Celebrating Our Founding Jewels

OTHERS ARE LIFTED

SWANS, Incorporated 30th Biennial Debutante Ball and 72nd Anniversary

Saturday, December 21, 2024 Tableau at eight o'clock in the evening

Sheraton Galleria Ballroom Four Galleria Boulevard Metairie, Louisiana

Swan Debra H. Edwards, President & Ball Chair Swan Shirley G. Williams, Ball Co-Chair Swan Shanna B. Porter, Jr. Court Chair Swan Raina Edwards-Elder, Esq., Debutante Chair



Queen Leyah Antoinette Dejoie

The Members of SWANS, Inc. Dedicate

The 30th Biennial Debutante Ball and 72nd Anniversary To

SWAN DEBRA EDWARDS

SWAN MARY JOSEPH

SWAN SHIRLEY WILLIAMS

Thank for your dedication to SWANS, Inc. and the community.

History of SWANS, Inc.

In October of 1952, a group of 10 educators who worked at Kenner Colored High School in Kenner, Louisiana, organized The SWANS. The charter members were the late Margaret C. Houston, Ethel H. James, Betsy B. Hammond, Hilda S. Bujol, Lucille Carroll, Gloria Bijole, Edna Crockem, Evelyn Carroll, Doris Bijole Jones and Angeline Harris. Within the first years, Ruth V. Blue, Geraldine B. Bernard, Rosalie B. Bradford, Mayme Gardner, and Aletha G. Bardell became members.



Pictured are: Angeline Harris, Hilda Bujol, Evelyn Carroll, Mayme Gardner, Ethel James, Geraldine Bernard, Margarete Houston, Ruth Blue, Lucille Carroll, Rosalie Bradford, Edna Crockem, Betsy Hammond (Not pictured is Gloria Bijole and Doris Bijole Jones

The purposes of the organization were to: promote social, cultural, and civic activities, to enhance community life through humanitarian services; provide scholarships; bring cheer and recognition to unsung heroines and the elderly; assist people in crisis; and to motivate children and youth to maximize their potential.

Since 1952, the members of SWANS, Inc. have been at the forefront of wholesome community, religious, civic and social endeavors which have brought a cross-section of the African American community together. The first Mother's Day Celebration was held in 1953. The first Debutante Cotillion was held in 1957. In 1981, the Little Miss Sweetheart Pageant began which later became the Beaux and Belles Experience. Each Christmas, The SWANS, their families and friends boarded a school bus and rode through the community singing Christmas carols while delivering food and fruit baskets to those in need.

The endeavors have included: recognition of 250+ mothers; nurturing and presenting more than 500 young ladies as debutantes, escorts and junior court; caring for people in the community with special needs; nurturing and presentation of girls and boys, ages 5-12 in the Beaux and Belles Experience; books and academic incentives; sending cards to the sick; supporting the faculty, staff and students of Washington STEM School; offering words of encouragement and service wherever needed.

Having selected as the motto, "OTHERS ARE LIFTED AS WE CLIMB," we continue to engage in activities that enhance and promote the ideals which the motto embraces. It is hoped that when those served reflect on the motto, they will remember SWANS, Inc. as one group that had a positive impact on their lives. Reorganizing in 2011 as a membership, nonprofit organization, we celebrate and continue this legacy!

Greetings from the

President....

Welcome to the culmination of the 30th Debutante Season and the 72nd Anniversary Celebration of SWANS, Inc. Sagacious, Willing and Noble Samaritans, the standards on which we were founded in 1952, established a framework on which to build. In 2011,



We re-organized as a membership, nonprofit organization to "Continue the Legacy."

Who would have thought that their beginnings in 1952, would have had such **phenomenal results?** With tonight's debutantes, over 511 young ladies have had the opportunities to enhance their relationships with God and others; to maximize their social graces; explore career opportunities; cultivate and present their gifts and talents; demonstrate their leadership skills; and share with others through community service.

