

To: Colleen Brown, President, Beta Gamma State
From: Gayle Hammons, Chair, EEC
Date: Oct. 4, 2017
Re: EEC at Northwest Conference, Spearfish, South Dakota

First question asked at the training for EEC chairs in Spearfish was, “What does Education Excellence mean?” This drew almost as many responses as there were participants.

In summary, though, all the responses could be summed up as dealing with excellence in education within chapters or within communities.

The top concern for any program’s success in DKG these days is the declining numbers of members across International. We do not seem to be able to keep new members, even if we can entice them to join, and we are losing our long-time members to boredom, or lack of feeling needed or important, or their declining health/passing.

This fact drove the rest of the day’s conversations/ideas. To keep DKG viable, we have to put the spotlight of education excellence on us, and on education excellence within our communities and states. This idea was behind our Founders’ dreams of creating this organization. Each of them were examples of education excellence, of women who took down walls, tested forbidden waters, and were not afraid to take on what seemed insurmountable obstacles in their state and in American society.

In a world that is full of technology, we need people to help us use it, regardless of their gender. (Currently, Bill is answering the phones at DKG International among other things—the first time I heard his voice, I thought I had dialed the wrong number--and he is an absolute delight. There are now two men, he tells me, who are part of DKG Headquarters, and they are both very important to the organization.) TEDTalks, community TV stations, school TV stations, radio call-in shows on all kinds of topics, blogs, etc. are all ways we could make ourselves known to the “outside” world.

In the worlds of art and print, there are members who have accomplished honors, or been lauded for their efforts as women and/or as educators—what do we do to bring attention to them? We can place PSA’s on radio, TV, and newspapers., and we can write columns, or Dear Teacher-type of weekly or monthly columns. In fact, many of us said that it was these type of “old-fashioned” announcements/honors that the older population enjoyed. From there, people suggested interpretive walks through parks, or buildings, or history walks for an entire community, or school faculties, either lead by members, or by other experts, but advertised/sponsored by DKG chapters.

Monthly breakfasts for any new educators are popular; new educators being welcomed with “secret” sisters offering tools/supplies needed in any classroom;

outside speakers coming to meetings to share their expertise in any topic, open to the community, or to schools, openly (and loudly) sponsored by DKG chapters; in-class help, any age, any classroom, if the district allows, touted as something DKG does or sponsors; new teachers asking for help via a website, or email, and DKG sisters offering multiple solutions for each challenge; honoring students throughout the system with gift certificate, or monetary help to send a child to special opportunities (basketball camp or drama camp or writing camp, etc.), and most important, a time (hopefully each meeting) that honors a member's expertise, in anything.

We also have to be known as an organization of women who strive to find more educational excellence for ourselves, in the form of trainings, scholarships, honors, etc. We are reluctant to put the spotlight on us, as individuals, within our communities (although we do it pretty well in our chapters), but this is another area where we can certainly demonstrate education excellence.

And, since too many times, tragedies or disasters are befalling residents where we live, why can't we wear DKG pins/T-shirts/hats as we help out at relief efforts? This is not only an example of personal excellence, we said, but it shows those who doubt or don't know what and who we are as women educators that we are excellent examples for our children.

We already know education excellence is what we represent; we need to let the rest of the world know it as well.