

THE

# LEAGUE

Life

THE OFFICIAL DIGITAL PUBLICATION OF THE JUNIOR LEAGUE



## ANNUAL CONFERENCE RECAP

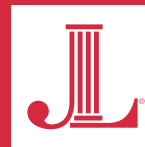
Our 2024 Annual Conference brought Leagues together for a weekend of ceremony, connection, and change. Read all about it on page 12.

## MIND YOUR WORDS

Cultivate a sense of belonging in your Junior League with inclusive language. Tips available on page 38.



Have you seen our newly revamped history video? [Click here](#) to learn more about our Leagues and our history throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century!



The Junior League has a long history of publications dating back to as early as January 1911. The first Junior League publication was the *Junior League Bulletin*, in which our founding League of The City of New York defined the organization “as an organization of the young society women of New York whose objects are, first to promote, among its Members, an interest in all kinds of charitable and social effort. Second to bring the Members in touch with already organized philanthropies so that they may find the sphere of usefulness best fitted to their individual capacity.” As our organization changed, so did our publications, and over the course of the magazine’s 83-year history, we see a variety of titles, from the *Junior League Magazine* to the *Junior League Review*, which is where its run ended in 1994.

We are pleased to revive these efforts to further unite our growing international organization, celebrate our Leagues and their Members, and provide insights and resources to advance Members’ civic leadership skills.

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*Articles in this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Association of Junior Leagues International.  
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ARTICLES BY JL MEMBERS

# Message from the President



*Dear Members,*

It is with great enthusiasm and humility that I introduce myself to you as President of the Association. Since joining the Junior League of New Orleans (JLNO) over 15 years ago, I have been privileged to contribute to the growth and impact of the JLNO through various leadership positions. From my early days as a Development Committee Chair to my time as League President, I have dedicated myself to advancing our Mission and strengthening our community impact.

Beyond JLNO, my time as a Board Member of the Association enriched my global perspective and deepened my commitment to empowering our talented membership worldwide. These roles have allowed me to witness firsthand the incredible influence our Members have in their communities, both locally and across the globe.

As Executive Vice President of New Orleans & Company, I plan to bring my experience with the nonprofit, government, and business sectors in strategy and organizational effectiveness to the role of President of AJLI. My professional background leads me to focus my tenure on driving innovation, fostering collaboration, and enhancing our organization's strategic initiatives. I am committed to continuous improvement for our organization and to the value we bring to you as the Association strives to fulfill its new purpose statement of adding value to our Member Leagues and their Members in the fulfillment of The Junior League Mission.

I look forward to the years ahead and serving alongside you, the 100,000+ women who drive progress in nearly 300 Leagues worldwide. Together, I am confident we will continue to innovate, advocate, and lead with purpose to make a lasting impact in our communities and beyond.

Yours in service and leadership,

Alice Glenn  
AJLI President, 2024-2026

**8-10 NOV**  
**ADVOCACY & LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE**  
A three-day conference for individual Members interested in running for elected public office and for Leagues interested in getting involved in advocacy work. [Register here.](#)  
Chicago, IL

**27-30 MAY 2025**  
**ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
AJLI's annual gathering provides training and connection for all League Members and attends to Association business. Registration will open in December. Find out details and reserve your room [here.](#)  
Orlando, FL

**21-23 FEB 2025**  
**EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TRAINING**  
Formerly known as Winter Leadership, this three-day conference is for those stepping into Board Leadership positions to prepare for the upcoming League year. [Registration is now open!](#)  
San Diego, CA

**ONGOING VIRTUAL TRAINING**  
AJLI is hosting regular online training and meet-up opportunities. Visit the [AJLI Calendar](#) for more information on our virtual events.

## Outgoing President's Message

Dear Members of the Association,

Two years ago, I called the AJLI Board of Directors together for the first time as Association President to map out the future of our beloved organization. Armed with our ambitions, we made plans for a stronger, more unified Association with the needs of our Leagues at the top of our to-do list. Our sights were set high, but as Members of The Junior League, we knew there is no limit to what a group of women can accomplish when working toward a unified goal.

Our plan was built upon these seven goals:

1. Helping our Leagues succeed
2. Providing services and connection opportunities
3. Engaging in community impact and advocacy
4. Increasing The Junior League's image and relevancy
5. Growing and sustaining membership
6. Prioritizing financial prudence and growth
7. Securing our future

From this work plan came many new initiatives, including the Secure Our Future Task Force, which worked tirelessly to collect data and make suggestions for the longevity of our organization. These goals also brought a renewed focus on harnessing the power of our collective voice and becoming more effective advocates for our Members and Mission. Yet perhaps our greatest challenge was finding a new CEO, a search that ended successfully with the hiring of Melanie Schild, whose personality, experience, and ideas align perfectly with our vision for the Association.

The state of our Association is strong, and I am filled with optimism for what lies ahead. Serving as your President has been one of the greatest honors of my career, and my visits to Leagues have been profoundly impactful. As I pass the presidency to Alice and the profoundly remarkably Board, I am excited to see the Association's continued growth and success, and I know it is in the best of hands.

With gratitude,

Dona Ponepinto  
AJLI Immediate Past President, 2022-2024



*Thank you, Dona!*



# A BOND From Across the POND

SARAH FERGUSON CONNECTS WITH  
RACHEL GOODLAD

BY JACQUELYN BAUMAN, AJLI DIRECTOR OF CONFERENCES & MEETINGS



The Duchess of York (center) with JL of The Woodlands President Rachel Goodlad and her husband.

As many Junior League Members know, being a part of an organization of women dedicated to improving themselves and their communities can lead to incredibly powerful experiences and impactful relationships. The Junior League Stories feature highlights stories from Junior League Members whose experiences in their Leagues have changed their lives. If you would like to share a story of your own, [let us know here](#).

On February 10, 2024, the Junior League of The Woodlands welcomed a very special guest speaker to their IMPACT event – a member of the British Royal Family, Duchess of York, Sarah Ferguson. This event (the title of which stands for Increase and Motivate Positive Awareness in Children and Teachers) is an “annual free conference designed to celebrate, motivate, and inspire educators in North Harris and Montgomery County.”

“Because of the Mission of the Junior League, the Duchess was really excited to sign onto this event,” Rachel Goodlad, President of the JL of The Woodlands shared. “She has a lot of nonprofit work that focuses on children and education, so this was a perfect fit.”

This was not Sarah Ferguson’s first time working with one of our Junior Leagues. In 2022, she spoke at the Junior League of Denver’s tenth annual “The Journey” fundraiser, where she focused on the resiliency and strength of women in philanthropy.

For the IMPACT event this past year, she spoke about the importance of self-care and of nurturing the positive values we want to see in the world in our children. She noted the importance of balancing empathy with giving ourselves the care we need to move forward. After her presentation, the Duchess of York signed copies of her books, and dedicated time to the teachers and administrators in attendance, even canceling meetings in order to stay as long as possible.

Overall, it was a spectacular event for the Junior League of The Woodlands, as it received unprecedented media coverage and led to the highest-attended iteration of the conference in its over 15-year history, giving the JL of The Woodlands increased visibility in their community.

Although it all ended well, hosting the Duchess presented the JL of The Woodlands with some unique challenges. Despite sourcing her through a Member with a personal connection to Ferguson’s agent, there were understandably still plenty of negotiations and approvals to go through, in addition to the fee for her attendance.

The cost to hire Ferguson as a presenter was not outrageous for a speaker of her caliber; however, the budget for this event would not completely cover her appearance. This was no immovable obstacle, and as motivated women in this organization tend to do, the committee got creative.

The night before the event, JL of The Woodlands hosted a VIP dinner – the tickets for which ranged from \$1,500 to \$2,500 per person. “We had never done anything like this before,” Goodlad divulged.

“Because of the Mission of the Junior League, the Duchess was really excited to sign onto this event. She has a lot of nonprofit work that focuses on children and education, so this was a perfect fit.”

“This was an excellent exercise for us in terms of fund development. We host several fundraising events, but we had never done something that targeted this level of donor.” Despite the novelty, the VIP dinner more than paid off for the League. The tickets for the event sold out quickly, mostly just through word of mouth.

“After seeing the success of this event, it occurred to us that maybe the reason that we haven’t been receiving that level of donation is that we haven’t asked,” Goodlad expressed. “It opened up the box for us in terms of what is possible. We had a whole audience that we hadn’t tapped into that were interested in unique experiences – not just a \$100 VIP event at our holiday market.”

The idea proved effective in ways that extend beyond covering the expenses for the IMPACT event. At the VIP dinner, one attendee was so moved by the work of the League that she pledged \$100,000 over the next four years.

At the dinner, Ferguson had the opportunity to meet with each guest and was charming and gregarious – remembering details of each person she met and connecting with each and every one of them.

One connection that stood out was the one she forged with Goodlad. During her time with Ferguson leading up to the dinner, Goodlad expressed her gratitude to the Duchess about how she spoke openly concerning her struggles with cancer. (Ferguson has been diagnosed with two forms of cancer in the past, one of which was shortly before her visit to The Woodlands.) Goodlad’s husband, Nathan, has stage four neuroendocrine cancer, which is extremely rare, and Goodlad admired the grace and candidness with which Ferguson shared her cancer experience with the public.

