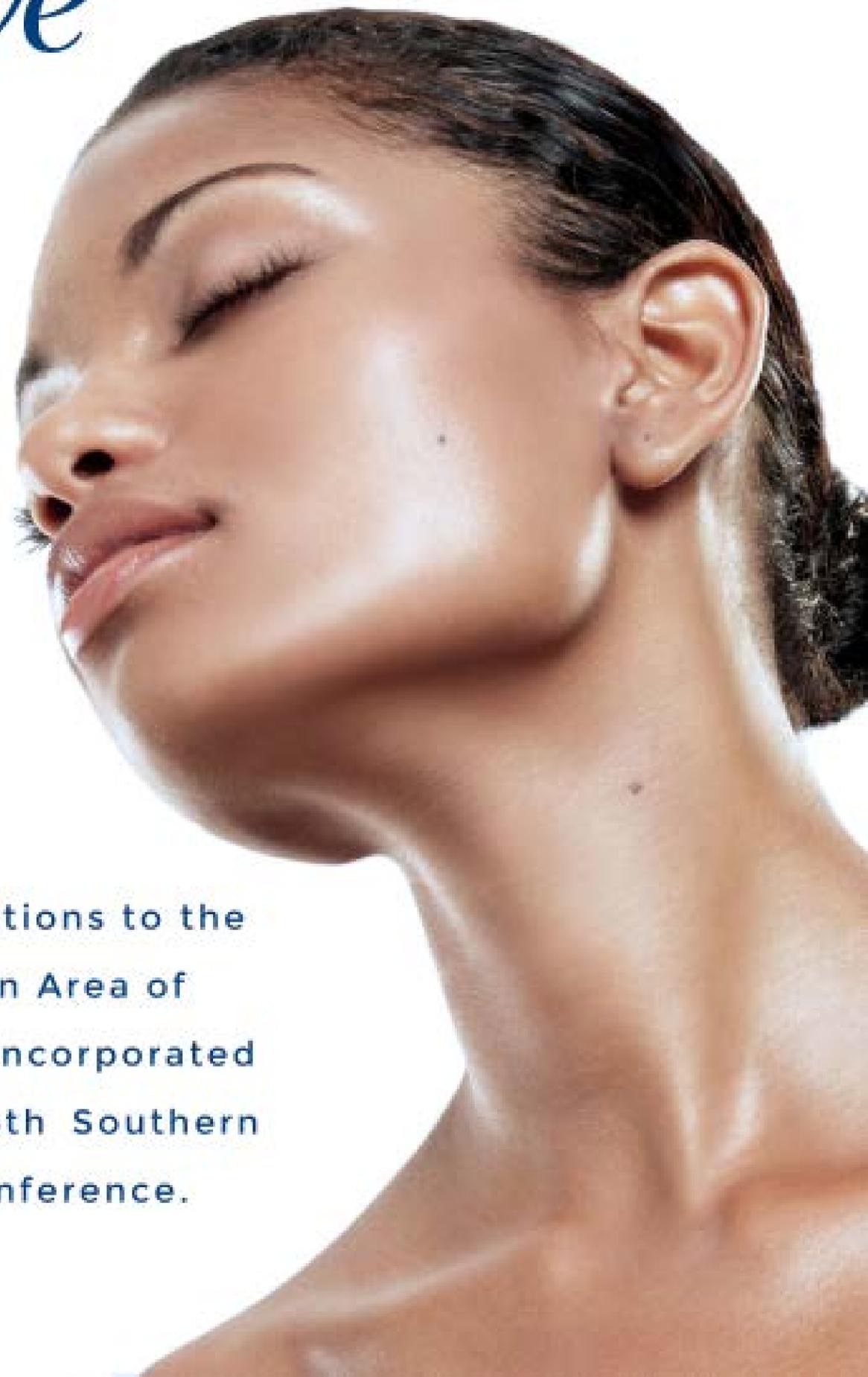
The chapter is proud that its members have provided exemplary service and have contributed at



Executive Committee during the 17th Southern Area Director Mary Currie's administration. Sharlyn Wilson Smith served as the Southern Area International Trends and Services Facet Chair during the Administrations of the Eneid Francis and Anne Turner Herriott, the 18th and 19th Southern Area Directors respectively. Charter Member Sharon Wilson served on the Executive Council of the 13th National President Gladys Gary Vaughn and 14th National President Gwendolyn Boyd Lee. Charter Member Allyson Maynard Gibson presently serves as the National Assistant Director of the International Trends and Services Facet at the request of our present National President Kimberly Jeffries Leonard. The Nassau (Bahamas) Chapter has distinguished itself in every way and looks forward to many more generations of friendship and service.