Our legacy is rich. Tonight, we continue that legacy with the theme, "Celebrating Our Founding Jewels." We hope that this experience has imparted that desire for service to this generation and generations to come.

2024 Debutantes, this is your night!!! Queen Leyah, Princess Kennedy, Debutantes Destiny, and Harlym, your enthusiasm and perseverance have paid off. We celebrate the awesomely gifted and talented young ladies that you are. Parents, thank you for sharing these beautiful young ladies with us.

To those persons who have supported our efforts, thank you! To our Ball and Debutante Committees, Cobs, Families, Friends, Sponsors, and Special Guests, thanks for all you have done to make this night a reality. We ask that you, parents and guests, remember and **live our motto by "Lifting Others as We Climb."** Now, join us in applauding God's blessings that He has shared with us this 2024 Debutante Season and His blessings for 72 years of service with your thunderous applause, encouragement, and well-wishes.

> *With love and gratitude,* Swan Debra Houston Edwards, President

SWANS, Inc. Members



Debra H. Edwards, '63 President, Ball Chair



Raina Edwards-Elder, Esq., '95 Vice President, Debutante Chair



Brenda C. Hill, '57 Vice President Emeritus



Shirley G. Williams, '65 Financial Secretary Ball Co-chair



Shanna B. Porter, '87 Recording Secretary



Gwendolyn R. Crockem, '63 Amenities



Keisha Ferdinand Debutante Committee



Dr. Raijanel Crockem, '89



Mary Joseph Outreach



Shelita M. Holmes, '87 Debutante Committee

Queen Tykeyah Chaliz Dejoie

Greetings SWAN Sisters, Family and Friends,

Giving thanks to God for the favor He has placed on my life and all of the wonderful people he allowed to travel this journey with me. It has been an honor and a pleasure to reign as the SWANS 2022 Queen. My debutante experiences were exceptional. The beautiful women that encompass the SWAN'S Organization taught us the meaning of "finer womanhood," grace, poise, team



building and sisterly love. These things I will always remember and be grateful for. Through it all, I have learned to put my Trust in God as I continue to pursue my future educational endeavors no matter how challenging it may be.

I would like to give a special thanks to my parents, Joy Miller-Dejoie and Reginald Dejoie Jr, my grandmother Cherry Miller-Dickerson, and aunts Joanna Miller and Shirley Williams. They all have never given up on me and have been a continued support throughout this journey into adulthood and career aspirations.

To my SWAN Sisters and future Debs, I leave with you love, joy, peace and success in all of your future endeavors. Along with my grandma's favorite scripture when I call in a discouraging mood: Proverbs: 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path.

Blessings and be well,

Tykeyah Chaliz Dejoie Tykeyah Chaliz Dejoie SWANS Queen 2022



Tableau

Narrator

Swan Debra H. Edwards Entrance of Mothers and Escorts Introduction of SWANS and Ball Marshalls **Greeting and Special Recognition** Swan Debra H. Edwards

> Introduction of 2022 Queen Tykeyah Dejoie and Introduction of 2022 Ladies-in-Waiting Presentation of 2024 Debutantes and Princess Introduction of 2024 Ladies-in-Waiting, Herald/Page

> > Presentation of 2024 SWANS, Inc. Queen Queen's Salute & Past Queen's Departure

> > > **Royal Promenade**

Toast to Queen And Debutantes 72th Anniversary Toast Special Awards

Grand Promenade Grand Cotillion Waltz Special Dance: Swans, Ball Marshalls, Parents Past Debutantes

General Dancing and Dining

72th Anniversary Secondline

Queen Leyah Antoinette Dejoie



Daughter of Reginald Dejoie, Jr. and Joy Miller Dejoie

Escorted by: Shamus Gardner, Jr.