“She said to me, ‘I knew there was a reason I was supposed to come here,’” Goodlad shared. Ferguson revealed that just two days before her arrival, she had met a doctor who is currently working with the FDA to fast-track a treatment specifically for late-stage neuroendocrine cancer and that she would connect Goodlad and her husband with the doctor.

*NOTE: Rachel Goodlad and her husband have since met with the doctor formulating this new treatment. Rachel has remained in contact with the Duchess of York, who remains impressed by the work of Junior Leagues.*



Sarah Ferguson greeting guests at the JL of The Woodlands’ VIP dinner.

“After seeing the success of this event, it occurred to us that maybe the reason that we haven’t been receiving that level of donation is that we haven’t asked.”



The Duchess of York at the I.M.P.A.C.T. event. All images courtesy of Rachel Goodlad.

# LEAGUE Spotlights

Read about the accomplishments of Junior Leagues from across the Association!

## MEXICO CITY

Information provided by Cecilia Mendez, Communications VP

Junior League Mexico City was founded in 1930, by a group of 14 women who wished to give back to the country that had received them as expats. To date, over 2,600 women have volunteered with JLMC, benefiting over 95,000 people directly and over 400,000 indirectly, with over 5,600,000 volunteer hours through the many programs that have been implemented over the years.

For almost 100 years, we have been working towards creating better quality of life and opportunities in the community and have been pioneers in the Mexican nonprofit sector, creating projects and programs that have been integrated to the operations of companies as their social impact areas or as government institutions. Through this, the League has cultivated new and innovative fundraising activities never seen before in Mexico and has been the first organization to create a program in which the civil, government, and private sectors have united for a common goal.

The Junior League of Mexico City is incredibly proud of the work we've done to improve our community. During the COVID Pandemic, JLMC did not stop seeking ways to help people better their quality of life.

With an alliance with *Pro-Mexico Indígena*, an organization seeking to enhance the capacities of Mexico's indigenous peoples, we set forth on a campaign to raise over 15 million pesos (800,000USD), to build 500 rainwater collection cisterns (that would benefit indigenous communities in 7 states of Mexico. (Campeche, Chiapas, State of Mexico, Michoacan, Guerrero and Yucatan).

With the help of local communities, over 4,500 cisterns were built, creating a steppingstone for the families to start breaking the cycle of poverty by improving access to water

Another one of our programs that we are honored to be a part of is Mundo Mágico/Magic World Junior League Mexico City. Mundo Mágico (Magic World), offers after school support and continuous studies to children in less privileged areas of the city. In collaboration with local governments, in the denominated Faro del Saber (Knowledge Lighthouse) government spaces, volunteers work with the children for over two hours once a week, provide training to interested teachers, and supply a well-balanced meal to the children. Mundo Mágico tackles many important aspects of childhood development and offers a safe space to children so their parents can have peace of mind while they continue their working hours.

The program provides a space where they are guided and taught new subjects and helps them tap into their creativity, seeking not only to complement their primary education, but also to boost their self-esteem, and learn more about themselves and what the world has to offer.

With Mundo Mágico we can see a great change in the children. Their self-esteem has increased, they have gained conflict resolution tools that are now applied in their day-to-day life and the levels of violence in their families has decreased. Students in need of glasses received a pair, all the children attending eat at least one balanced meal once a week, and two families received food baskets to aid their precarious economic situation. For the volunteers, Mundo Mágico has given the women of Junior League Mexico City, a more proactive and hands on experience in the building of better quality of life of those in need. They have had the opportunity to acquire new skills as educational guides, program development and implementation, and above all personal growth and satisfaction that permeates others. The program touches so many layers of the children's lives, as well as that of our volunteers.

In addition to our successful work in our communities, JLMC is proud to be one of the international branches of AJLI.

Every day, we see a greater migration of people between countries. Having Junior League representation outside of the USA allows women to have a go-to place they identify with, allowing them an easier transition and adaptation to their new environment.

The work the League has done over the years and its replicability permits other women to implement these ideals, processes, and programs that benefit the communities they live in and receive training as volunteers to have a greater and more successful impact.

JLMC is proud to be part of AJLI, and to share experiences and know-how that will strengthen the work of Leagues around the world.

## READING, PA

Information submitted by Lynsay Ladnay, Immediate Past President

On August 6, 1923, in the residence of Mary Griggs Barbey, the seeds of community service were sown as ten local young women convened to establish the Junior League of Reading. Over the next two years, the Junior League of Reading grew in number and in reach through impactful community projects including crafting and donating layettes to organizations supporting those in need, establishing a day nursery, partnering with the Red Cross to produce books in Braille, and even launching a settlement housing project – the Junior League House.

At the end of the 1920s, the Junior League House closed its doors and gave way to the organization's next endeavor, the Tyson-Schoener Recreation Center.

This evolution underscored the Junior League of Reading's adaptability and commitment to addressing the evolving needs of the community.

In a joint effort with the city Recreation Department and the Reading School Board, the League inaugurated the Tyson-Schoener Recreation Center on October 15, 1930, marking the city's first recreation center. The purpose of this center was to provide wholesome leisure time for underprivileged adults. It was a timely response to the pressing needs of the community during an economically challenging period. At a time when many faced unemployment and economic hardship, the Junior League of Reading demonstrated its commitment to enhancing the quality of life for those most affected.

In the 1980s, the Junior League of Reading partnered with the Berks County Chamber of Commerce, the United Way of Berks County, and the United Labor Council of Reading to establish Leadership Berks. The inception of Leadership Berks marked a pivotal moment, aligning seamlessly with a core tenet of the League's philosophy—the provision of quality training for volunteers, while also extending its commitment to excellence in volunteerism to the broader Berks community. By fostering the development of Leadership Berks, the Junior League of Reading demonstrated its foresight and dedication to empowering individuals throughout the region and the investment in the long-term growth and potential of the people it served.

In the 1990s, as the Junior League of Reading shifted its focus to the area of affordable, low-income housing, a powerful collaboration was forged with the YMCA to bring forth the Beacon House. The program aimed to provide homeless families with not just shelter but a pathway to independence through safe and affordable housing. To kickstart this endeavor, the League committed \$25,000 alongside volunteer hours. Within the initial three years, the JLR not only contributed significant funds but also dedicated an impressive 15,000 volunteer hours, whether in administrative roles or direct services, underscoring the League's holistic approach to community service, combining financial backing with hands-on involvement.

During the celebration of JLR's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 1997, the League allocated \$75,000 for the furnishings, landscaping, playgrounds, and other essential needs of Emma's Place – a Child-Parent Center located within the Emma Lazarus Place and affiliated with Berks Women in Crisis (now known as Safe Berks).

Currently, JLR's focus is on youth empowerment. Centered on enhancing the emotional well-being of our youth, the Youth Empowered programming is dedicated to elevating their self-esteem and fostering leadership qualities. The ultimate goal is to cultivate a generation of young leaders who can actively serve as stewards of leadership within their communities.



Images courtesy of Junior League Mexico City



The Young Women's Summit is a two-day workshop, facilitated by members, and tailored for local middle school girls in Berks County. The objectives of Summit include expanding their developmental assets, cultivating their leadership skills, and instilling in them the power to effect positive change in their communities through civic engagement and the implementation of community projects. By the culmination of the two-day Summit, the young women will have not only identified their personal strengths but also defined a specific area of need within the community. Importantly, they will have actively participated in a service learning project aimed at creating a tangible, positive impact in their community. This process propels young women towards becoming the architects of change, creating resources that positively shape and uplift their community. The Young Women's Summit is a testament to the commitment to empower the next generation of female leaders and to shaping a future where the potential of every young individual is unlocked and empowered.

A cherished tradition in our community, each year the Junior League of Reading proudly co-hosts our beloved Touch-a-Truck event, held annually each spring at the Reading Fightin Phils stadium. As we approach our 17<sup>th</sup> year in 2024, this signature community event has become a beacon of family-friendly fun and exploration.

Touch-a-Truck offers families a unique opportunity to climb aboard and explore a diverse array of vehicles, creating an interactive and educational experience for all. This enduring tradition not only brings joy to families but also exemplifies JLR's commitment to creating engaging and inclusive community events that contribute to the vibrancy and unity of our local area.

Last year, we began addressing the issue of menstrual equity. Alarming statistics reveal that nearly one in four students in the United States struggle with the affordability of period products, leading to missed days of school, health challenges, and self-esteem issues. In response to this pressing concern, our donation efforts last year facilitated the equitable distribution of menstrual products to Governor Mifflin School District, Northeast and Southern Middle Schools in Reading, and the Youth Volunteer Corps Backpack initiative through VOICEup Berks. In total, 5,949 pads, 3,001 tampons, plus menstrual cups, period underwear, and wipes were delivered, making a tangible impact on the lives of those facing these challenges.

Furthermore, during the 2023 JLR Young Women's Summit, 44 menstruation stations were assembled and subsequently delivered for direct placement in bathrooms. This initiative aimed not only to provide necessary products but also to contribute to destigmatizing the conversation around menstrual health.

Building on the successes of the previous year, our focus for the current year is to ensure equal access to menstrual hygiene products while incorporating comprehensive education about menstrual health.

Since its inception in 1923, the Junior League of Reading has borne witness to significant changes in women's roles within society and the evolving needs of the community. Despite these transformations, the foundational Mission articulated by the first ten women endures—to promote women's leadership for a meaningful community impact. This commitment remains unwavering within The Junior League of Reading, a century later in 2023.

