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Love, Support, and Sisterhood Shine at Community Baby Shower for 22 St. Croix Mothers

Led by event chairwoman Nia Sylvester, Alpha Kappa Alpha's Mu Gamma Omega Chapter hosted a heartfelt baby shower for 22 expectant mothers, offering gifts, mentorship, and support in celebration of Black Maternal Health Week.

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Collage of joyful moments from the community baby shower, featuring expectant mothers with their AKA mentors and a group photo of Mu Gamma Omega Chapter members united in sisterhood and service. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

In what may be one of the most heartfelt events held for expectant mothers in the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Mu Gamma Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, hosted an

elegant and thoughtful community baby shower on Saturday. Organized to honor 22 young women, the event was a classy celebration fit for royalty, complete with meaningful programs, beautiful décor, and an abundance of gifts that reflected the care and intention behind every detail.

Held at Le Jolie in the Sion Farm Shopping Center, the mothers arrived to a warm welcome from the sorority members, whose chapter has been actively serving the St. Croix community for over four decades. Guests expressed deep appreciation for the meticulous attention to detail evident in every aspect of the event, from the sophisticated decorations to the thoughtful programming and generous gifts, making it a memorable and cherished experience for all who attended.



Decorative desserts presented by Sugar Rush Desserts and Mari Beri's Home Bakery. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, V.I. Consortium)

Expectant mother Gennia Liburd encapsulated the sentiments of many when she remarked, "What we lack in the Virgin Islands is support, so when you do get a support system like what they're doing today to help you out, it becomes a positive thing in your life for you." Liburd highlighted the importance of this support, adding, "Because you find that you can relate to these chaperons. They guide you along the way, they look out for you, and I wish that more [organizations] would give more support to them. We have so many mothers here that need our help, that need people to rely on. Sometimes you don't have your family, you don't have your friends to rely on, so if you're getting help from a stranger, that tends to be a big part of your motherhood. It's a big part."

Preparation for the event included sorority sisters being paired with expectant mothers a month in advance to regularly check on their well-being. At the event, these sisters actively attended to the comfort and needs of the mothers, ensuring a welcoming and supportive atmosphere.



Alpha Kappa Alpha members and expectant mothers engage in a bonding activity designed to build connection and community. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, V.I. Consortium)

The initiative for this community baby shower originated with Nia Sylvester, who served as the event's chairwoman. Sylvester noted in an interview that 22 mothers responded to an open public invitation, with one mother expecting twins, bringing the total number of babies anticipated to 23. Each mother received essential gifts, including car seats, strollers, and pack-and-play cribs. Additional items provided included postpartum kits, breastmilk storage bags, nursing pads, wipes, diapers, onesies, socks, baby shampoo and wash, bibs, pacifiers, noise-canceling earmuffs, hats, lotion, and other necessities vital for the post-birth period.



From left to right, Alicia Barnes, Nia Sylvester, and Rena Sarauw—members of the Mu Gamma Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated—stand proudly at the community baby shower they helped organize in honor of 22 Black expectant mothers in the U.S. Virgin Islands. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, V.I. Consortium)

Vice Chair Rena Sarauw stated that the baby shower was specifically planned to coincide with Black Maternal Health Week, observed from April 11-17. The week's theme is "Healing Legacies: Strengthening Black Maternal Health Through Collective Action and Advocacy." Sarauw explained, "That's what we're doing today. Mu Gamma Omega Chapter has answered the call to action." The theme highlights the significance of community-focused efforts and collaborative advocacy to address maternal health disparities and honor the legacy of generations

of Black women affected by these inequities.

In the United States, Black women face a maternal mortality rate three to four times higher than that of white women. This alarming disparity contributes to a maternal mortality crisis unique among industrialized nations. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 80 percent of pregnancy-related deaths are preventable, underscoring the critical need for systemic reforms.



These bibs were selected as the winning entries in the bib-decorating contest held during the Mu Gamma Omega Chapter's community baby shower. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, V.I. Consortium)

The successful execution of the community baby shower was made possible by strong community backing, including generous contributions from individuals who purchased items through an Amazon registry. Numerous significant community partners also supported the event, such as the V.I. Department of Health, TempleWorks Wellness & Therapeutics, Partners in Healthy Communities VI, Neighborhood Pharmacy, Phresh Juice Bar, STEM SOLVE LLC, Carlos Furniture, Vivot Construction, HKT Energy Consulting Group, Rittenhouse Consulting, Eleven Construction, Concrete Masters VI, G-Max Service Station, CGVI, Zefo Enterprise, Genesis Electric, Best Home, Paradise Freight, and The Market St. Croix.



Community baby shower committee members from the Mu Gamma Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, gather after successfully organizing the heartfelt event. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, V.I. Consortium)

The dedicated members of the community baby shower committee included Alicia V. Barnes, Alicia George, Ayanna T. Romney, Bria James, Chanice Jarvis, Keva Muller, Kiara James, Lisa Mitchell-Harris, Lorraine Benjamin-Matthew, Maliesha Williams, Maureen Burke-Ventura, Nia Sylvester, Patricia Fatal, Rena Sarauw, Sheneal Patrick, Tanya Lockhart, Thandi Masilela, and Vernae B. Floyd.

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