Senior East Jefferson High School

Sponsor: Swan Shirley Williams

Princess Kennedy Elizabeth Hughes



Daughter of Lloyd Michael Sr. and Gillian King-Hughes

> Escorted by: Dedric Lastie

Senior Riverside Academy

Sponsor: Swan Raina Edwards

Debutante Harlym Rocsi Henderson



Daughter of Brandi Henderson and Paul Cooper Niece of John Williams

> Escorted by: Jakiren Williams

Junior Bonnabel Magnet Academy High School

Sponsor: Swan Debra Edwards

Debutante Destiny Loretta Johnson



Daughter of Eric Johnson and Willye Mae Turner

Escorted by: Cardell Henderson

Senior Archbishop Chapelle High School

Sponsor: Swan Debra Edwards





Shamus Gardner Jr.



Dedric Lastie



Cardell Henderson



JaKiren Williams



Junior Court



Lauren Katherine Arceneaux



Nakira Lee Elder



Rose Berlin Gelin



Alvin Meyers Jr.



Davion Maria Boykins



Blossom Ellen Gelin



Taylor Alexandria Grant

FIRST Place Essay Winner

Princess Kennedy Elizabeth Hughes

"Celebrating Our Founding Jewels"

"The time is always right to do what is right" (Martin Luther King). The founding jewels of the SWANS in 1952, knew then that the time was right! A dynamic group of dedicated and educated African American women played a key role in establishing an organization that have become a pillar of our community recognized and celebrated by many still to this day. Rooted in education, all of the founding jewels were educators at Washington Elementary and that legacy continues as many current members are also educators ensuring the children of our community are educated. A jewel according to Webster is a precious stone and to describe someone as a jewel would mean that they are special to others. Celebrating the founding jewels who are definitely special to us, means we are to acknowledge, give credit to and congratulate them, but also to continue their legacy. The original ten founding jewels were Gloria Bijol, Hilda Smith Bujol, Evelyn Carroll, Lucile Johnson Carroll, Edna James Crockem, Dorris Bujol Jones, Ethel Hurks James, Betsy B. Hammond, Angeline Brown Harris and Margarete Carter Houston. It is most appropriate to celebrate them and their legacy. These founding jewels vision for service, along with their unwavering dedication to community and to others have developed the SWANS into a remarkable, and well-known organization that is still continuing strong, seventy- two years later. When starting such a program, it is important to explore the history of Black excellence, showing recognition of their importance, fostering unity and their contribution to the community. Our founding jewels that we should always celebrate did just that; when they organized in 1952, they promoted social and cultural events, civic activities, enhanced community life, offered scholarships, participated in humanitarian services, helped the elderly and motivated children just to name a few. We should always celebrate our founding jewels not only for what they have done in the past, but for the rich legacy that still lives and will continue to thrive for years to come. There are three categories that we can acknowledge, give credit to and congratulate our founding jewels as we continue to celebrate their legacy in the following areas: community service, education and social action.

Community service is a fundamental aspect of any service organization established to impact and make a difference for the people of their community. The original founding jewels established their organization and community service was then and continues to be a pillar for the SWANS. Providing cheers to unsung heroes, assisting those in a crisis, establishing and continuing Mother's Day celebrations, Adopting a Family and providing Thanksgiving Baskets are a few ways that community service is provided by the SWANS that was originally adopted by the The goal, I believe for the jewels was to assist with cultivating the youth so that they are prepared to make meaningful contributions to their communities and beyond. The founding jewels created a pathway for us to celebrate them and also carry on their legacy through acts of service in the community. The jewels definitely did this which is why we celebrate them!

Education is another cornerstone of the legacy that was provided by our founding jewels. They all were educators and knew that education was necessary and the path to freedom. Our founding jewels knew that as African American women pursuing knowledge and personal development was vital for their growth, family and community. The debutante experience provided by the SWANS that was started by the jewels allows young ladies to participate in programs that offer workshops, seminars, and mentoring sessions providing educational opportunities, skills and knowledge needed to assist young ladies to navigate various aspects of life confidently. The Tea and Pageant are also programs that focus on the youth with education and participation ensuring the youth are involved, educated and prepared for society. Finally, the education and the debutante experience provided through various programs ensure that young ladies are well-rounded individuals prepared to excel in their future endeavors. The jewels definitely did this which is why we celebrate them!