Reflecting on this remarkable journey, we acknowledge our rich history while simultaneously looking forward to the challenges and opportunities that the next century may hold. While the specific needs of the future remain unknown, what remains certain is the Junior League of Reading's steadfast commitment to rise and adapt to meet those needs. As we continue to evolve, we will persist in our Mission of developing women who, in turn, play a pivotal role in developing and uplifting Berks. The resilience and adaptability embedded in our history propel us confidently into the future, ensuring that the Junior League of Reading will remain a dynamic force for positive change in the community for years to come.



A jewel of our initiatives, the Young Women's Summit stands as a cornerstone program orchestrated by the Junior League of Reading. This transformative two-day workshop, facilitated by the dedicated members, is tailored for local middle school girls in Berks County.



Images courtesy of the Junior League of Reading

If you would like to have your League featured in an upcoming League Spotlights feature, please submit your information [here](#).

# CELEBRATION at ABOUNDS Annual CONFERENCE

BY JACQUELYN BAUMAN, AJLI DIRECTOR OF CONFERENCES & MEETINGS



Cover illustration by Alyn Fraser

Jazz music in the air, the delicious aromas of jambalaya and beignets, laughter and merriment around every corner, bright lights and warm evenings – NOLA set the perfect stage for AJLI's most celebratory, exciting, and invigorating Annual Conference yet.

On May 15, 2024, the New Orleans Marriott on Canal Street – located in the heart of one of the liveliest areas of the Big Easy – welcomed over 650 Junior League Members from around the world, representing 224 Leagues from across the Association, and making this Annual Conference AJLI's highest-attended event in over a decade.

This year's conference theme was "Unmasking Endless Potential," a concept that was ever-present in each function of the weekend, whether through the commemoration of our Members' and Leagues' achievements over the past year, or the dissemination of information and materials to help them reach even greater heights in the days to come.

Kicking off the event on Thursday evening, AJLI hosted a rousing welcome party involving traditional New Orleans-style performers, stilt walkers, babydolls, mirror men, and of course, a brass and drum-heavy second line band.

"You can't come to New Orleans and not include a little bit of flair," explained AJLI CEO Melanie Schild. "We wanted to start this Annual Conference off with a bang – something to get people excited about the event ahead. This past year has been a lot of work for the Association and our Leagues. The Annual Conference is time to celebrate the good that our Junior Leagues are doing, to honor the women who are making great community impact and to talk out loud about the hope and excitement we have as an organization for the future."

At the kickoff dinner, after another second line led attendees into a banquet room adorned with Mardi Gras-style glitz and glamor, AJLI Past President Dona Ponpinto welcomed those in attendance with some opening remarks before bringing AJLI Board Members Merilou Gonzales and Dr. Zonzie McLaurin to the stage to recognize our inaugural 40 Under 40 winners. (To find out who was honored with these distinctions, turn to page 22.)

With spirits high and stomachs full, the night concluded with recognition of our AJLI Scholarship winners and our donors before attendees were sent off to enjoy the streets of New Orleans.

Bright and early the following morning, voting delegates lined up for one of our attendees' favorite moments of the conference – our League processional.



Images courtesy of Nic Kennedy

One by one, representatives from the Leagues in attendance marched into the room, carrying flags with their name and establishment date.

"I loved watching the room fill up with these flags," expressed one of our attendees in their post-event survey. "Hearing the names of Leagues from over a century ago at our founding, all the way to those founded this past year was really impactful."

As part of the procession, AJLI welcomed eight new Leagues to the lineup for the first time:

- Brownsville, TX
- Lake Wales, FL
- Columbia, MO
- Maury County, TN
- Nairobi, Kenya
- Cheyenne, WY
- Covington County, MS
- Greater Mankato, MN
- Puerto Rico
- La Côte d'Azur, France

After the business meeting was called to order, AJLI Governance Committee Chair, LaShonda Kennedy led the delegation in an invocation and then welcomed into office our newly elected AJLI Board & Governance Committee Members:

President, Alice Glenn (JL of New Orleans); Vice President, Danielle Wilberg (JL of Champaign-Urbana); At-Large Director, Dr. Paulette Evans (JL of Raleigh); At-Large Director, Anita Dueñas (JL of Fort Myers); At-Large Director, Dr. Sandra Thompson (JL of Orange County, CA); At-Large Director, Jennifer Porter (JL of Tulsa); Governance Committee Vice Chair, Cece Gassner (JL of Boise); Governance Committee Chair, Dr. Jessica Sharp (JL of Houston); Governance Committee Member, Katie Duffin (JL of St. Louis); Governance Committee Member Leslie Fisher (JL of Oakland East Bay); and Alex Zucco (JL of Sacramento). More information on our newly elected Board Members can be found on page 24.

AJLI Treasurer Gena Lovett was then brought to the podium to share a financial report update with Members in attendance.

Lovett shared AJLI's FY2023 audit report (conducted by external auditor Marcum LLP) revealed that, due to an increase in revenue, as well as a decrease in expenses over 2023, AJLI ended the fiscal year with a \$1.5 million surplus which is being invested back into Leagues through a variety of AJLI offerings. She explained that due to the cost savings of 2023 and an expected surplus in 2024, AJLI dues will not increase for fiscal years 2025 or 2026.

Following the opening business session, attendees filtered into our "Come Bloom with the Junior League" luncheon where AJLI CEO Melanie Schild and other staff announced upcoming partnerships and plans to increase relevance on the road ahead.

"I loved hearing about the direction AJLI is going in to make Junior League relevant in 2024," one attendee shared in her post-event survey remarks. "It felt really special, everything has a wonderful level of intention and great optics. It helps you see you are part of something bigger, it's so polished & FUN!"

After lunch, Members proceeded into either the Governance Dialogue or the workshops for non-voting delegates. This year's workshops were led by AJLI's new Volunteer Learning Specialists, Kendria Taylor, Dr. Karen Thompson-Jackson, Melanie Esland, and Sara Sternberger. They covered topics relevant to many Junior League Members, including conflict resolution, best practices for internal communications, building relationships for community impact, and recruitment communication techniques.



Images courtesy of Nic Kennedy

During the remainder of the weekend, from our Annual Business Meeting to our Affinity Group meetups to our final mainstage sessions, every moment was filled with connections – some newly formed and some already established, but deepened further – education, and celebration. The response from attendees following this event reflected the positive atmosphere of this conference.

“I don’t think I could nail down my favorite thing about the conference. It was so inspiring and wonderful to network with so many ladies from across the world,” one survey respondent expressed. “I would say that I left with an understanding of my own strengths and weaknesses, where I have opportunity to learn and grow, and some practices we need to implement in our League to continue to grow, retain Members, and make an impact in the community.”

Others echoed her sentiment.

“I loved socializing with and learning from other Leagues and experiencing the excitement of the large group meetings surrounding meals times,” said another survey taker.

“Seeing so many dedicated women who care about volunteerism, leadership, and community was very invigorating and helped me gain excitement for the work we do.”

One of the event’s final highlights was the Dinner with Mary Awards Banquet where Leagues and Members across the Association, who have gone above and beyond, were recognized for their efforts. Read all about the award winners on page 16.

At the conclusion of our awards dinner, newly appointed AJLI President Alice Glenn took the stage with AJLI CEO Melanie Schild to announce the location for our 103<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference. Attendees were beaming from ear to ear when Cinderella and Tiana entered the room, surprising Glenn’s youngest daughter, and announcing to Members that the 2025 Conference would be taking place at Disney World!

We are so excited to “Share the Magic of The Junior League” with you in Orlando, May 27-30, 2025. Register and book your hotel room today at [www.myajli.org/trainings-meetings/annual-conference-2025](http://www.myajli.org/trainings-meetings/annual-conference-2025).



Image courtesy of Nic Kennedy



# Awards SPOTLIGHT

HONORING EXCEPTIONAL WOMEN AND LEAGUES



Image courtesy of Nic Kennedy

The Junior League has thousands of incredible women dedicated to making a difference in their local communities and beyond. The Association's Dinner with Mary Awards Banquet, which occurs every year at our Annual Conference, is one avenue we use to celebrate the impact of our Leagues and Members in their service to those around them.

Congratulations again to our 2024 Annual Conference award winners!

**Mary Harriman Community Leadership Award Winner: Ann Cramer**



Described as a "legend" by influential Atlantans and Members of the Junior League of Atlanta, Ann is renowned for her profound sense of social responsibility and remarkable ability to inspire others to contribute through impactful volunteer service. Her personal mission statement—creating a world where every child is safe, healthy, educated, connected, and has equal opportunity to future employment—reflects her commitment to social progress and mirrors Mary Harriman's hope for The Junior League.

For over 40 years, Ann has been a guiding force in the Junior League of Atlanta, mentoring Members and grounding them in the League's Mission of bold community work. Alongside her close friends, known as the "fearsome foursome," Ann has demonstrated a lifelong dedication to improving outcomes for women and children in Atlanta.

Ann's innovative approach to community engagement extends into the corporate realm. During her career at IBM, she redefined corporate citizenship, ensuring the company's significant contribution to Atlanta's community. Her trailblazing efforts have empowered women to step into leadership roles, challenging traditional norms and shattering glass ceilings.

Ann's spirit of "Still Saying YES" exemplifies her unwavering commitment to service and mentorship. She has not only received numerous awards, she even has one named after her – Atlanta Business Chronicle's Corporate Citizenship Ann Cramer Lifetime Achievement Award, which underscores her enduring impact and dedication to community service. Ann Cramer's legacy will be one of inspiration, leadership, and the belief in the power of individuals to create positive change.

