

# SOROR RIVIAN SMITH

Bellevue Alumnae's Nominee for Delta Dear of the Year



Soror Rivian Smith, charter member and current president of Bellevue Alumnae Chapter, year 2018-20.

Sunday, June 14, 2020

After 43 years of service, Soror Rivian Smith, is still upholding one of the Delta Sigma Theta's Five-Point Thrusts by being active in her community, attending the *Bridge to the Future* march in honor of the Black Lives Matter movement, across the I-90 bridge on Mercer Island, WA. The march was hosted by the wives of Seahawk players, Kenneth Wright and Kam Chancellor in an effort to prompt social justice and equality.



Soror Rivian Smith attending Black Lives Matter protest across I-90 bridge with granddaughter Laila, 16.



Charter members of Bellevue Alumnae's chapter of Delta Sigma Theta, Bellevue, WA circa.1989

## *An Open Letter on Behalf of Rivian Smith for Delta Dear of the Year...*

BY ALICE ALLEN

Thirty-five years ago, Rivian Smith and I were on line together in what was then Alpha Omicron now known as Seattle Alumnae Chapter. Little did either of us know that we would grow old together in a different chapter that we ourselves along with others had chartered. Some of the strength of character and initiative that distinguishes her for this award flashed in our first year as Deltas. There was this point of character that showed up in an incident involving the subtle ostracizing of one of our line sisters because of her ethnicity. It had been a very under cover plot but when Rivian and I discovered it we refused to cooperate. Without even sharing it with each other we just showed up when the point was to boycott. It was one of those "we didn't get the memo," deals. From those days I remember her as diminutive, and an athletic type she played tennis; a world traveler, politically astute and active.

When Bellevue Alumnae chartered in 1989, she got her chance to pull out there and be in the lead as vice -president with a true Delta veteran Doris Leverette, who has help set up a dozen or so chapters in her lifetime. We were a little chapter of about 25 women, but we had warmth and energy and a spirit that knew no boundary around what we could do. We were chartered in January of one year and we accepted responsibility for hosting the Founders Day of the following year. We all pulled together and hosted one of the most memorable Founders Day celebrations of this region. That Founders Day was not only memorable because of its venue, Bellevue Athletic Club but because of the creativity it employed to tell the Founders Story. With that inaugural presentation Bellevue Deltas became known for their public service, their warmth and their step shows. Rivian was in the lead tapping, performing bopping at age 50 some.



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# NOMINEE: SOROR RIVIAN SMITH

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## Going into 30 Years of Service...

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Every organization has its ebbs and flows and in thirty years or more of existence Bellevue has been weathered by storms and has been chiseled by its unique position geographically and economically. A large percentage of our members are women who because of their education and areas of expertise was wooed here to work in our aeronautical, space and other technological industries. They join us as already made Deltas or they find us to join and become Deltas for cultural and spiritual support in a community that fluctuates between eight to ten percent African American. We have always tended to be a small chapter and depending on who has been transferred for promotion or who is suffering family hardship, our active core group's size is affected.

For those of us who have a thirty-year history with our chapter there exists a special love and allegiance. The chapter is our baby and we feel a powerful need to keep it going even as we age and suffer the other ravages of life. With sorors aging, Bellevue for the past three years has operated as a skeleton crew. After our hosting Founders Day in 2018 the officers were wiped. They had been a small cadre who carried the load for others who had been unable to work because of life changing circumstances. Rivian Smith and Thelma Payne had co-chaired the last Founders Day we hosted in 2018. They presented magnificently. That event had been in March. And in June, the end of the chapter year was upon us in the squeak of a moment, our then president was done with her task of two years. And unbeknown to us she was also very sick. Summer was here. Our Spring had gone by and we had not elected a new slate of