The third and final pillar that our jewels established and a great legacy to have and celebrate is the social activities that were developed and are still in existence today. The founding jewels collaboration and work brought African American communities together through social activities. The jewels provided humanitarian services as well as participate in and held civic responsibilities. Social activities organized properly and with a purpose allows all involved to witness success and progress that can be made when we work together. This legacy and pillar are very important as it play a significant role in the personal growth of our youth. The Tea and Pageant are also both educational and social programs that focus on the youth and participation ensures the youth are involved, educated, and prepared for society. The jewels definitely did this which is why we celebrate them!

In conclusion, as we celebrate our founding jewels it is important to remember that the integration of community service, education, and social activities that were established by our jewels leaves a rich legacy, promotes personal development and help others which I believe was a goal for this great organization. The three pillars established by our founding jewels allowed our members to continue to learn the importance of giving back, the value of continuous learning, and the skills needed to navigate social interactions gracefully. This is the legacy that continues with the SWANS and the youth that they touch regularly. Our founding jewels deserve a celebration and is worthy to be praised! The legacy continues.

Second Place Essay Winner

Queen Leyah Antoinette Dejoie

"Celebrating Our Founding Jewels"

Jewels are a tribute to great women, SWANS, Inc has embodied that phrase by becoming jewel, cultivating jewels and continuing to pave the way for the jewels to follow. SWANS, Inc is a service organization established in Kenner, Louisiana in October 1952. The founders were all African American Educators who worked at Washington Elementary School. These women saw a need and decided to do something about it. These selfless women served their community with poise.

The ten ladies that started this organization were the late Gloria Bijol, Hilda Smith Bujol, Evelyn Carroll, Lucille Johnson Carroll, Edna James Crockem, Doris Bujol Jones, Ethel Hurks, James, Betsy B. Hammond, Angeline Brown Harris, and Margarete Carter Houston. Their goal was to promote social, cultural, and civic activities; enhance community life, provide humanitarian services; encourage scholarship; bring cheer and recognition to unsung heroes, heroines, and the elderly; assist those in crisis, and motivate children and the youth. The women hosted their first mothers day celebration in 1953, that event sparked the beginning of the SWANS journey to fulfilling their mission. The first debutante ball was in 1957, This event most definitely enhanced the community.

The SWANS have kept up with their traditions and events. Others like myself have become a part of the organization by participating in the programs, such as, Beauxs and Belles, Debutantes, Ladies in Waiting, community service events, and many other social activities. The foundation created by the founding jewels still holds strong and is also developing and changing with the times. Throughout each generation the organization is getting better and continues to cultivate a new.

These ladies have made a big impact on not just the community of Kenner but in places all across America. They changed the lives of many children by preparing them for society. We honor the founding jewels and appreciate all they have done.

Second Place Essay Winner

Debutante Destiny Loretta Johnson

"Celebrating Our Founding Jewels"

Celebrating the Founding Jewels of Swans Inc. is more than honoring them, but savoring their legacy by continuing what was started. In 1952, Gloria Bijol, Hilda Smith Bujol, Evelyn Carroll, Lucille Johnson Carroll, Edna James Crockem, Doris Bujol Jones, Ethel Hurks James, Betsy B. Hammond, Angeline Brown Harris, and Margarete Carter Houston founded Swans Inc. These 10 incredible women are considered the Founding Jewels. These women put together their talents to create a magnificent organization that was destined to prosper for years to come. These women kept God first and used their gifts from God to help others by motivating, cultivating, serving, and assisting the elderly as well as the youth. These gifts helped the organization to grow and become a strong legacy, which is known within society today.

While assisting the youth they would have talks and workshops that would give young people the confidence and motivation to be who they are by letting their talents shine and encouraging them to be scholars. These women also helped to bring peace to society by first bringing different African American communities together. Also, these women touched many lives and left long-lasting impacts from the things they said, their attitudes toward each person, and the accomplishments they accomplished.

