



## AKAs show sisterly love to soldiers overseas



Photo by LINAISE LIMA

AKA members Jessica Davis, Kiara Wright, Kristen Leek, Genise Austin-Holliday, Frances Trulear, Crystal Gabriel, Hannah Brooks, Demetria Wright and Lyndsi Caldwell on the campus of FAMU.

By Linaise Lima  
Outlook Staff Writer

TALLAHASSEE, FL—Known for responding to community needs, the Florida A&M University Beta Alpha chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, Inc. teamed up with Sister Soldier Project to provide black women soldiers abroad sisterly care packages.

The sorority decided to take on the project after a member, Aylin McGinnis, who has family in the military, expressed to the chapter the importance to do so.

"The idea came from my dad being in the military," said McGinnis, who is also chairwoman of the project. "I came across the Sister Soldier Project while doing research."

Sister Soldier project was founded by Myraline Morris Whitaker in 2006 to fill the gaps black women soldiers faced when it came to personal supplies they needed.

"The women of color were asking families and friends to send them the ethnic branded hair care products, ones they've used most of their lives, but could not obtain through the normal military provided supplies or their local PX facilities," said Morris Whitaker, creator of the national initiative.

The sorority organized its first care package drive around campus for one week where they collected items and monetary donations.

"The goal is to send out 20 packages to black women soldiers who are stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan," McGinnis said.

The products consisted of non-perishable foods, black hair care products, toiletries, books and magazines.

"We want to let the soldiers know that we care and support them through packages that can go a long way," said Courtney Gwyn, member of

Beta Alpha.

McGinnis added that the chapter was pleased with the donations they received and had exceeded their goals. The chapter received a list of 20 names from Morris Whitaker. They plan to mail any excess to other soldiers.

For the past two years, the Sister Soldier Project has made thousands of such ethnic hair care shipments, totaling over five tons of goods, to the women troops in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and the Ships at Sea.

One soldier expressed how grateful she and the other soldiers were for the items they received from Sister Soldier Project.

"I'm glad there's an organization that understands the need of us 'sister soldiers,'" said a soldier in letter to Sister Soldier Project.

Morris Whitaker pointed out that she believes the true value of any gift lies in the

heart of its recipient.

This past September, the Sister Soldier Project received a Congressional Award. The Congressional Black Caucus' Veterans Braintrust Award for 2009 recognized the project for its service and dedication and in support of the United States Armed Forces and for its "unique understanding of the special position of African American servicemen and women."

McGinnis said the chapter intends to make the Sister Soldier Project a continuous event on campus.

"We would like to at least hold the event every fall, if not every semester," McGinnis said.

For more information on the Sister Soldier Project, visit [www.sistersoldierproject.com](http://www.sistersoldierproject.com).

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