

**EPSILON SIGMA OMICRON (ESO)**

**“Enlighten Your Own Pathway”**

**Alpha Theta Chapter - GFWC Virginia**

<https://www.gfwc.org/education-libraries/>

Epsilon Sigma Omicron (ESO) is an honorary educational society open to all per-capita dues paying GFWC federated clubs. More than 70 years ago, the ESO program became a permanent part of the GFWC Education Community Service Program. Through ESO, clubwomen are given direction in planned reading for self-enrichment and personal growth. Over the years, many GFWC clubwomen have profited from this unique self-improvement program, seen as vital by the members it directly benefits. The purpose of ESO is to provide clubwomen with a structural reading program, which is educational and stimulates a desire for self-improvement.

The following are the goals of the ESO:

- To encourage clubwomen's pursuit of higher education
- To create an additional means to unite women in volunteerism
- To develop a support network for women returning to school
- To improve current and develop new study skills
- To stimulate systematic home reading and study with minimum supervision
- To encourage the establishment of home libraries and
- To encourage the formation of reading/study/discussion groups.

ESO can take the form of a reading group or an individual's personal reading pursuit. The program provides membership, awards/certificates, pins, reading lists, and a framework in which to pursue continued self-improvement through reading. Many clubs combine club programming with ESO related activities, such as reading awareness and book promotion. GFWC Virginia has established a virtual book club to discuss ESO books – please contact [ESO@gfwcvirginia.org](mailto:ESO@gfwcvirginia.org) to be receive information on the virtual book club.

#### **BENEFITS OF ESO MEMBERSHIP**

Unlike other GFWC programs, ESO exists specifically for the benefit of clubwomen. GFWC programs are traditionally community improvement based. Although ESO is beneficial to the community, its main focus is directed at club members. Reading groups have become commonplace in many communities recently because of their unique benefits. Members who participate in reading groups are able to experience intellectual discussions on a variety of books, create new friendships, coalesce with various members of the community, and gain knowledge about life, love, family, politics, cultures, technology, the world around them, and many other topics.

#### **HOW TO BECOME AN ESO MEMBER**

Step 1: Contact your state ESO chairman to receive your state ESO guidelines. Many states have their own requirements regarding becoming an ESO pledge and member.

Step 2: Interested GFWC members must first pass through the ESO pledge stage before they can become ESO members. The completion of an ESO pledge application is needed before a pledge can begin working towards membership status. The pledge application must be sent to the respective or state ESO chairman, who will begin tracking the pledge's progress. A pledge qualifies for membership at her own pace, finishing in a few weeks or working slowly throughout a longer period of time. After proper completion of 16 books, the pledge receives a certificate verifying her ESO membership from her club and/or state.

## MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

ESO members are encouraged to participate in club programs such as:

- Reading
- Participating in reading/study/discussion groups
- Working to achieve higher ESO levels
- Continuing to pursue self-improvement through personal study

Reading is, of course, the main responsibility of an ESO member. Once books are completed, the member is required to complete a brief form, giving the title and brief opinion of the book read. The form is submitted to the club ESO chair to keep track of each member's ESO levels, which are based on the number of books read. Clubs without an ESO chair may submit reports to the state ESO chair. The club report form must be sent to the State ESO chair based on each state's requirements. Report forms will not be returned. State ESO chairmen will issue certificates and awards based on report forms received.

## ESO LEVELS

There are many opportunities for ESO members to work their way up through the ESO levels. Clubwomen move to a new ESO level by completing a set of reading list requirements. The reading list is divided into subject categories. To complete a category, a member must read and report on four (4) books from that category.

There are several sequential levels of ESO Membership:

***Pledge Member:*** Has indicated her interest in joining ESO by sending the application form (below) and \$1.50 to the ESO Chairman. The Chairman will acknowledge involvement in ESO by sending a welcome letter with further information on ESO.

***Member:*** Has completed 4 books from 4 different categories (16 books). Send a brief Book Report (form found on page 15 of ESO handbook from GFWC) on the books read to the chairman. Members will receive a certificate of membership and an ESO pin.

***Star Level:*** Has completed 4 books from 10 different categories. Send a report of one book from each category to the chairman to receive a Star level membership certificate.

***Torch Level:*** Has completed 4 books from 16 different categories for a total of 64 books. Send a brief report of one book from each category to receive a Torch level membership certificate and the ESO Torch pin.

***Century Award:*** Has completed 100 books. A member receiving a Century award can continue to read to receive Second, Third, Fourth, and so on Century Award levels with corresponding membership certificates.

***Diamond Award:*** Has completed 1,000 books. She will be awarded a Diamond Award Certificate and be publicly recognized at the State Convention.

Once a member of ESO, you remain a member as long as you are in GFWC. Progression through ESO membership levels is done at your own pace with no deadline or time limitations.

There is a recommended reading list available from GFWC with 34 different subject categories. However, other books can be substituted in the various categories with approval from the ESO chairman and/or in consultation with other ESO members.

**ESO PLEDGE APPLICATION**

Please copy and complete the following application and send it to your state ESO chairman. This form will be used to track your progress as an ESO member through the ESO Levels.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY, STATE, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

CLUB \_\_\_\_\_ DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby agree to pursue the goals of ESO and to participate in ESO programs.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Make check for \$1.50 payable to **GFWC Virginia**  
Mail application and check to: Ilia Desjardins  
840 Trout Street  
Staunton, VA 24401  
ESO@gfwcvirginia.org

\*\*\*\* Please copy this form before using as to have it for the second year of the administration.  
This form will not be reprinted in the supplement.\*\*\*\*