

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
Annual EAF/Leadership Awards Nomination
“Hat’s Off: Recognizing Our Pearls of Leadership”
Soror Ruscel Reader



It is an honor and pleasure to nominate Soror Ruscel Reader for the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Far Western Regional Conference Annual EAF “Hat’s Off. . . Recognizing Our Pearls of Leadership” Award. Soror Ruscel has served as Ivy Leaf Reporter, Membership Chairman, Grammateus, Anti Basileus, is currently serving as our Chapter Basileus and has consistently served as the Committee Chairman for the Kappa Omega Omega Graduation Awards Program. Through these venues, she has provided exemplary leadership and vision in the chapter and the community of Bakersfield.

In 1980, Soror Ruscel developed the Kappa Omega Omega *Scholarship and Awards Program* to honor African American high school students in the Kern High School District. Historically, African American students had not been recognized at the traditional high school awards programs. Soror Ruscel organized a networking structure that included chapter sorority members, other fraternities and sororities, local churches, civic organizations, high school Black Student Unions and individual donors to collaboratively focus on and recognize outstanding African American high school students through the establishment of the annual Alpha Kappa Alpha Graduation Awards Program held in May of each year. Through Soror Ruscel’s continuing vision, the Graduation Awards Program later included African American junior high/middle school eighth grade honor roll students from the twenty three junior/middle schools in the

community, to encourage them to strive for academic excellence and to show them that hard work, superior grades and good citizenship pay off in scholarship and other opportunities for



learning. Since the inception of the Graduation Awards Program, more than 1000 scholarships totaling nearly \$300,000 have been presented to deserving African American high school students for college admissions and other college costs. This awards program has expanded through the years to the extent that now, the African American students who annually receive awards at the Alpha Kappa Alpha Graduation Awards Program are also presented as scholarship award recipients at the Scholarship and Awards Programs held at each of the high schools for the entire student body and their families in the Greater Bakersfield community. The impact upon the lives of the awards' recipients and the community at large is highly

significant and far reaching. For an example, one scholarship award winner is a well respected attorney in town, another is a high school principal of a decorated and distinguished school, another is an obstetrician and gynecologist completing her internship at John Hopkins Hospital and others are teachers, engineers, business owners and contributing members and leaders in the community.

Soror Ruscel's special interest in educating our youth is displayed in her leadership as the Chairman of the Parent Liaison Committee for the chapter's Miss Fashionetta program. The focus of the local Miss Fashionetta program is education and scholarship. The high school participants earn scholarship monies that are awarded to them upon proof of registration into college. Throughout the five-month bi-annual program, Soror Ruscel's primary role is to articulate program goals and engage students and parents as active participants in the scholarship program. In addition, she also provides leadership to the Miss Fashionetta participants by developing self esteem, etiquette, college and financial aid workshops, wherein the young ladies receive invaluable instruction from established female leaders in the African American community in various careers and confidence building exercises and discussion sessions. She also works with the local churches, volunteer centers and other organizations to arrange attendance at worship services and other activities for the young ladies who participate, as well as their parents and other sorors. Soror Ruscel provides leadership in this phase of the Miss Fashionetta program with a purpose of encouraging the young ladies to provide service to others. By exposing these young ladies to successful and confident African American women who have continued their education to include successful matriculation through college and attained success in their respective careers and communities, these young ladies are



motivated and encouraged to pursue their future educational and career dreams. Soror Ruscel's participation in this "signature program" for our community has played a major role in our chapter awarding over \$180,000 in scholarship monies to the young ladies who successfully participate in the Miss Fashionetta program. In addition, Soror Ruscel keeps contact with these young ladies, encourages them as they continue their college education and then invites them to "come back" to share their experiences and success with other young ladies who are currently participating in the Miss Fashionetta program.

Soror Ruscel is a leader in the educational community. She is the principal and sole administrator of Cesar E. Chavez Science Magnet School, an urban elementary school that is 77% minority, 46% socio economically disadvantaged and draws students from 31 different neighborhoods in the Bakersfield City School District. The school has received the California Distinguished School Award, the Title 1 Academic Achievement Award for closing the achievement gap among minority and socio economically disadvantaged students, the



California Business for Education Excellence Award and the California Golden Bell Award for excellence in Education. In the last two years, a Chavez student won the US Naval Science Award and another student received a monetary award for Excellence from the American Chemical Society and 2nd Place in the Pharmacology and Biochemistry Junior Division at the California State Science Fair at the University of Southern California. As a result of Soror Ruscel's outstanding leadership and emphasis on the

importance of all students receiving a quality education, the Superintendent of California Schools and the California Department of Education nominated Chavez School as one of the thirty two schools in California for the nation's highest educational award, the national Blue Ribbon Schools Award that honors successful public and private schools that set the standard of excellence for all schools striving for the highest level of achievement. As a result of Soror Ruscel's hard work and leadership, Chavez students are ready and prepared to enter junior high/middle school, high school and college. Chavez alumni are student body officers, honor roll students, leaders, movers and shakers in the schools and the community.

