Florida DKG State Legislative Committee

September 18, 2020

Annual Report

Provided by state committee chair: Nancy Bentz

Moving forward. Always moving forward. Thirty-five (35) of our members from around the state participated during three days of action and activities during our Rally in Tally, February 10-12, 2020 in Tallahassee. This was a record number of attendees.

On Monday evening, as we were hosted by several sisters with a smorgasbord of dishes and desserts at St. Stephen Lutheran Church, while fellow DKG member, former congresswoman, Gwen Graham, and House Representative Ana Eskamani came for delightful discussion about our five issues. While other elected officials were invited, these two were available to join us and we were grateful to have them with us. Our top issues were: (1) Teacher Shortages and Retention; (2) High Stakes Testing; (3) Accountability and Transparency; (4) Financial Support for Education; and (5) Human Trafficking. Signs were prepared and our schedule was reviewed.

On Tuesday morning and for the first time, our group led our first *Rally in the Rotunda*. The committee members worked to write a rally speech, and I proudly delivered it at the podium in front of the Senate entrance, 3rd floor Capitol building. The speech, entitled, *We the People*, was a speech written in collaboration with the committee members. Posters were waved and voices echoed through the halls, two elected officials sponsored and spoke, and a firm mark was made ensuring our Society would be heard.

Throughout our time, we met with 30 legislators in offices and conference rooms in addition to several aides. Each committee member became the spokesperson for one issue, taking charge of the research and responses when their issue was discussed with an elected official. We attended committee hearings, heard from outside speakers, Ben Wilcox of Integrity Florida, Linda Edson of Retired Educators, and op-ed writer, Kathleen Oropeza of FundEducationNOW. Our relationships with legislators and these speakers are growing strong. Our collaborative work over the past several years is paying off.

Carrie Frye and I may have seemed to be the leads on this endeavor, but without everyone, this would not be possible. We are especially grateful for the members of four chapters in Tallahassee and their members (Alpha Kappa, Iota, Alpha Lambda, Beta Phi) as they provided meals and rooms in their homes. A very special thank you to Sharon Simmons as she organized the dinner and stays. State President Dr. Nancy Henning and her husband opened their beautiful home for a festive dinner and hosted again during our debrief and luncheon. The kindness of our members makes for a lifetime of friends, camaraderie, and memories.