All the things that the Founding Jewels accomplished were footprints for future debutantes to follow. Their final goal was for every future debutante to continue what they started. Today each debutante is taught to spread love and hope and work to enhance the community in every way possible. We can always look back on the many things the Founding Jewels did and use it as a guide. In conclusion, we should use our motto "To Lift Others as We Climb" as a reminder to always help others just as the Founding Jewels did.

Congratulations

Queen Leyah Antoinette Dejoie



on participating in Swans, Inc.'s 30th Biennial Cotillion

We are so proud of You!

Love,

SWANS Inc.

Congratulations "My Queen Leyah Dejoie A daughter is someone you laugh with, dream with, and love with all your heart. We are looking forward to your next steps in life Love, Mom & Dad





Queen Leyah Dejoie



"The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you." B.B.

King

Continue to navigate the world, absorb as much knowledge as you can, you will be

Congratulations Mrs. Stroughter & Mrs. Pellebon

Queen Leyah Dejoie

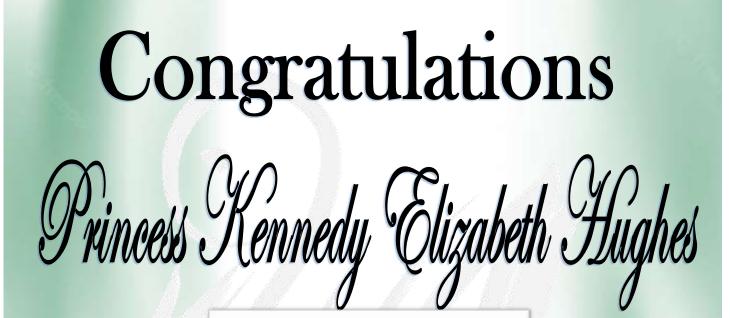


"Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today." Malcolm X

SINCEREST Congratulations

From a Small Part of the Ralph J Bunche Family Mrs. Rountree, Mrs. Bauman, Mrs. Taylor & Mr. Jackson







on participating in Swans, Inc.'s 30th Biennial Cotillion

We are so proud of You!

Love, SWANS Inc.

Congratulations Debutante Harlym Roch Henderson



on participating in Swans, Inc.'s 30th Biennial Cotillion

We are so proud of You!

Love,

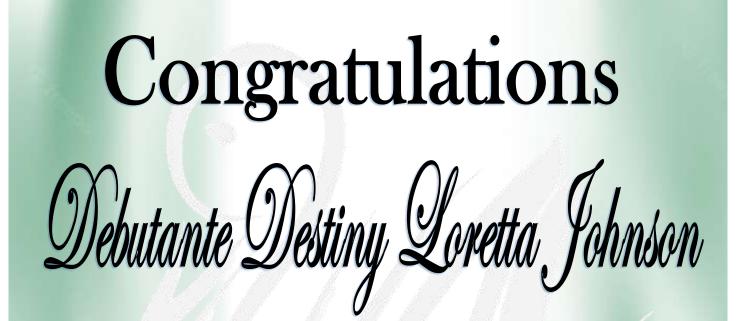
SWANS Inc.

Debutante Harlym Rocsi Henderson & Debutante Destiny Loretta Johnson

on all of your accomplishments. We are so proud of the both of you!

The Lord, He goes before you. He will be with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you. Do not fear, nor be dismayed. Deuteronomy 31:8

Love, <mark>Reverend Richmond & Minster Debra</mark> Edwards





on participating in Swans, Inc.'s 30th Biennial Cotillion.

We are so proud of You!

Love, SWANS Inc.



DESTINY JOHNSON

Congratulations to my little sister! Continue to aim high and excel, and you're bound to achieve remarkable things. It fills me with pride to be your older brother.

ABOUT US

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ONGRATS LEYAH

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TRAVEL ADVISOR

Oh, The Places You Will Go! Love you Tammy

Congratulations

Kennedy Elizabeth Hughes

on making your debut with SWANS, INC.!