**Rising Star Award Winner: Dr. Kanani Espinoza**



Dr. Kanani Espinoza embodies the Mission of The Junior League through her extensive volunteer work and leadership. She earned both her undergraduate and graduate degrees at the University of Nevada Las Vegas and remains highly involved in her alumni community. When tragedy struck on campus, she was an integral part of coordinating the volunteer first responder team that ensured the safety of students and staff during and following a mass shooting. In the aftermath, Kanani organized fundraisers that raised over \$20,000 to aid victims and support student wellness.

Her dedication to service extends beyond her impressive response to this harrowing incident.

As a Member of the Junior League of Las Vegas (JLV), she manages programs supporting homeless youth, feeding the hungry, and teaching first-generation college students. She also oversees grant distributions to local teachers, totaling over \$49,000 this year. Recently, Dr. Espinoza has been a critical part of implementing her League's newest focus area, human trafficking. Through her dedicated volunteerism and leadership, Dr. Espinoza has become a significant part of the Las Vegas community and a shining example of The Junior League Mission.

**Fund Development Award Winners: The Junior League of Minneapolis, MN (Division 2)**



In celebration of their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Junior League of Minneapolis (JLM) revitalized The Clothesline Thrift Shop. This legacy fundraiser contributed the money raised to key initiatives at two community nonprofit organizations, which started as JLM service projects: The Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery and Free Arts.

From 1950 to 2006, The Clothesline provided over \$3.5 million in community aid, helping people across the city meet essential needs for clothing and household items at affordable prices. JLM of Minneapolis reimagined the historic fundraiser as a three-day pop-up in September 2023 to kick off their 100<sup>th</sup>-year celebration.

The Clothesline Pop-Up raised over \$35,000 in three days, with JLM receiving approximately \$150,000 in in-kind donations to offset expenses, including storage space, moving trucks, and rent at Eden Prairie Mall. This successful event demonstrates JLM of Minneapolis's long-standing commitment to community support and innovation, honoring the significant impact of the past 100 years while setting the stage for future achievements.

**The Junior League of Charleston, SC (Division 3)**



The Junior League of Charleston, SC (JLC), achieved remarkable fund development success during their Centennial Year. Their Centennial celebration event, "A Night to Inspire," attracted over 500 attendees and featured a live auction, silent auction, fund-a-cause, and two golden-ticket raffle pulls. JLC credits its success to a few key factors: thoughtful sponsorship levels of individuals and businesses, raising over \$110,000; collaboration among past presidents, resulting in over \$50,000 raised through the fund-a-cause; committee engagement with businesses, securing \$40,000 of in-kind donations for the silent auction; and strategic marketing efforts by the JLC Communications Council, increasing awareness of the event and the JLC cause.

The gross proceeds from the event topped \$325,000, a record-breaking amount for the Charleston League.

Beyond this event, JL of Charleston introduced the 1923 Society, an initiative that engaged both new and lapsed donors. In total, JLC has raised over \$200,000 (and counting) during their Centennial year. In addition, they have seen increased participation at all donor levels, which will further their Mission of strengthening families in the greater Charleston area.

**The Junior League of Austin (Division 4)**



The Junior League of Austin's annual fundraising initiative, Austin Entertains, is a cornerstone of their Mission-driven efforts. This event showcases women in Austin's vibrant culinary scene while raising vital funds for Food In Tummies (FIT), a program dedicated to eliminating weekend hunger for children in the Austin community. This year, Austin Entertains raised over \$88,000, a 33% increase from the previous year.

Austin Entertains is more than just a culinary event; it's a celebration of women's empowerment and entrepreneurship in the culinary arts. By spotlighting top female chefs, bartenders, spirit purveyors, and industry leaders, the event supports local businesses and provides a platform for aspiring women in the culinary field to thrive.

Funds raised also grant fellowships to culinary artists, helping them achieve their professional goals.

With increased attendance of 450, including 200 VIP attendees, Austin Entertains engaged a diverse audience. The 2024 lineup featured a wide range of cuisines and drinks, catering to vegan, vegetarian, pescatarian, and non-alcoholic preferences. The committee secured an additional 27 beverage sponsors through in-kind donations, including alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, and procured nearly \$79,000 worth of in-kind donations for the entire event.

**Public Policy Award Winner: The Junior Leagues of California State Public Affairs Committee (CalSPAC)**



The Junior Leagues of California State Public Affairs Committee (CalSPAC), composed of 17 Member Leagues, has a long history of influencing public policy, and this year was no exception. On October 10, 2023, Senate Bill 848 was formally signed by California Governor Gavin Newsom. This bill, a co-sponsored policy project by CalSPAC, is better known as "Reproductive Loss Leave" and allows employees to take up to five days of job-protected time off for reproductive-related losses, such as a failed adoption, failed surrogacy, miscarriage, stillbirth, or unsuccessful assisted reproduction.

The bill idea originated in October 2022 from the long-running CalSPAC contest, "There Ought to Be a Law," which encouraged Junior League Members statewide to submit ideas for policy improvement. From there, CalSPAC identified three key roles and primary point persons for executing the sponsorship project, Policy Lead, Legislative Lead, and Impact Area Lead. This effort was conducted entirely with volunteer work and minimal expenses. The success of CalSPAC's work exemplifies the potential and power of an all-women-led advocacy group and coalition of multiple Junior Leagues to bring significant positive impact to women and communities across the state.

**DEIB Award Winner: The Junior League of Washington, D.C.**



Though the Junior League of Washington (JLW) had always emphasized DEIB principles, the League recognized it had not focused on each aspect individually. To address this, JLW collaborated with an outside consultant to assess the organization, leading to the expansion of DEIB to DEIAB and adding "Accessibility" as a core focus. These principles are now deeply integrated into JLW's structure and long-term strategic plan, earning this League the 2024 DEIB Award.

JLW introduced quarterly townhall meetings to foster open dialogue between Members and the Board of Directors. They enhanced food accessibility by diversifying menu options at events to accommodate various dietary needs and allergies. A DEIAB task force was established to continuously assess efforts and promote a culture of improvement. This feedback informs evaluations of community partners and their DEIAB practices.

In addition to targeted DEIAB training for leaders, JLW invests in ongoing training and resources for all Members. During a recent headquarters renovation, JLW expanded doorways, improved wheelchair access, and installed automatic swing door openers. The League's weekly newsletter, League Lines, includes a DEIAB Moments section, offering knowledge on cultural holidays and DEIAB needs.

These initiatives have significantly advanced DEIAB principles within JLW and the community, marking a shift towards proactive, inclusive practices ingrained in their culture and planning.

**Community Impact Award Winners: The Junior League of Douglas County, GA (Division 1)**



The Junior League of Douglas County's initiative, "Clean Clothes Today, for a Successful Tomorrow," exemplifies impactful collaboration with community stakeholders, a significant achievement for the community. Partnering with school ambassadors, counselors, the juvenile justice system, the homeless coalition, and local laundromats, JL of Douglas County organized a free laundry day for residents. This initiative stemmed from recognizing the link between families unable to launder clothes and children's school attendance and academic performance.

JL of Douglas County raised over \$5,000 to support this effort, providing a free laundry day for 100 community families. This initiative facilitated the washing of nearly 750 loads of clothes over three months, addressing a crucial need in their community.

**The Junior League of Harlingen, TX (Division 2)**



The Junior League of Harlingen, TX launched the KidFit Festival and Fun Run to combat high obesity rates in Hidalgo County, part of the Rio Grande Valley. Hidalgo County's obesity rate of 42.9 percent surpasses the Texas state average of 36 percent. In light of this alarming statistic, the Junior League of Harlingen set out to promote healthier lifestyles through collaborative efforts with local stakeholders, including the parks and recreation department, city government, school district, nonprofits, and businesses.

The KidFit festival is the result of these efforts, offering a wide range of activities for children of all ages, fostering community engagement, and encouraging physical activity. To boost participation and foster friendly competition, local public, charter, and private schools competed for the highest number of registered participants. The event also exemplifies Member engagement, with every Member of the Junior League of Harlingen volunteering their time and effort. This annual initiative underscores the League's commitment to improving community's health and well-being in the Rio Grande Valley.

**The Junior League of New Orleans, LA (Division 3)**



The Junior League of New Orleans's (JLNO) Diaper Bank, celebrating its tenth year in operation, evolved from a modest project into a warehouse operation that not only addresses diaper needs but also tackles period poverty and access to adult incontinence products. What distinguishes JLNO is its comprehensive Member-driven approach, as Members actively lead all facets, from product drives and inventory management to sorting and distribution.

The scale of the impact is impressive: JLNO has distributed nearly 10 million essential products to those in need. Compared to the national average of 861,445 diapers annually, JLNO's distribution rate is 16% higher, which exemplifies the significant community impact of their dedicated efforts. This achievement in such a short period of time not only reflects JLNO's commitment to service but highlights its effectiveness in meeting critical needs across New Orleans.

**The Junior League of Nashville, TN (Division 4)**



The Junior League of Nashville (JLN) has enhanced its commitment to community impact and Member engagement by refining its approach to partnerships and focus areas. In response to Member feedback and community needs, JLN expanded its focus beyond traditional volunteerism to include professional skill-based opportunities and strategic partnerships. Through thorough research and collaboration with community stakeholders, such as the Nashville Chamber of Commerce and local nonprofits, JLN identified new impact areas and selected a range of community partners based on financial need, impact metrics, and alignment with JLN's Mission.