Dove



**Congratulations to the
Southern Area of
The Links, Incorporated
on their 45th Southern
Area Conference.**

Kudos



Drs. Juel Smith and John Smith | St. Petersburg (FL) Chapter

Dr. Juel Smith, member of the Tampa (FL) Chapter, and Dr. John Smith were honored by the UNCF at Tampa, Florida's 17th Annual Mayor's Luncheon as Champions of Education. Juel Smith is the President of JUE-L Consulting Group. John Smith is a former professor at the University of South Florida and the former president of Fisk University. The two were honored for their contributions to education as part of the UNCF's Black History Month celebrations.

Freda Scott Giles | Athens (GA) Chapter

Freda Scott Giles, member of the Athens (GA) Chapter, was selected to deliver the 17th annual Founder's Day Lecture at the University of Georgia Chapel. Giles is an Associate Professor Emerita of Theatre and Film studies. The Founder's Day Lecture is hosted by the UGA Alumni Association in partnership with the Office of The President, Provost's Office and UGA Emerita Scholars. The lecture has become a tradition drawing alumni, students, faculty, esteemed guests and members of the community.



Kimberly LaMotte | Baton Rouge (LA) Chapter

Kimberly LaMotte was recently recognized for her contributions in the series Woman in Law Black History. Southern University Law Center noted LaMotte earned a PharmD degree, working in Alabama, Louisiana and Texas. When her family relocated to Louisiana, she earned a law degree and worked for the Louisiana Department of Health and House of Representatives before returning to SULC where she now serves as Academic Counselor and Instructor of Law.

Dr. Brenda DeRamus-Coleman | Montgomery (AL) Chapter

Dr. Brenda DeRamus-Coleman, a member of the Montgomery (AL) Chapter, won election to the Montgomery County Board of Education. She was sworn in by attorney Monica Arrington and Dr. Tyna D. Davis, National Parliamentarian for The Links, Incorporated.



Michele Pearson | Athens (GA) Chapter



Michele Pearson, a member of the Athens (GA) Chapter, received the Outstanding Member of the Athens Community Award during the 16th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Breakfast. The event was hosted by the University of Georgia. Pearson is an Edward Jones Financial Advisory Firm Independent Owner. She earned the award for her work in furthering King's dream of an inclusive community for all.

Vanessa Falls | Birmingham (AL) Chapter

Vanessa Falls, a member of the Birmingham (AL) Chapter and Southern Area Secretary, has a family owned business, Falls Facility Services, Inc., that was included on The Birmingham Business Journal's annual list of the leading black-owned businesses in Birmingham, Alabama. Falls serves as Executive-Vice President and manages the human resource department for the company.



Gina Presley | Montgomery (AL) Chapter



Gina Presley, a member of the Montgomery (AL) Chapter, was recently promoted to be one of four Forensic Biology Regional Technical Leaders within the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences. Presley is the first African American and second female ever to hold the position. She serves in this capacity at the Huntsville Regional Laboratory.

Cheri Beasley | Triangle Park (NC) Chapter

Justice Cheri Beasley, a member of the Triangle Park (NC) Chapter, has been appointed to serve as Chief Justice of the North Carolina State Supreme Court. Beasley is the first African American woman to hold that position. Beasley said that she hopes her appointment serves as an inspiration to young people and serves as a symbol of the state's progress.



Carmen Walters, Ph.D | Gulf Coast (MS) Chapter

Carmen Walters, a member of the Gulf Coast (MS) Chapter, has been named the new president of Tougaloo College. She is the institution's 14th leader and the second woman to ever hold the post. Walters assumes the post after 24 years of experience in community college leadership.



Shanna Jackson Sheats | Athens (GA) Chapter



Shanna Jackson Sheats, member of the Athens (GA) Chapter, was honored with the 7th District Georgia Funeral Service Practitioners Association, Inc. Award. Sheats is the Funeral Home Director of Jackson McWhorter Funeral Home in Athens, Georgia.