We love you,

Mom, Dad, and Sisters



To my beautiful darling daughter,

You have grown up to be an amazing young lady. It has been a joy watching you over the years grow into this extraordinary young lady and I'm so proved of you. Today is your day and I celebrate with you all your achievements and accomplishments. Continue letting God's light shine brightly through your life and through all you do.

> Congratulations on your debut. Love Mom 🤎



Congratulations, Destiny Johnson!

Your debut with SWANS, INC marks a beautiful new chapter filled with grace, elegance, and endless possibilities. We are proud to honor your achievements and the bright future ahead!

Here's to your shining moment!



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DESTINY JOHNSON

Congratulations Destiny! On behalf of CJ Claim Services, we wish you the best in all that you do. Keep working hard!

About Us

We are local licensed Louisiana Public Adjusters. We assist property owners with their insurance claims to ensure that they are properly paid to repair damages to their property. We have +17 years of experience and we have recovered over a million dollars in the past I2 months for our residential and commercial clients. Call today to get a free evaluation of your insurance claim.

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CJ CLAIM

Chris@CJClaimservices.com www.CJClaimservices.com

Congratulations to Debutante Destiny Johnson on your Debut, Trinese Duplessis

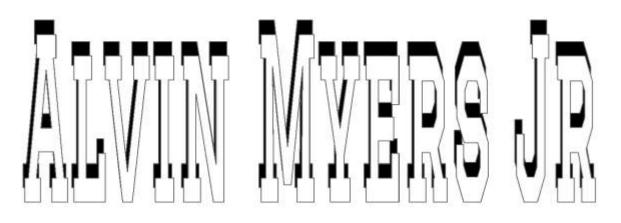




Congratulations Alvin Jr

With All Our Love Grandma and Grandpa

Be Happy, Be Bright, Be You



Aunt Shirley and Mrs. Mary

Leyah

Thank you for all you do to help us around the school. I know you will be exceptional at anything you decide to do next. Congratulations





Your Future is Bright & I am so proud of you. Continue to Blossom.

Congratulations

Mrs. Penis



You're on your way to great things

Mrs. Osborne

Congratulations BestFriend Leyah Deja



Congratulations Debutante

Destiny Johnson

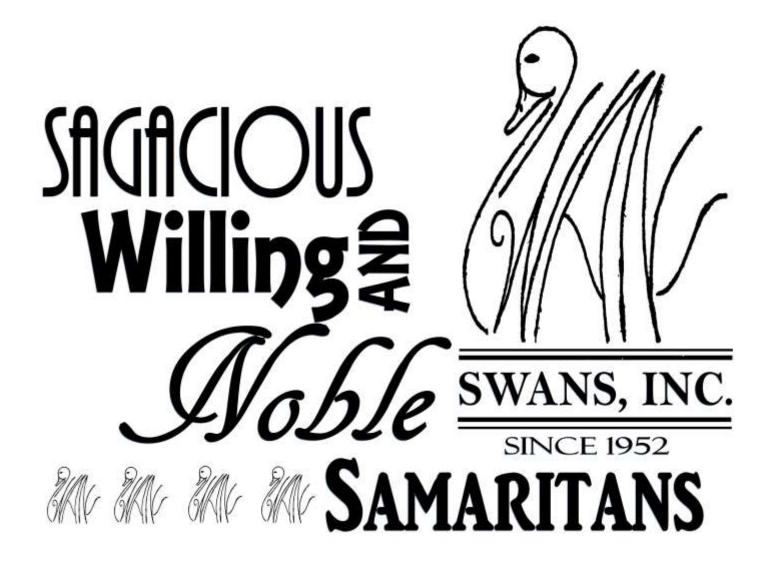
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lie are so proud of your