This initiative resulted in a significant increase in volunteer opportunities and partnerships, with 62 applications received and over 852 volunteers requested, exceeding the League's Active membership totals. By broadening its reach to serve over 121,500 individuals annually and diversifying volunteer options, including those that focused on professional skills development, JLN aims to make a deeper and more sustainable impact in Nashville. The addition of Strategic Partnerships further strengthens JLN's capacity to support community agencies through long-term collaborations and grant opportunities, aligning closely with The Junior League's Mission of promoting volunteerism and community leadership development.

**Leadership Development Award Winners: The Junior League of Annapolis, MD (Division 2)**



Starting in 2022-2023, the Junior League of Annapolis, Inc. (JLA) enhanced Member training by employing Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) for monthly sessions. This initiative aimed to diversify Members' skills beyond their usual career-aligned volunteer work, fostering a well-rounded skill set for community leadership. The Annapolis Leadership Initiative for Growth and Networking (ALIGN) offered introductory training sessions, led by experts, to spark interest and provide foundational education.

In 2023-2024, as part of JLA's commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB), training sessions focused on making the League and other community organizations more inclusive. These workshops provided ideas on creating a sense of belonging, ranging from organization-wide strategies to individual actions.

The program also extended training opportunities to community partners, other Maryland-based Junior Leagues, and local 501(c)(3) organizations, thereby broadening its impact.

The ALIGN Program, costing approximately \$10,000 per year, was funded through grants. It reached over 300 individuals from 30 nonprofit organizations, primarily benefiting women of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. The program equipped participants with leadership skills in strategic management, fundraising, DEIB, and wellness, and included networking events to foster collaboration among local nonprofits. Through ALIGN, JLA has built an informal network of organizations to collectively address community needs, significantly amplifying their impact.

**The Junior League of Palm Beaches, FL (Division 3)**



In the post-COVID world, the Junior League of Palm Beaches (JLPB) noticed a knowledge gap among newer Members regarding League operations and nonprofit essentials. In response, they created a curriculum, "The President's Leadership Series," with the goal of re-focusing efforts on training women in leadership to best serve their League and the local community. By utilizing resources from AJLI, JLPB strengthened their understanding of topics such as board service, volunteer management, finance, fundraising, and communications.

This initiative strongly aligns with The Junior League's Mission of focusing on advancing women's leadership through training and collaboration. Each session saw consistent attendance numbers and sparked increased interest in leadership roles within the League and other nonprofits.

By filling a critical educational void, it ensures Members are well-prepared to make a meaningful impact.

**The Junior League of Washington, D.C. (Division 4)**



The Junior League of Washington (JLW) is committed to fostering leadership skills among its Members through its dedicated Leadership Institute Committee. This committee collaborates closely with JLW leaders to develop and manage programs aimed at enhancing the leadership capabilities of over 140 current and future JLW Members. Key responsibilities include overseeing the JLW Leadership Institute curriculum, which encompasses the League's Get on Board (GOB) training, Summer and Mid-Year Training Sessions, and the creation of tailored workshops and seminars as needed.

JLW's leadership training covers essential competencies such as collaboration, negotiation, diversity and inclusion, resource management, logistics, relationship building, networking, and strategic thinking.

These skills are pivotal in effective community and civic leadership, aligning closely with JLW's Mission to advance women's leadership through volunteerism, collaboration, and training.

In 2024, JLW launched its inaugural Get on Board 2.0 training program, enhancing the original with an advanced curriculum and increased exposure to nonprofit and corporate executives. This initiative was supported by donations honoring past JLW and POLL President Elizabeth Marshall Keys, whose commitment to women's training continues to inspire Members. The success of both Get on Board programs and other Leadership Institute Committee initiatives underscores JLW's ongoing dedication to Member development and community impact, honoring Elizabeth's enduring legacy.

**Excellence Award Winner: The Junior League of Washington, D.C.**



The Junior League of Washington (JLW) exemplifies a Mission-driven League, achieving steady membership growth in a transient metropolitan area through focused Member engagement and retention efforts. With Provisional classes of over 300 women annually, JLW maintains an impressive 80% conversion rate from New Members/ Provisionals to Actives and an 80% retention rate year over year.

JLW's accomplishments extend beyond membership size, establishing significant partnerships with external organizations and community partners. These collaborations enhance their ability to serve the Washington, DC, metropolitan area, focusing on early and adult literacy, supporting women in transitional housing, and mentoring historically underserved youth.

Innovative strategies in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Belonging, (DEIAB) are deeply integrated into JLW's structure and strategic plan. Its effective marketing and public relations efforts, particularly through social media, enhance visibility and reputation, reflecting the League's diversity and contributing to recruitment and retention. This League exemplifies the Mission of the Association - advancing women's leadership for meaningful community impact through volunteer action, collaboration, and training.

[Click here to learn more about the AJLI Awards Program.](#)



All award images courtesy of Nic Kennedy





The Junior Leagues are filled with incredible women of all ages who demonstrate exceptional achievements in various fields and careers. To highlight some of these women and their outstanding accomplishments, AJLI launched the inaugural “40 Under 40” award, which celebrates a select group of Junior League Members who have had a significant impact on their professions and/or communities. These women, who were announced at our Annual Conference in New Orleans this past May, embody the following criteria:

**EMPOWERMENT**

Through their work and community involvement, these women empower themselves and others and uplift and inspire individuals to reach their full potential.

**LEADERSHIP**

These women demonstrate outstanding leadership in their professions or areas of service and are committed to driving positive change.

**COMMUNITY IMPACT**

These award winners are actively creating a positive impact on their communities through their contributions to local organizations, volunteer work, or initiatives to address community needs.

We once again celebrate these women and commend them on their exceptional work and impact.

- Megan Adams, Junior League of Lexington
- Dr. Lauren Albaum, Junior League of Greater Lakeland
- Olivia Benson, Junior League of Pittsburgh
- Ansley Booker, Junior League of Macon
- Roya Boustany, Junior League of Lafayette
- Ashley Bunch, Junior League of Phoenix
- Heather Carbajal, Junior League of Johnson City
- Kimberly Carr, Junior League of the Lehigh Valley
- Sandra Colley, Junior League of Jackson County
- Ebony Cornish, Junior League of Pensacola
- Lindsay Davis, Junior League of Dallas

- Tamara Wilkerson Dias, Junior League of Charlottesville
- Steph Drewnowski, Junior League of Omaha
- Dr. Stephanie Fiorenza, Junior League of Las Vegas
- Lucy Foerster, Junior League of Miami
- Morgan Gaynor, Junior League of Monmouth County
- Jillian Goodwin, Junior League of Norfolk Virginia Beach
- Samantha Henley, Junior League of Fort Wayne
- Marcella Herrera, Junior League of The Woodlands
- Lyndsay Kerr, Junior League of Austin
- Carrie LaFargue, Junior League of Lake Charles
- Rachel Lancaster, Junior League of Eastern Panhandle
- Ashley Cangelosi Llewellyn, Junior League of New Orleans
- Shatterra Reed Marion, Junior League of Memphis
- Imani Myers, Junior League of Northern Virginia
- Nicole Novroski, Junior League of Toronto
- Katrina Dixon Patterson, Junior League of Prince George’s County
- Kylee Peña, Junior League of Los Angeles
- Renee Penalver, Junior League of Monterey County
- Amy A. Puerto, Junior League of Greater Covington
- Maria Pumarejo, Junior League of The Palm Beaches
- Alexandra Reinhardt, Junior League of Jacksonville
- Abbie Rothermich, Junior League of Kansas City, MO
- Michele Sok, Junior League of Hartford
- Claire Stam, Junior League of Greenville, SC
- Charlyn Stanberry, Junior League of Washington
- Erin Stone, Junior League of High Point
- Angel Tang, Junior League of Madison
- AJ Turner, Junior League of Owensboro
- Kristina Zwettler, Junior League of Denver

To read more about these winners and why they received this designation, go to <https://thejuniorleagueinternational.org/2024-ajli-40-under-40>.

At the 2025 AJLI Annual Conference in Orlando next May, the Association will be honoring our inaugural class of “40 Over 40” award recipients. [Click here to learn more or to nominate.](#)



# Board SPOTLIGHTS



Image courtesy of Nic Kennedy

At the 2024 AJLI Annual Conference in New Orleans this past May, the Association welcomed seven new women to the organization's Board of Directors. Here's a brief introduction to the newest set of incredible women who will be working over the next few years to help shape the future of AJLI.

**DANIELLE WILBERG**  
 Vice President, 2024-2026  
 Sustaining Member, Junior League of Champaign-Urbana, IL



*Tell us a little about your Junior League history.*

In 2003, I joined the Junior League of Champaign-Urbana, where I am currently a sustaining Member. Through my time in The Junior League, I have served in several positions ranging from Festival of Trees Chair to Membership Council Director to President to SPAC Member to the first ever EVP of my League following my time as League President. I

have even served in several governance roles within AJLI in the past, including as Governance Vice Chair and Governance Chair, among others.

