

The following was spoken from the podium at the 2025 National Convention by National Conductress Valerie Helms-Mejia.

2025 Psi Ote of the Year Award

Good afternoon sisters! I know after that delicious lunch we are all probably ready to just settle in a little bit...but I have an exciting announcement that is going to get us energized for an amazing afternoon!!

I am Valerie Helms – Mejia. I have had the pleasure of serving as your National Conductress for a second year. The best part of this is that I get to announce another Psi Ote of the Year...my favorite part of the office!

Before we get to the exciting announcement, I would like to introduce you to the 2025 Psi Ote of the Year committee who put in a lot of time and effort to choose this year's POOTY winner. Will you please stand as I call your name:

- Pam Gunterman, Northern Officer
- Beth Vipond, Central Officer
- Carol Good, Southern Officer
- Jane Patton, National Editor
- Brenda Bonner, Past National President

I served as a facilitator for the group. Since I am aware of all the candidates, I only facilitate the nominations and the discussion. I do not vote for the winner. Thank you, sisters, for all your hard work and dedication you have given to choosing our 2025 POOTY winner!

I just want to give you a brief overview of how this selection process works so you can have a full understanding of how our POOTY winner is selected. First, our POOTY nomination letter goes out to all chapters. Nominations are then submitted. I want to thank the twenty-five chapters who nominated a sister for this year's award! After receiving the nominations, I go through each letter and make sure it meets the criteria for the award. Then then go through each letter and black out any tell-tale information that would identify the nominee to the committee. The committee works like the blind auditions on THE VOICE! I then gather all the information and make a packet of the nominees and send it to each committee member. They then pour over each nominee and prepare for our ZOOM meeting. We then have a meeting where the nomination letters are debated and discussed until the committee came to a decision on the winner. I did not tell the committee who they chose, so they are going to be as surprised as you are when I announce our winner.

I would now like to read the beautiful nomination letter sent in for our 2025 POOTY winner. Please note that I am reading you the original letter not the blacked-out version the committee was given.

Why Should this sister be considered for National Psi Iota of the Year:

It is our hope that every chapter would have a member like the sister that we have nominated for the Psi Ote of the Year, but we know she is one in a million. It is difficult to put into words how much our nominee touches the lives of our members, the patrons of our projects, and members of our community. She is a member who has truly dedicated herself to the work of Psi Iota Xi.

Over the past year, her dedication and initiative have led to significant advancements for our chapter. She has a remarkable ability to turn our ideas into reality, exemplified by her leadership in our new philanthropic project, Bingo. Organizing a Bingo event is no small task, yet she rose to the challenge with impressive results. In the last twelve months, she successfully qualified our chapter with the state gaming commission and chaired three Bingo events, collectively raising nearly \$25,000. Her meticulous planning and the time she invested in attending other organization's events to gather ideas and adapt them were invaluable to our success.

Beyond Bingo, she teamed up with another member to revitalize a struggling initiative, our Community Calendar project. She not only reorganized the project but also reached out to various community members to secure new advertisements, which doubled our profits compared to the previous year. Her efforts have been instrumental in driving our chapter forward, showcasing her exceptional commitment and resourcefulness.

Our nominee has significantly contributed to our chapter's successes in other ways as well, by securing \$4,500 in grants through Walmart Spark Good Giving for our literacy projects: Little Free Libraries and I Like Me Books. She is tirelessly dedicated and always thinking of new ways to support Psi Iota Xi and the community. Our chapter often wonders if she ever sleeps, as we might receive random texts at all hours of the night – she never stops thinking about what she can do for Psi Iota Xi and the community. She has brought in a new member, shopped for children at Christmas, donated items to the elderly in nursing homes, and supported several other chapters in our district fundraising events. When a member was undergoing multiple rounds of chemotherapy, this nominee did not hesitate to volunteer out of her genuine compassion, not out of obligation, to assume the meeting hostess duties and the Raise Right fundraiser project during this time. Her actions reflect the very best of what it means to be a supportive friend and how to volunteer with your heart. Thanks to her unwavering dedication, our chapter is being exponentially recognized in the community. We are profoundly grateful for her tireless efforts and the positive impact she has made on all of us.

The most pivotal contribution she made to our chapter this year was guiding us in envisioning our future. With her astute insights and strategic foresight, she helped us chart a course for where we aspire to be a decade from now. Her efforts in fostering a vision not only established a long-term goal but also instilled a sense of direction and purpose among the members. Furthermore, she emphasized the importance of sustaining ongoing change. Recognizing that change is a continuous process rather than a one-time event, she provided us with the tools and methodologies to adapt and thrive amid evolving circumstances. Through discussions, and hands-on guidance, she ensured

that we are equipped to handle transitions smoothly, maintaining momentum and resilience. Her contributions have laid a solid foundation for our chapter's future, blending visionary thinking with practical strategies for sustaining growth and adaptability.

The Psi Ote of the Year award is a prestigious honor that recognizes outstanding members who have made significant contributions to their communities and to Psi Iota Xi. Our sister is a prime example of such excellence. Her dedication, impactful actions, and unwavering support make her the ideal candidate for this honor. We are honored to nominate her and express our gratitude for her ongoing contributions and the positive change she brings. It is our sincere hope that she receives the recognition she truly deserves, as her work embodies the essence of Psi Iota Xi and the values we hold dear.

It is my honor and privilege to present to you the 2025 Psi Ote of the Year Andrea Niedenthal from the Zeta Tau Chapter in Milroy, Indiana!