

D. Paul Sommerville

January 16, 2017

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity's Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Unity Awards Breakfast

I am honored to be here and especially want to thank Dr. Ed. Johnson and Mr. Andray Holmes for the invitation. To our guest speaker, Mr. Don Weston, we are glad that you have joined us today in Beaufort County - welcome. I would be remiss not to say a special hello to your chapter member Mr. Morris Campbell, who retired not too long ago from 30 years of service to Beaufort County as a public servant.

Congratulations to all of you and especially the 2017 honorees on continuing the legacy of Dr. King through this event and through your ongoing work to strengthen our community through principles of scholarship, fellowship, good character, and the uplifting of humanity.

We are gathered this morning to share a meal, enjoy some fellowship, and reflect on the accomplishments of one man in particular whose words and actions have inspired so many throughout the world for more than 50 years. But this day is not just about him, but it is about all of us. It is about a call for each of us to do what we can to make our community a better place for everyone.

Beaufort County is proud of the many ways in which our community honors Dr. King and his legacy. We have this breakfast and so many other programs and celebrations occurring across the County this weekend and Monday.

We also have Dr. Martin Luther King Drive on Saint Helena Island, taking us to the Penn Center campus, where my Christensen family ancestors, as staunch abolitionists, joined in the Port Royal Experiment after the Civil War that led to Penn School, where Dr. King visited on several occasions, bringing a message of hope and equality right to our community's door.

I have always believed that everyone deserves an equal opportunity to be heard, to succeed and to fail. Our community may not yet have fully achieved Dr. King's vision of equality and justice, but we are just the kind of place that has what it takes to make greater progress than most.

Beaufort County has a diversity of people, a deep history, solid values, and the faith for the future that it takes to address these issues and come out stronger.

As Dr. King said, "We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today."

Consequently, we all need to continue giving back in some way to make our community better than we found it. For me, decades of mission work, serving as a translator for local migrant workers, and representing our community in an elected office allow me unique ways to contribute and serve. For you, it is through your brotherhood and other avenues.

As our Lord said, “He would be the leader of men must first be the servant of all.”

I applaud you and thank you for being servants and leaders of our community. Keep up the good work.

I wish you an enjoyable program and best wishes this year, as together, we continue to improve the quality of life for all who call Beaufort County home.