*What originally drew you to join the organization?*

Growing up in Champaign, I wanted to broaden my social network beyond those I had known throughout my childhood. My mother and mother-in-law were both part of women-focused organizations, so I was quite familiar with several that were offered in my area, but Junior League was the best fit for me. Being a part of this organization has not only helped me meet new women, but it has significantly impacted my life in so many positive ways.

*Why did you decide to run for a spot on the AJLI Board of Directors?*

I decided to apply for a spot on the AJLI Board of Directors because of the incredibly exciting time The Junior League is currently in. We are identifying new ways to align with women in a significantly shifting global landscape. I bring to the Board a combination of professional and Junior League experience, an understanding of membership organizations, strategic planning expertise, change management skills, and insights into trends relating to generational needs. All of this allows me the opportunity to help in guiding the positive trajectory of The Junior League that honors the past but is focused on the future.

*What do you hope to accomplish during your time on the Board?*

My hope is that, as a Board, we are able to identify opportunities, address League needs, and communicate our work as we strive toward positive outcomes for our Leagues and their Members, as well as for all of our community partners, donors, grant recipients, family units, and everyone who is impacted by The Junior League.

*What do you find most valuable about being a part of The Junior League?*

Working alongside some of the most talented, thoughtful, and intelligent women on the planet! Being surrounded by inspiring women is what constantly pushes me to be a better version of myself!

**DR. PAULETTE EVANS**  
 Secretary, 2024-2026  
 President, Junior League of Raleigh, NC



*How did you get started in The Junior League?*

In June 2008, my husband and I relocated from Central Florida to the Triad region of North Carolina. During the summer of 2009, I was sitting at a traffic light and saw the Junior League of Greensboro headquarters. I had never heard of The Junior League, so when I arrived at home, I immediately went to Google to conduct a search. Upon learning that it was an all-

women nonprofit focused on two of my favorite areas – leadership and service – I knew I needed to be a part of it. I completed the New Member application, wrote a check for membership fees, and dropped both items off at the JLG HQ the next day. I was accepted into the incoming Provisional class in September 2009 and the rest is JL history. I have since relocated to Raleigh, where I have just concluded my tenure as President.

*Why did you decide to run for a spot on the AJLI Board of Directors?*

Whenever I join an organization, professionally or socially, I delve deeply into its story, structure, and strategic goals. I then focus on my immediate assignment major work activities to ensure I perform at the highest level to secure the success of the organization.

Lastly, I determine how I can further contribute to the overall performance of the organization, which leads to the creation of my short- and long-term plans. With Junior League, I felt that I had contributed greatly to two local Leagues, so I knew it was time to give back at the Association level and use my skills to help AJLI positively impact Leagues at a higher level.

*What has been your favorite placement in your League and why?*

My favorite placement across two Leagues has been serving as the 2023-2024 President of the Junior League of Raleigh. Because of the dedication from my amazing Staff and Board of Directors, I was able to focus on the presidential priorities of the JLR. During my term, I enjoyed working with Active Members on short- and long-term goals, socializing with Sustainers at their many events, and celebrating the successes of the JLR, including encouraging engagement from membership, hosting three beneficial fundraising events, and meeting our strategic objectives.

*What's a fun fact about you?*

I am an avid traveler and have visited all 50 states! I also enjoy international travel and have visited approximately 30 countries across the globe thus far. Lastly, I love creating recipes in the kitchen based on my cultural experiences while traveling.

**DR. JESSICA SHARP**  
 Governance Committee Chair, 2024-2025  
 Sustaining Member, Junior League of Houston, TX



*Tell us a little bit about your Junior League journey.*

While I was living in South Carolina, a few of my friends urged me to join The Junior League as a way to get plugged into our local community and meet new people. I joined the Junior League of Greenville, SC, in 2013 and served in a variety of capacities during my time there, including serving as the inaugural DEI Chair and Recruitment

Committee Chair, as well as Fund Development Vice President and Communications Vice President. I have recently relocated to Houston, TX where I am now a Sustainer in the Houston League.

*How has your Junior League experience helped you in other aspects of your life?*

I am a better leader because of The Junior League. The League has allowed me to stretch my leadership skills and try new things that I wouldn't be able to in a work capacity.



Image courtesy of Elizabeth Whited

*Why did you decide to run for a spot on the AJLI Board of Directors?*

I love serving at the local level, but I was really drawn to the idea of having an impact on a broader scale. I believe deeply in the Mission of The Junior League and want to help make our movement as strong as possible.

*What do you hope to accomplish during your time on the Board?*

As the Governance Committee Chair, my goal is to work with the Governance Committee to produce a diverse and inclusive slate that will best serve the Association moving forward. As a Board Member, I hope to continue to help advance the strategic priorities of the Association and help support our local Leagues and their Leaders.

*What do you find most valuable about being a part of The Junior League?*

The relationships forged and the leadership development skills honed are the most valuable part of being in this organization. I am not only a better leader, but also a better person because of The Junior League. I love being a part of a movement that impacts so many communities and women across the world.

**CECE GASSNER**

**Governance Committee Vice Chair, 2024-2025**  
**Vice Chair: Training Team, Junior League of Boise, ID**



**What's your Junior League story?**

Twenty years ago, I got my start with the Junior League of Boise because, like so many women, I was looking to meet people and give back to the community I had just moved to. I have served on my local League level, as well as at the AJLI level in many different capacities over the past two decades. In my local League, some of my past roles include

Board Chair and President, and I am currently serving as the Vice Chair of the Training Team. Regarding AJLI, this term marks my fourth Association leadership role.

**How has your Junior League experience helped you in other aspects of your life?**

When I joined the League, I was a practicing attorney who knew she did not love her job but did not know what else I could do. I credit the League with helping me recognize that I had other skills and could explore other paths in my life. As I tell so many of my friends, the League is a place where others spot and name your potential, often before you have that clarity. Being in the League gave me the courage to explore other careers and interests as I gained more skills and accepted more leadership challenges from my League.

**What is one of your favorite memories in The Junior League?**

One of my favorite memories comes from a time before I was even a Member. My mother joined the Junior League of Texarkana as soon as she was able, and when my parents needed to move to Boston so my father could pursue his doctorate, she transferred to the Junior League of Boston. An early memory of mine is being five years old and going with my mom to "help" her at one of the Victory Gardens where the League was doing a project that day. I weeded and turned over soil and probably made more trouble than really helped, but I remember it feeling fun that all these grownups were coming together to play in the dirt together (and my mom told me about how it helped the nearby neighborhood). I'm so grateful for that time because I truly treasure the friendships and connections I've made across my community and even the globe.

**SANDRA THOMPSON**

**At-Large Director, 2024-2027**  
**Active Member, Junior League of Orange County, CA**



**Tell us about your Junior League history.**

I joined Orange County, CA's JL in 2005 and had my first leadership placement in June of that year as our Spring Fundraiser Treasurer. From that point on, I was hooked. I've remained an Active Member throughout my League tenure and served as Treasurer, Fund Development Director, Public Affairs Vice President, Communications

Vice President, President-Elect, President, Nominating Director, Training Lead/Chair (3 times), and Chair of our Signature Fundraiser.

**What originally drew you to the organization?**

I was new to Orange County, working all the time, and didn't really know many people outside of work. My best friend, who was President of the Richmond League at the time, suggested that I find and join my local League, for which I am eternally grateful.

**How has your experience affected you outside of The Junior League?**

The biggest skill that I learned early in my time in the organization and have since honed is delegation. I use this skill in everything now – work, home, the League, and beyond! I learned that if I wanted to stay sane while chairing our biggest fundraiser, I had better learn how to delegate things to others, follow up, and encourage women "to bloom" in their roles.

**Why did you decide to run for a spot on the AJLI Board of Directors?**

The plans for the organization and our new Mission speak to me. The idea that I can work on helping the Association further both is exciting! At the end of my term, I hope that I have helped to meaningfully advance the goals of the Strategic Plan and continued to help position the Association to be the world's leading organization for women.



Image courtesy of Nic Kennedy

**What was one of your favorite memories in The Junior League?**

My first Annual Conference in Washington, DC, when I was Fund Development Director. Between the impacts of the sessions, the connections I made with other women, and the excitement in the room, I was hooked after that!

**What was your favorite placement in your League and why?**

Nominating Director! I loved talking to all our Members and then putting the puzzle pieces together for a successful leadership team.

**What is a fun fact about you?**

I've played in a Fantasy Baseball Dynasty League for 26 seasons and have more second-place finishes than any other team in the League.

**JENNIFER PORTER**

**At-Large Director, 2024-2027**  
**Sustaining Member, Junior League of Tulsa, OK**



**What has your Junior League journey looked like?**

I knew that The Junior League was a great way to make new connections and forge meaningful friendships through a desire to build a better Tulsa. I wanted to be surrounded by smart and ambitious women who not only wanted to work for our city and its people but who also wanted to have some fun while doing it. In 2011, I joined

the Junior League of Tulsa and have remained a Member there ever since. I served on the JL of Tulsa Board of Directors for four years, including a term as President in 2019-2020 and I currently serve as a trustee on the JL of Tulsa Endowment Committee.

**How has your JL experience helped you in other aspects of your life?**

As someone who has built a career in revenue development and advocacy, The Junior League has given me a space to enhance the skills necessary to excel in my professional world. Through various placements and roles throughout my Junior League career, I have learned the value of relationship management, tough conversations, and harnessing passion and energy for good.

