

## *Iota Sigma Chapter History*



*The Iota Sigma Chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. serves the Richmond, VA metropolitan area. It was organized in 1935 by Soror Rubye G. Peake Watts Hall, from Zeta Sigma Chapter, St. Louis, Missouri. Soror Hall was the Grand Syntaktes of Sigma Gamma Rho at the time. It is an honor to attribute the chartering of Iota Sigma to Soror Hall, who was active in Sigma as a charter member of Zeta Sigma Chapter, 1934 Sigma Gamma Rho Scholarship Winner, Grand Syntaktes, 1937 Blanche Edwards Award Winner, and Editor-in-chief of the Aurora (1944 – 1963). The need for a graduate chapter in Richmond arose from the alumnae sorors from Tau Chapter, which had been chartered at Virginia Union University six years before Iota Sigma in 1929. The chartering members of Iota Sigma Chapter were Sorors Eunice Carrington Caster, Olga Williams Dicks, Gertrude Chiles Saunders, Antoinette Hamilton Stephens, and Madeline Hamilton Smith.*

*Iota Sigma's service in Sigma began with hosting the 10<sup>th</sup> Boule in its charter year in conjunction with Tau Chapter from December 26 – 30, 1935. This was the first Boule to be held in what would later be known as the Northeast Region. The chapter had been established as part of the Northern Region, but at the Fourteenth Boule in 1939, redistricting efforts created the Northeast Region, in which Iota Sigma takes recognition as the oldest chartered alumni chapter. Iota Sigma and Tau Chapters then hosted the first Northeast Regional Conference at Virginia Union University on May 11, 1940. Iota Sigma had become inactive at some time during the interim between 1940 and 1950, but was reactivated under the leadership of Soror Annie Neville, Northeast Region Syntaktes and future Grand Basileus, in 1950.*

*Throughout the years, Iota Sigma projects have included Rhomeia celebrations, Carver day and Black History Week/Month activities, our Eyeglass Repair Fund for indigent students in Richmond Public Schools, and our Dr. Elizabeth Johnson Scholarship Fund for college students. Our annual debutante ball, the oldest in the Richmond area, was organized in 1953 by Soror Mary Robinson, a charter member of Tau Chapter, and has continued for over half a century. Iota Sigma also hosts an annual Cool Jazz Wine Tasting and Community Service Festival to benefit our Scholarship Fund. The chapter participates in Wee Savers, Habitat for Humanity, Adopt-A-Highway, and Operation Big Book Bag, among other community service programs. In 1972, at Sigma Gamma Rho's Golden Anniversary Celebration, Iota Sigma was honored as being among the outstanding chapters of service and progress in Sigma. We also have a very active chapter of Philo affiliates. Our chapter advises Tau Chapter, of Virginia Union*

*University, Epsilon Zeta Chapter, of Virginia Commonwealth University, and Omicron Omicron Chapter, of Longwood College.*

*Iota Sigma Sorors have served in regional and national positions throughout the chapter's history – most notably: Soror Alice Brown as Grand Epistoleus, Soror Olga Williams Dicks as a member of the national Board of Directors, Soror Sylvia Harris Wade Felker as Past Northeast Region Syntaktes and member of the Board of Directors, Soror Ella Richardson as Northeast Regional Grammateus, Soror Marian J. Martin as Northeast Region Parliamentarian, and Soror Shirley L. Smith as Epistoleus, Anti - Grammateus, Undergraduate Chapter Coordinator, and Syntaktes for the Northeast Region in addition to International Grand Anti – Grammateus. Outstanding Iota Sigma Chapter sorors include Soror Ella Richardson, 1980 Virginia Teacher of the Year, 1981 inductee of the Beta Lambda Sigma Hall of Fame, and recipient of the Northeast Region Community Service Medallion. Sorors Mary Robinson and Sadie Sears also merit distinction for their distinguished service to Iota Sigma and to the greater Richmond community. Another notable soror, Dr. Elizabeth Johnson, held a doctorate from the University of Virginia and was the Dean of Education at Virginia Union University before serving there as the Director of the Division of Education and Psychology.*

*Past chapter basilei include:*

*Sorors Thelma Bullock Wilson, Antoinette Hamilton Stevens, Mildred Lee Tynes, Edith Terry Hawley, Sadie Carter Sears, Gwendolyn Frye Henderson, Dr. Elizabeth Johnson (1963-1968), Ella Jones Richardson (1968-1974), Elaine Burton (1974-1976), Shirley L. Smith (1976-1978), Sonora Wyatt Bibbs (1978-1980), Cornelia Belches (1980-1984), Rev. Lynda D. Moore (1984-1986), Pauline Kersey Harvey (1986-1988), Marjorie D. Brown (1988-1990), Carolyn Brown (1990-1994), Marian J. Martin (1994-1998), Christy Williams (1998-2000), Teresa Brown (2000-2001), and Jean'Yea Webb (2001- present).*

*Life members include Sorors Marlene H. Brewer, Shirley L. Smith, Marian J. Martin, and Ella J. Richardson. Also,*

*Iota Sigma Chapter has been ripe with family legacies:*

*Mother/daughter sorors:*

*Ella and Renita Richardson, Elizabeth Johnson and Phyllis Richardson, and Esther and Kimberly Smith*

*Sister/sister sorors:*

*Lynda and Deborah Moore, Carolyn and Yolanda Brown, Josephine Norrel and Sadie Sears, and Marian Tanner and Joan Johnathan, Dorothy Draper Hargrove and Thomasine Draper Fox, and their cousins, sisters Shirley and Annie Smith.*

*Iota Sigma strives in this new 21<sup>st</sup> century to be a beacon light for Sigma Gamma Rho in Richmond. This true family affair in sisterhood, scholarship, and service aims to fulfill the motto of Sigma - "Greater Service, Greater Progress."*

[http://www.geocities.com/sgrho\\_is](http://www.geocities.com/sgrho_is)

*Last updated February 2002  
Soror Katrice Taylor, Epistoleus*