terry and Wanda Johnson

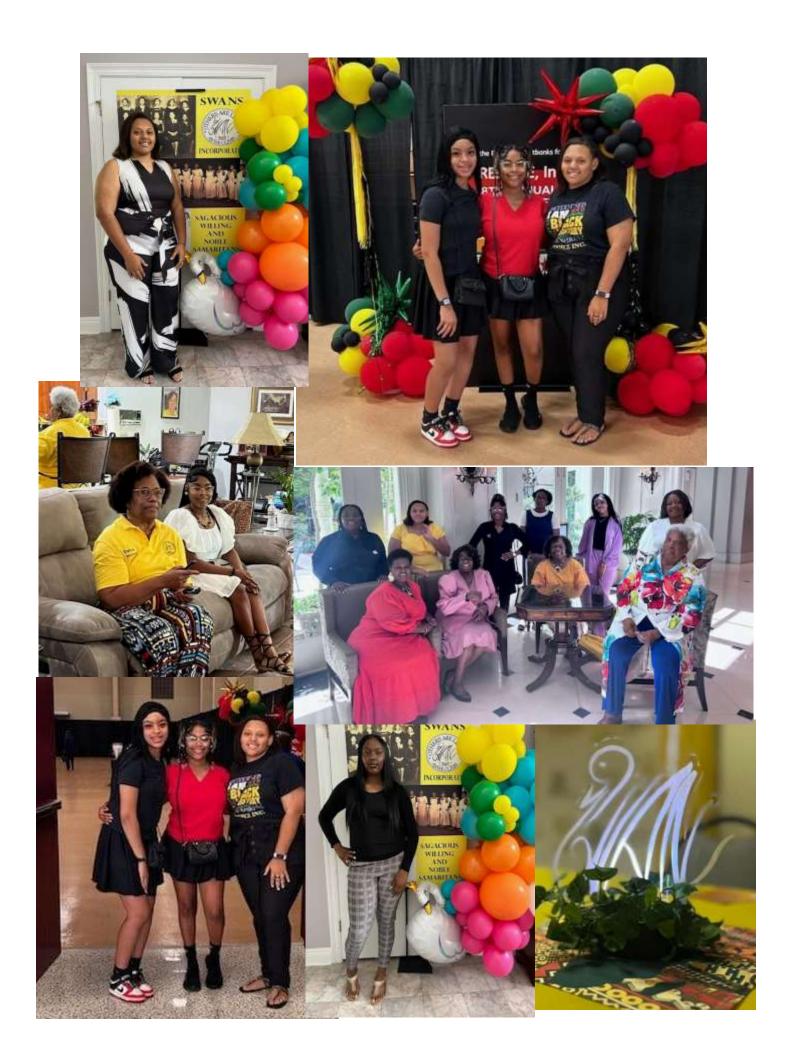






2024 Debutante Activities





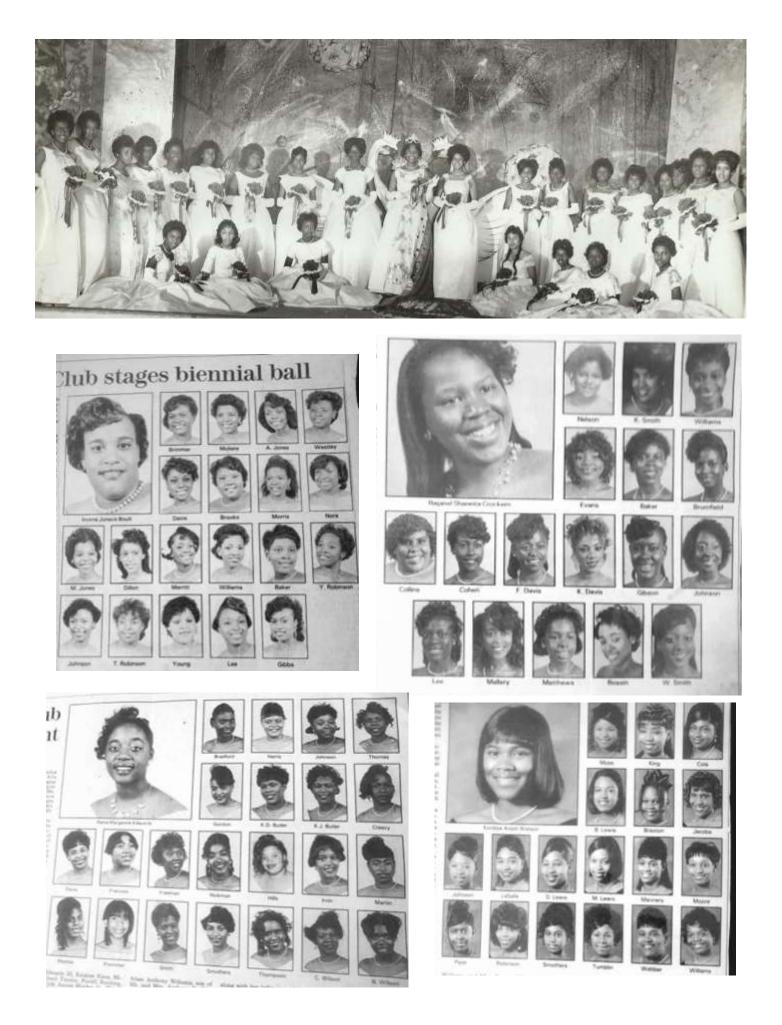
Past Queens

Althea Wright 1957 Verda Leer Crockem 1959 Beverly Lola Bujol 1961 Debra Gail Houston 1963 Jacqueline Ferchaud 1965 Bernadette Bujol 1967 Joella Sinceno 1969 Vanessa Bridgeport 1971 Linda Bernard 1973 **Constance Leah James 1975** Yolanda Bernard 1977 Dwanell Johnson 1979 Marilyn Lynette Carroll 1981 Wendi Tyshawn Nelson 1983 Angela Rene Williams 1985 Irvona Junece Boult 1987

Raijanel Shenetra Crockem 1989 Rekita Brown 1991 Raina Margarete Edwards 1993 Bianca Smith 1995 Kordice Angelic Watson 1997 Alisha Latoya Blue 1999 Amber Ovide 2002 Candace Lewis 2008 Alex Julia Soniat 2012 Alyssa Porter 2014 Hailee Juliane Marie Blount 2016 Najah Patrice Nicholas 2018 Tykeyah Chaliz Dejoie, 2022







ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An abundance of thanks is extended to the following for making the 2024 Debutante Experience and 72nd Anniversary Celebration a blessing to SWANS, Inc. and the SWANS, Inc. Family.