**What drew you to serving on the AJLI Board of Directors?**

My experiences throughout my Junior League membership and the friendships I have formed through it have been some of the most meaningful parts of my life, and I can truly say that they have helped shape me into the person I am today.

It only feels right that something so valuable to me would be something that I would want to pour myself back into – and I can think of no greater way to do so than to devote my time and energy back to this organization through service on the AJLI Board of Directors. I hope our Board can be looked upon as a group that is trustworthy, hardworking, and intentional. I want us to continue to bridge the gap between the Association and the individual Leagues and hope to do so through improved communication, robust League services and resources, and continued expansion of our brand strategy.

**What is one of your favorite memories in The Junior League?**



Image courtesy of Nic Kennedy

Every AJLI conference I have ever attended has contributed to my memory bank as some of my fondest, as these travels provided moments of fun and connection with like-minded Leaders who have become some of my dearest friends.

**What was your favorite placement in your League and why?**

Besides serving as President of the Junior League of Tulsa, my favorite placement was serving as President of the Presidents of Large Leagues (POLL) affinity group in 2023-2024. It was a true honor to represent our largest Leagues in this capacity and to work for them in both personalized training opportunities and in association matters.

**What do you find most valuable about being a part of The Junior League?**

We each have the opportunity to be a part of a collective that has changed the landscape of women's leadership across the globe. There truly is power in numbers and I can think of no greater power than the power of women Leaders - we have done so much to be proud of, but we are nowhere close to being finished.

**What is a fun fact about you?**

Our chow-chow, Aslan, was featured in People magazine in 2021 as runner-up for their World's Cutest Rescue Dog contest and was highlighted in a spread about the contest. I have SEVERAL copies of the issue in case anyone would like one.

**ANITA DUEÑAS**  
 At-Large Director, 2024-2027  
 Active Member, Junior League of Fort Myers, FL



*Tell us a little about your Junior League history.*

I joined the Junior League of Fort Myers in the fall of 2006 and have since been on every council, including leading Membership and Communications as Council VP, as well as Placement, Nominating, Training and Fund Development. I also served as President in 2013-2014.

*What originally drew you to the organization?*

A good friend encouraged me to check out a recruitment event because she thought it would be right up my alley. Obviously, she was right on the money. I was presented with almost a checklist of things particularly suited to me – a positive organization, exceptional history, a record of achievement, a Mission of service, etc. Almost instantly I said, 'I love it. Where do I sign?'

*How has your JL experience helped you in other aspects of your life?*

The League was the first place I felt safe to say 'Yes!' to scary things. In saying 'Yes!' I have learned so much. I have developed and honed my skills in public speaking, strategic planning, budgeting, running meetings, team dynamics, and so much more. All these skills have been abundantly useful in my career and in my service on other boards. ("Using your League Skills" is one of my favorite topics!)

*Why did you decide to run for a spot on the AJLI Board of Directors?*

I'm not just a Junior League Member, I am a FAN of what the Movement represents. Being on the Board felt like a great opportunity to be a small part of building the Leagues of the next century on the strong foundation of the last century. During my term, I would like to support AJLI and our Leagues to reach their goals of growth and sustainability using data and best practices, as well as serving as an advocate of the fact that Members are the heart of our Movement, focusing on making Leagues a welcoming space for all women to grow.

*What is one of your favorite Junior League memories?*

Fort Myers experienced devastating hurricanes in 2017 and 2022. Some of our Members lost their homes, jobs, and all their personal goods. It's hard to explain the trauma of that experience, but many Leagues came to our aid, called to ask how we were, drove goods and supplies to our community, and raised money to help us get back on our feet. Members were out supporting recovery efforts and helping each other, despite having no power or clean water themselves. It made me so proud to be in the League.



Image courtesy of Nic Kennedy

If you're in one of those Leagues that supported us, or are a Member who supported others, I deeply thank you!

*What was your favorite placement in your League and why?*

I loved being Membership Development Chair. It was so fun being in a mentorship role with our Provisional Members. I also thrived on the process of revamping the curriculum and working with Recruitment to use data to evaluate the effectiveness of the process.

*What's a fun fact about you?*

After serving as League President, I signed up for painting classes to relax, and I got hooked. I've been taking painting classes here and there ever since, and it's a wonderful outlet that lets me forget everything for an hour or two.



Image courtesy of Nic Kennedy

If you would like to read more about our new or existing Board Members, or would like to find ways to connect with them, [click here](#).



Images courtesy of Nic Kennedy

# Community Impact AND Advocacy

TOOLS FOR AFFECTING CHANGE

BY JACQUELYN BAUMAN, AJLI DIRECTOR OF CONFERENCES & MEETINGS



Image courtesy of the Junior League of Gainesville-Hall County

Junior Leagues across the organization have established massively successful efforts in both the community impact and advocacy spaces – making a difference in their local communities on a variety of levels. Here are some examples of the amazing work our Leagues are doing.

## JUNIOR LEAGUE OF GAINESVILLE-HALL COUNTY, GA

As any parent or early childhood caregiver knows, children go through a lot of diapers. And yet, according to a recent National Diaper Bank Network study, nearly 47% of families in the United States are affected by diaper needs, including almost 30% of middle-class working families. Those experiencing diaper insecurity are often forced to choose between spending money on diapers and their other basic required expenses such as food, rent, utilities, and more.

This issue not only affects the mental wellbeing of parents and early childhood caregivers, but it can also further impinge on their financial earning ability. Without enough diapers, children cannot be left at childcare, and without childcare, parents and caregivers are limited in their employment or education options.

To address this need in their community, the Junior League of Gainesville-Hall County, Georgia runs the Diaper Bank of North Georgia – the League’s largest internal program, which has distributed over 180,000 diapers to their community to date. In addition to providing families in need with these crucial items, the Diaper Bank of North Georgia recently partnered with three other organizations – Helping Mamas (Norcross, GA), Athens Area Diaper Bank (Athens, GA), and Over the Moon Diaper Bank (Savannah, GA) – to launch the Georgia Diaper Bank Coalition to help advocate for families across the state.

The Coalition not only fulfills the tangible needs of the community, but also raises awareness of diaper poverty and advocates for families at the local, state, and federal levels.

After their state legislature failed to pass House Bill 211, which would have exempted diapers from the state’s four percent sales tax, the Coalition saw a need to fill on a larger level than simply direct service. In response to this, they held the first Diaper Need Awareness Day at the Georgia Capitol on March 14 to educate state lawmakers and to draw attention to the rising costs of diapers and those struggling to afford these essential childcare items.

In next year’s session, the Coalition will continue to focus on having the diaper tax legislation reintroduced.



The Junior League of Gainesville-Hall County, Georgia runs the Diaper Bank of North Georgia – the League’s largest internal program, which has distributed over 180,000 diapers to their community to date.

## JUNIOR LEAGUE OF LONG ISLAND, NY

Since 1983, the Junior League of Long Island (JLLI) has provided funding to local nonprofit organizations serving their community through their Community Service Fund awards. Each year, applications submitted by local nonprofits are reviewed by the JLLI Community Service Fund Committee headed up by the League’s Finance Team and President. This program is made possible through the League’s fundraising efforts, including their thrift shop.

In 2024, after receiving a record number of applicants, JLLI granted \$22,500 to ten organizations – their largest number of recipients since the first Community Service Funds were awarded.

The 2024 awardees are as follows:

- **Allied Foundation, Inc.** – A community partner of the Junior League of Long Island, Allied Foundation, Inc. is an organization that works to increase access to essential resources within patient populations of the pediatric physicians from the Allied Physicians Group. Their pillars of purpose include newborn support, community service, community education, and early childhood literacy. With this award, they will be able to enhance their efforts to provide 1,500 books to children five-years-old and under in English and other languages.
- **Belmont Childcare Association** – A prior Community Service Fund recipient and beneficiary of previous JLLI initiatives, the Belmont Childcare Association provides early childhood education and development programs for children of New York Thoroughbred racing backstretch workers at Belmont Park. This award will fund their Children’s Movement Program to help their students improve their fine motor skills, social skills, and listening skills.
- **The Book Fairies, Inc.** – A partner of the JLLI Thrift Shop, Book Fairies sources and redistributes books to under-resourced communities on Long Island and NYC to provide equitable opportunities for children to learn, grow, and thrive. The funds received from the award will help support their Long Island public bookshelves project, which increases book access Island-wide by supplying, maintaining, and refreshing book collections at public parks, LIRR stations, grocery stores, pediatric doctors’ offices, health centers, before- and after-school programs, transitional housing, food pantries, women’s shelters, and community centers, especially targeting communities who have lacked access to books and face barriers in providing high-quality and age-appropriate books for their children. The award will enable the distribution of 3,500 books to Long Islanders.
- **CYO of Long Island** – CYO is an organization that provides programs for children and teens that span athletics, academics, art, and community service to improve mental and physical health for Long Island youths and to connect them with their community. The award will be used to establish a Junior League of Long Island Scholarship Program that will allow 16 children whose families are struggling financially to participate in a season of athletic, social, or academic activities.