**Bellevue Alumnae attending a play for a Sisterhood event Winter 2018.**



**Bellevue Alumnae attending a retreat in Fall 2019.**



**Bellevue Alumnae at the Bellevue MLK Health Fair Winter 2020.**



officers. Up steps Rivian Smith the diminutive one who had served as vice president during our very first year and who held that office in 2018. She figured out all the organizational mandates of the chapter. She brought us all together and like the athlete she is she presented us with a game chart, the goals and the dire consequences of nonperformance. She chaired conversation around the desire for chapter sustainability. She led the probe for a vision of what sustainability would look like. We developed a plan of outreach to missing sorors. We pledged to fulfill modified programmatic thrusts while also working to allow time to know, support and value one another more. The latter became the time we called sisterhood events. She had become our leader, and no one objected. We were all so grateful. She put in so much time, effort, and study that her hard work inspired us to try and do no less. She knew us well enough that she called upon our different strengths to keep us involved. We decided upon a retreat to look at social streams within organizations. We called in one of our regional leaders who had once long ago been our chapter president. At our retreat we spent a day studying our feelings and developing trust. We elected a slate of officers. We formally made Rivian our president. That retreat wasn't just about feelings, but it was about how can we take what we know and feel about each other and use that bond to implement the aims of Delta. We came back from the brink of weariness where we had found ourselves after Founders Day 2018 and began working into our 30th year. We banded together and made the strategic decision to do MIT.



Bellevue Alumnae Needs to Grow...

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We have to replenish ourselves. We were sophisticated enough to know MIT for the for the last two decades has become increasingly work loaded and highly prescribed. In other words a lot of work. We also knew we needed to increase our chapter membership . The legal environment Delta is emerging from has mandated very strict adherence to time frames. Our president was tasked with trying to inform and fit as many of our sorors as could be possible into dates for training so we would have new Deltas by the end the official 2019-2020 sorority year. These training dates all fell within two of the biggest holidays of the year, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Unfortunately most of us had already purchased holiday vacations. Before this Rivian had taken her own money to go to Regional in order to get information that would be helpful .

It is commonplace to receive an email postmarked 3am. She disseminates information. She distributes and organizes tasks, She oversees the management of the Minerva Circle insuring that the chapter operates within national’s guidelines. She is careful to monitor that all our requirements to national are met. She attends webinars and keeps alert to deadlines, changes and reminders of upcoming events. She is eighty plus, a ball of energy even though through the course of the years she has endured several orthopedic surgeries and even some work on her heart. She embodies the characteristics of our Delta jewels not just in working with her sisters, fellow Deltas and not just in her golden years but she has always managed to contribute to the hope and fight for a better world by volunteering in her community and church.

Tennis is Rivian’s sport. In the days before her orthopedic surgeries she would go out of her way to promote and teach tennis to urban youngsters to enlarge their world. And in all of the forty-three years I have known her she has been active in church, singing in the choir and serving as a deacon. Rivian even still volunteers with seniors at the community center. Her life has shone as a cache of all the nine jewels of Delta. She does all this, while being President of Bellevue Alumnae and while she has been the life guard on duty to rescue our chapter from extinction. She has blessed her chapter with two years of extraordinary service. With a group of about 16 financial members we have been able to support Delta’s programmatic thrusts.



Social Action Thrust: Seattle’s Mayor’s Great Day of Hunger Food Drive 2020.



Our fierce leader, Rivian Smith...

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One of Bellevue Alumnae’s signature pieces is the Martin Luther King Health Fair which has run for 16 years and has been held annually on the Monday of the weekend of his birthday celebration. Another signature piece is our International Awareness and Involvement piece which has gone on for 11 years. She has been a force which has pushed us beyond where we thought we could go. We began MIT, a Delta’s most sacred trust, in Delta’s sensitive 2020 legal environment. On this landscape Bellevue has been committed and focused. On short notice Bellevue was able to attract 22 women to our 2020 Bellevue Rush on a rainy dark Pacific Northwest winter evening. Presently COVID-19 has our selection of five candidates on hold to begin Pyramid training; they have been approved by National and Bellevue is operating on the schedule National modified due to COVID-19. Rivian Smith at 80 continues her march for justice even as the George Floyd protests engulf our world. See the newspaper clipping of Rivian protesting with The Seahawk Wives Group. Rivian Smith actively knows that membership in Delta is a lifetime commitment. We of Bellevue Alumnae are so proud to nominate our fierce leader, Rivian Smith, President of Bellevue Alumnae for the award of *Delta Dear of the Year*.

Sincerely,

Bellevue Alumnae Chapter of DST

