

937 305 2323

Corinthian S 120@yahoo.com
2d

2-20-10

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Janelle Jackson and on behalf of the Alexandria Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated, I thank you for the opportunity to stand before you to discuss a hot topic in our nation, our state, and the city of Alexandria – our youth.

As an Air Force Officer and church youth worker, I have seen the positive effects a strong community can have on children and it is quite evident that Alexandria is a strong community. As stated in your strategic plan, **“Alexandria is a Community with Public Schools Amongst Northern Virginia’s Best and Where Our Recreational Programs Provide Youth the Opportunity to Succeed.”**

According to the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the percentage of children and teens that are overweight has more than doubled in the past 30 years. Today, about 17 percent of American children ages 2-19 are overweight. By Alexandria having such youth sports’ leagues as boxing, track and field, cheerleading, volleyball, soccer, tennis and many more, you are not only helping

Alexandria youth have a venue for physical activity, health and wellness but you are also in line with the First Lady's "Let's Move" campaign to curb childhood obesity.

Alexandria has also taken the lead on education with Project Discovery. This program prepares and motivates low income and first generation college-eligible students to access opportunities in higher education. On many occasions our Chapter has partnered with students at T.C. Williams High School to provide scholarships, mentors, and workshops about the number of opportunities available after graduation. These opportunities not only show us the tremendous growth and excellence these students are achieving but have also given us insight to a need. We have found that preparation plus opportunity equals success. We are helping prepare these children for a college future but we would also like to help them see their opportunity by visiting numerous college campuses. Project Discovery already provides trips to college campuses and our Chapter has also made this opportunity available to several youth. Maybe in the future we can combine our endeavors to ensure all youth succeed.

The Chapter recognizes Alexandria is combating several youth issues such as teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, child welfare and safety, education, and youth development. Much like Alexandria has the Fund for Alexandria's Child to help children in foster care and those at risk of abuse or neglect, our Chapter has started the HAVE Foundation (Helping Alexandria Virginia Excel). Through this non-profit foundation, we hope to raise funds, promote community involvement, and foster positive public relations via scholarships and youth programs in the Alexandria community. We would like to work with the city to provide children in need an opportunity to excel.

Last month when our Chapter spoke to you, we mentioned several steps to improving literacy in the community. Specifically, we mentioned Read Across America that will take place March 13 at the James Duncan Library. Since that time, we have expanded our focus to look at a child's sense of positive identity. 36% of Alexandria High Schoolers are Black and 26% are Hispanic. Several of these students are either pregnant, using drugs and/or alcohol, or live in poverty. If we can work together to educate parents, improve the self-image

of our kids, provide after school programs, and funding for post-secondary education and training; maybe we can reverse some of the negative statistics that plague the Alexandria Community.

Our Chapter has volunteered at the Carpenter's Shelter, ALIVE House; Walked in the March of Dimes Walk America, led classes at Community Lodgings, and has hosted a Domestic Violence Self Defense seminar for the last three years with the Office on Women. Our Chapter is dedicated to world class service and advocacy and is committed to scholarship and youth development. We are here and will keep Helping Alexandria Virginia Excel. Thank you.