> All participants and attendees at our fundraiser. Councilwoman Dee Dunn, District 1, City of Kenner Carolyn Smith, Little Zion Baptist Church New Birth Cathedral of Glory Ministries Lori Foret and Kwanza Jones, Sheraton-Metairie Paul Butler, Sr., True Value Clark Knighten and 4x4 Connection Orchestra DJ Polo, Young Pinstripe Jazz Band Kevin Gourrier, Photographer Richmond Edwards, III, Capture Videography Victor Lista, Corporate Lighting Victor Andrews, The Advocate

Workshop Presenters/Mentors/Services: Dr. Alice Cryer-Sumler, Writing Workshop Dr. Darlonda Harris, MD, '02 Health and Wellness Swan Shirley Williams, Dining Etiquette Swan Shana Porter, Financial Planning and College Preparation

Debutante Committee Co-chairs Swans Raina, Keisha, Shanna, Shelita, Shirley Choreography, Decorations, Swan Raina Handsome Clinic, Cob Rev. Richmond Edwards, Jr.,

Swan Debra H. Edwards, Cotillion Narrator

Essay Judges Bethany Charles, Nadia Magee & Shona M. Williams

> Scrapbook Judges Debutante Committee

Choreography Swan Raina M. Edwards-Elder, Esq

Souvenir Book Swan Raina M. Edwards-Elder, Esq

Ball Marshals

Cob Robert Crockem, Sr. Cob Kevin Anthony Elder Cob Mark Vincent Joseph Cob Rev. Richmond Edwards, Jr. Cob Robert Hill, Sr. Cob Huiet Joseph, Jr.

Paul Terry Butler, Jr.