



Founders' Day Proclamation April 30, 2017

As I thought about what I wanted to say in my first Founders' Day Proclamation, I knew my focus would be on reaching out and connecting with sisters. In the Akron Alumnae Association we used Founders' Day as an opportunity to encourage members to reach out to a sister they hadn't seen for a while and to help us find "lost lambs" i.e., sisters with whom we had lost contact. Since Founders' Day is such an important event for Theta Phi Alpha, women are often willing to attend even if they have not been involved for many years-especially if they are personally invited. The laughter and joy in the room as sisters reconnect is amazing. Many comment that they don't know why they stayed away and vow to return the next year. And many of them do.

I decided to look at past proclamations to see what kinds of messages other National President's shared, especially in the early years. The Founders' Day ritual was approved at the 1937 Convention and the first proclamation I found was given in 1941. Prior to then, the National President often shared a message in *The Compass* and I found one that stood out to me:

"Those of us who have been fortunate enough to have attended previous conventions of Theta Phi Alpha know better than the rest of us ever can the value of such meetings. The contact with others who are part of the same big plan and who have standards, ideas, and aims identical with our own brings home to us the seriousness and dignity of the work we are endeavoring to accomplish."

These words were written nearly 100 years ago by Ellen Miller, National President in 1923, yet they still ring true today. Our shared ritual creates a bond which unites us across chapters, generations, and time. Founders' Day is a time to gather to honor the 10 women who set forth the standards and ideals we follow today. The values our Founders chose to include in our creed; justice, wisdom, loyalty, faith, truth, and honor; are values we share today. Ellen Miller became National President immediately after Mildred Connely, who wrote our creed in 1933, at the request of the Convention body, to inspire and to encourage our members. From her message, it's clear the light had been passed on from the Founders. Ellen understood the importance of friendship with sisters. She understood the value of these relationships. I am very grateful for the women who founded this organization and for all those who have carried on that light since then.

Theta Phi Alpha has grown far beyond the initial circle of friends at the University of Michigan in 1912. As we celebrate the 105th anniversary of our Founding, I encourage each one of you to use this as an opportunity to reconnect with a sister you haven't seen for a while. If each alumna connected to just one sister, imagine how many connections we could re-establish. Alumnae and collegians should connect with each other. It is our responsibility to continue passing on that light. Each one of us can make a difference individually and collectively we can do even more.



On behalf of the Grand Council, I ask you to cherish the friendships you have made in Theta Phi Alpha, honor the memory of our beloved Founders, and celebrate the accomplishments of the past as we look towards the future.

It is my honor and privilege, as National President, to proclaim April 30, 2017 as Founders' Day of Theta Phi Alpha Fraternity and direct that it be so observed by alumnae, collegians and new members.

Yours in the bonds of sisterhood,

Susan Lee, Sigma

National President