Soror Ruscel is a Board Member of Region 11 Association of California School Administrators and is the chairman of the Educational Leadership Award that honors school administrators from Kern, Inyo and Tulare counties. She is a Board Member of the Kern County Museum that sponsors a Children's Discovery Center Museum, a former Board of Trustee Member of Fresno Pacific University, and a former member of the California State University at Bakersfield Committee to establish an Educational Administrative Doctoral Program at the college. Soror Ruscel serves on her church's Education Council that was responsible for bringing the Black College and University Tour to Bakersfield. This event was especially noteworthy as many of

the African American students are unfamiliar with the opportunities that the historically Black colleges and universities afford. The Education Council also provides workshops on colleges and financial aid, sponsors a yearly Youth Pep Rally for Education, schedules tutoring for youth in the church and partners with California State University at Bakersfield to schedule academic outreach efforts for members of the church. As a result of the work of the Education Council, Dr. Charles B. Reed, Chancellor of the 23 California State University campuses attended the church on Super Sunday. Soror Ruscel has received numerous honors and awards for her work in the schools and in the community; she is featured in the Bakersfield Life Magazine and other periodicals, interviewed by the local television newscasters and is regularly quoted in the newspaper. Her life activities within the sorority, her career, religion and community show continuous leadership and connecting threads of dedication to education for our youth and community. Soror Ruscel establishes a culture and climate of trust, respect and love within the sorority, school, church and community. I am proud to be her sorority sister and friend. I highly recommend her for the coveted EAF Leadership Award.

Click the following links for article on Soror Ruscel's leadership in the community:

[Soror Ruscel Named Top of the Class](#)

[Chavez Students Rally for Census at Liberty Bell](#)

[School District Interviews Soror Ruscel about a New Innovative Program](#)

Soror Ruscel Reader

Kappa Omega Omega Chapter

Bakersfield City, Cesar E. Chavez Elementary – Principal Mrs. Ruscel Reader

BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL NOMINATION, 2010



Local school nominated for nation's highest honor

BY JORGE BARRIENTOS, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield's already well-decorated Cesar Chavez Elementary was nominated for the country's top prize for schools Wednesday -- **a National Blue Ribbon.**

It comes on the heels of the state honoring Chavez for academic achievements while overcoming challenges in February. And the campus also has earned the state's highest honor -- the California Distinguished Schools award.

"Wow, wow, wow," Principal Ruscel Reader said after **learning only 33 schools in California were** nominated this year, and only eight Kern County schools have won in the award's 28-year history. "I view it as a tribute to all the things Bakersfield City School District has done to educate our students."

The Blue Ribbon award honors public and private schools that are either academically superior or demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement, while serving an economically disadvantaged population of students.

The schools "have stepped up to the challenge of closing the achievement gap

and are deserving of this prestigious national honor," said state Superintendent Jack O'Connell in a statement.

Schools are chosen primarily for high scores on the Academic Performance Index, a composite score of test results that includes STAR. The school must meet all federal benchmarks for it overall and for socio-economically disadvantaged students, English-learners and minorities.

Chavez has the seventh highest API score in the county with 866. It has a 60 percent Latino population. All nominees were either previous California Distinguished Schools or California Title I Academic Achieving Award schools. Chavez has received both.

Principal Reader credits the hard work of parents, teachers and students for the bid. The district, she said, has provided tools to help students achieve including teacher collaboration programs, consultants from WestEd and its Pathways to Teaching and Learning approach. "The teachers are so hard-working and dedicated, and the kids are wonderful," said Reader, Chavez leader of 10 years. "All that gives our kids additional learning opportunities." In the program history, only eight local schools have won the award. Fruitvale School District hosts the most, three, Blue Ribbon schools. Mary Westendorf, assistant superintendent at Fruitvale, was principal at one of the Fruitvale schools -- Discovery Elementary when it won the award. She has served on the Blue Ribbon review team. Winning a Blue Ribbon was "probably our best accomplishment in terms of awards," she said. "For us, there was a tremendous amount of pride. Our kids were very excited," Westendorf said. "It recognized a lot of hard work. It's not an easy award to win, and to be nominated is a great accomplishment." There is no money prize for Blue Ribbons, but schools use it for bragging rights. It also increases property values of nearby homes. Campuses are used as models for other schools to emulate.

The U.S. Department of Education will announce Blue Ribbon winners in September.