Connecting Link Garth C. Reeves | Greater Miami (FL) Chapter

Garth C. Reeves, husband of the late Link Beatrice Reeves and uncle of our 9th National President, Regina Jollivette Frazier, recently celebrated his milestone 100th birthday.

Born in Nassau, Bahamas, on February 12, 1919, Reeves moved to Miami with his family and established deep roots in the Miami community. Among other accomplishments, the Reeves family founded The Miami Times, a weekly black newspaper, in 1923. After returning from World War II and graduating from Florida A&M University, Reeves returned to Miami to work as the publisher and CEO of The Miami Times, a platform through which he significantly raised his profile and the profiles of other outstanding business and civic leaders. A civic activist, Reeves served on several college and university boards as well as organization boards such as the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce and the United Way of Miami-Dade County. He served as a president of Amalgamated Publishing of New York City and two terms as president of the National Newspaper Publishers Association. He also participated in efforts to achieve integration, including at local beaches, parks, and golf courses. In celebration of his milestone birthday and in recognition of his significant contributions to the Miami community, the Greater Miami (FL) Chapter will donate funds to his beloved alma mater, and HBCU Florida A&M University.





Thursday, May 2, 2019



The business of the Southern Area begins at Plenary Session I. Our Area Director and elected officers will report to the membership. Organizational updates including reports from the Area Director, Vice Director, Secretary and Treasurer will be presented. Southern Area Links will celebrate their sisterhood and special relationship at the Friendship Luncheon. The luncheon theme is: Friends United to Support Our HBCUs. At Plenary Session II, members who have reached the milestones of 25 and 40 years within our organization will be recognized. Following that session, those running for office in the Southern Area will share their visions and qualifications in Candidate Speeches and the Candidate Forum. Participants are also encouraged to take part in our Listening Post: Strategic Plan. The first full conference day wraps up with a chance to meet and support Southern Area authors at our Literary Links Café.

Friday, May 3, 2019

The morning begins with Southern Area elections. The business meetings continue in Plenary Session III. Members will hear from our Program Team and get details on their efforts to support transformational programming throughout the Southern Area. Our partners and sponsors will also address our organization, explaining how we can work together to meet common goals. Following that meeting, members will hone their skills and hear from experts in a variety of Operational Workshops. Sessions for chapter officers and chairs will be offered in the positions of: President, Vice President, Secretary/eCommunications, Treasurer, Mind, Body & Spirit, Becoming: Sisterly and Get Your Finances In Order. Our Civic Luncheon will highlight and honor Community Activists who share and support our transformational efforts. Following lunch, members resume training in Programming Workshops which address the topics: The Building Blocks of Great Programming, Linking Programs from the Chapter to Area and National Levels, The Art of Coding, Programming from Across the Diaspora, Healthy Living, Body and Soul, and Fundraising 101. To close the second full day of the conference, members and guests are invited to enjoy an evening of elegance at Saturday's Central Florida Cluster Gala: Palms and Pearls.



Saturday, May 4, 2019

Our final Plenary Session IV will feature the swearing in of the next term's Southern Area officers. Service efforts, best practices and award-worthy results will be lauded and celebrated at the Program Luncheon. Finally, the 45th Southern Area Conference will close Saturday evening with the traditional White Rose Banquet and Celebration featuring multi-platinum, Grammy-nominated R&B singer/songwriter Johnny Gill.



SOLD OUT



Wednesday, May 1, 2019

Our 45th Southern Area Conference begins with a local Community Service Project showcasing our commitment to improving lives wherever we are. Vendor booths will offer unique items for sale and Chapter Exhibits will display the important work being done in our communities. Later, members adorned in "uninterrupted white" will take part in a Memorial Service which honors Links, Connecting Links and Heir-o-Links who have passed on since the last conference. On Wednesday evening, our event officially kicks off with the 45th Southern Area Conference Opening and Concert featuring multi-platinum, Grammy-nominated R&B artist Ginuwine.





Linked in Friendship, Connected in Service

2018-2019

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*Linked in Friendship, Connected in Service
Embracing Our Legacy, Fulfilling Our Promise*