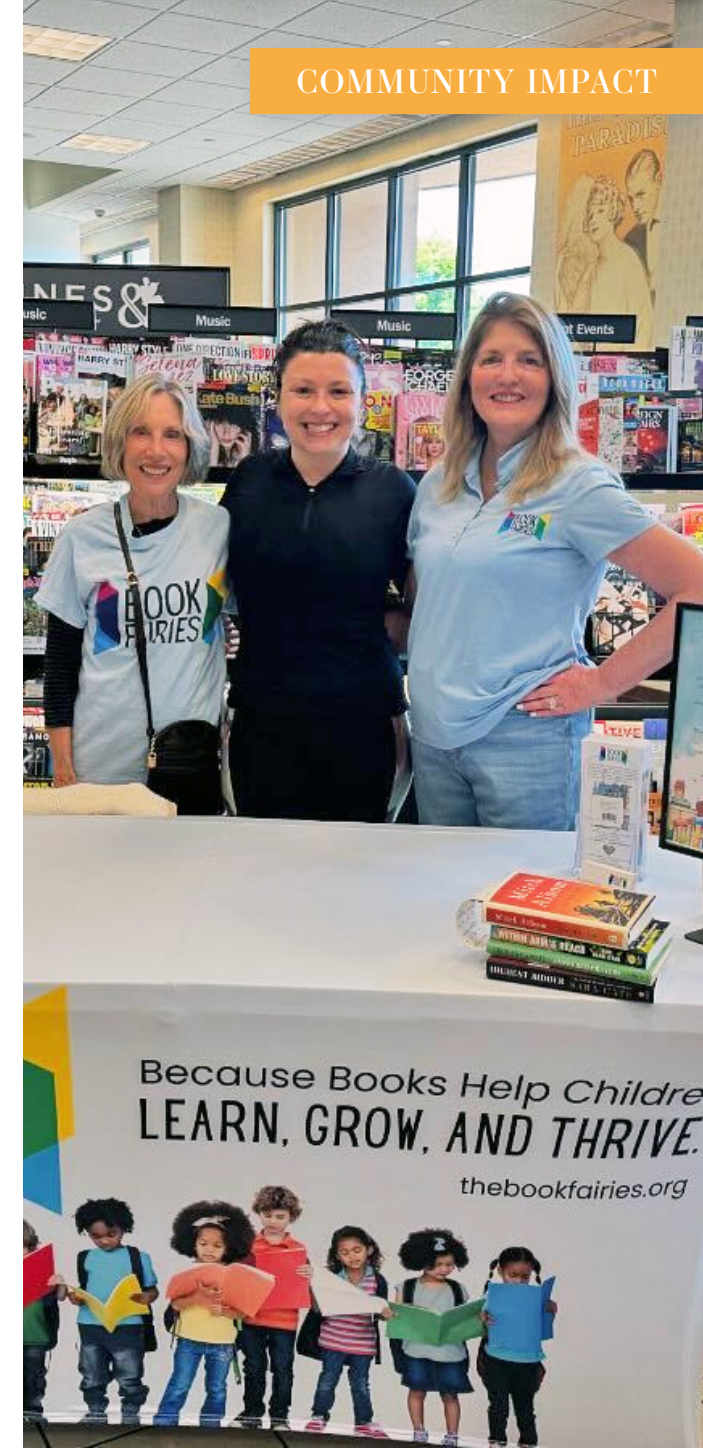


Image courtesy of the Junior League of Long Island





Images courtesy of the Junior League of Long Island

- **Does for Tots** – This organization partners with Help Me Grow Long Island to promote healthy infant and toddler development screening, free case management, and parent education programs, serving up to 1,000 families annually – 90% of which come from low-income backgrounds. The JLLI Community Service Fund award will help 15 families through Does for Tots’ Books, Balls, and Blocks program, which provides child development screenings and community resources at public libraries.
- **One World Girl** - One World Girl is a nonprofit organization that equips girls to become changemakers through arts-based learning and community action. They have previously partnered with JLLI and Girls, Inc. to produce the EMPOWER Girls project, which was attended by over 50 young girls last Spring. The funds from the award will support the continuation and expansion of their signature program, The Changemakers Council, which serves 25-30 young women from seventh to twelfth grade. Previous projects of the Changemakers Council have focused on benefiting the LGBTQ+ community, safe drinking water, and girl’s empowerment.
- **Port Washington Parent Center** – This organization aims to provide affordable early educational enrichment opportunities to the community. The funds from this award will provide a scholarship fund to 12 children from low-income families to participate in the Port Washington Parent Center’s Outreach program, which provides developmentally appropriate early-childhood classes and enriching experiences to participants and offers families opportunities to deepen their bonds with their children and their community.
- **Sangha Education Center** – Sangha Education Center offers heart-centered mentoring for young people and their families who are viewed as at-risk. The funds from the JLLI award will help offset costs for their civic mentorship program where mentors work directly with participants in their program to build social communication, executive functioning, and leadership skills through project-based learning opportunities. In the past, these project-based learning opportunities have included volunteering alongside JLLI Members during their Thanksgiving Baskets Program and their Birthday Wishes Program.



Image courtesy of the Junior League of Long Island

- **Women’s Diversity Network** - The Women’s Diversity Network connects and mobilizes women and gender-expansive people of different backgrounds to create positive change through unity and collective work. They accomplish this by educating the community about issues and policies challenging their unity, advocating collectively to break down barriers for improved inclusion and advocacy for all, and by celebrating diverse backgrounds. The award will fund their Youth Justice Leadership Program – a seven-month-long virtual program for high school-aged students designed to inspire them to become leaders and active changemakers. With this, 25 participants will be able to cover expenses to attend the in-person Annual Diversity Summit.
- **The NEST (Nassau Empowerment and Support)** – This is a nonprofit organization at Nassau Community College that is committed to fostering health and well-being for students through programs that address hunger and transportation access. This award will enable NEST to obtain MTA transit cards to alleviate the burden on those who cannot afford transit to come to classes.

“...This can only be attributed to our staff and volunteers that make the JLLI what it is – a family who cares for the Long Island Community. Personally, this is the highlight of my career as a Junior League Woman, and I cannot wait to see what else comes from this prestigious organization.”

If you would like to have one of your League’s community impact or advocacy initiatives elevated in a future issue of *The League Life*, go to [www.surveymonkey.com/r/LLCIA](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LLCIA).

# The ART of the PAUSE

TECHNIQUES FOR EMPOWERED LIVING

BY SAPNA PATEL, JUNIOR LEAGUE OF SAN DIEGO, CA

**“THE BEST WAY TO TAKE CARE OF THE FUTURE IS TO TAKE CARE OF THE PRESENT MOMENT.”**  
 – THICH NHAT HANH

Amidst the chaos of modern life, finding a moment of peace can feel impossible. Junior League women, who juggle volunteer activities, personal development, leadership roles, and caregiving responsibilities face unique challenges. It's a lot to manage, often leaving self-care neglected. But what if there was a method to navigate through all of this with ease and enjoyment?

**Enter Mindfulness.**

**Understanding Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is the practice of being fully present and engaged in the moment without judgment. Rooted in ancient traditions, it involves paying attention to our thoughts, feelings, and environment with an open and accepting mindset. Historically used to cultivate deeper self-awareness, mindfulness has evolved into a therapeutic tool in modern psychology, shaping how we understand and manage our emotions and behaviors.

**The Theory and Science of Mindfulness**

From a psychological standpoint, mindfulness alters the structure and functioning of our brains. Regular practice can lead to changes in areas associated with attention, emotion regulation, and self-awareness—a phenomenon known as neuroplasticity. For Junior League women, mindfulness enhances crucial leadership skills such as attention to detail, resilience in the face of challenges, and empathy in community engagement.

**Practical Daily Mindfulness Techniques**

**1. Breathing Exercise in the Shower:** Start your day with deep nasal breathing in the shower. Inhale deeply for a count of four; then exhale slowly for a count of eight. Focus on the sensation of warm water on your skin and the pace of your breathing. This practice calms your mind, reduces stress, and enhances clarity of thought.

**2. Lunch Break Body Scan:** Take a moment during your lunch break to practice a brief body scan meditation. Begin by gently focusing from your head to your toes, noticing and releasing any tension you encounter along the way. As you scan, gently align your spine and roll your shoulders back to enhance your posture. This practice not only relieves tension but also promotes deeper breathing, leaving you feeling refreshed and rejuvenated for the remainder of your day.

**3. Nightly Gratitude Journaling:** Before bedtime, dedicate a few minutes to gratitude journaling. Reflect on one thing you're grateful for, how it makes you feel, and any insights it brings. Over time, this practice cultivates appreciation, boosts emotional well-being, and brings clarity amid daily challenges.

**Incorporating Mindfulness into Daily Routines**

**Mindful Eating:** Engage fully in your eating experience. Observe the colors, varied textures, and rich flavors of your food.

*For Junior League women, mindfulness enhances crucial leadership skills such as attention to detail, resilience in the face of challenges, and empathy in community engagement.*



Take your time to chew slowly and savor each bite. This practice not only aids digestion but also fosters mindful decision-making and deepens your appreciation for meals.

**Mindful Walking:** Transform an everyday walk into mindfulness practice. Focus on the sensation of your feet touching the ground, the rhythm of your steps, and the peaceful surroundings. This intentional practice boosts physical well-being and promotes mental relaxation.

**Mindful Listening:** Engage in mindful listening during conversations by giving the speaker your full attention without planning your response. This practice nurtures deeper connections, enhances communication skills, and fosters empathy.

**Integrating Mindfulness into Junior League Activities**  
**Meetings and Events:** Begin meetings with a brief mindfulness exercise, such as a minute of deep breathing or a short, guided meditation, to help Members center themselves.



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

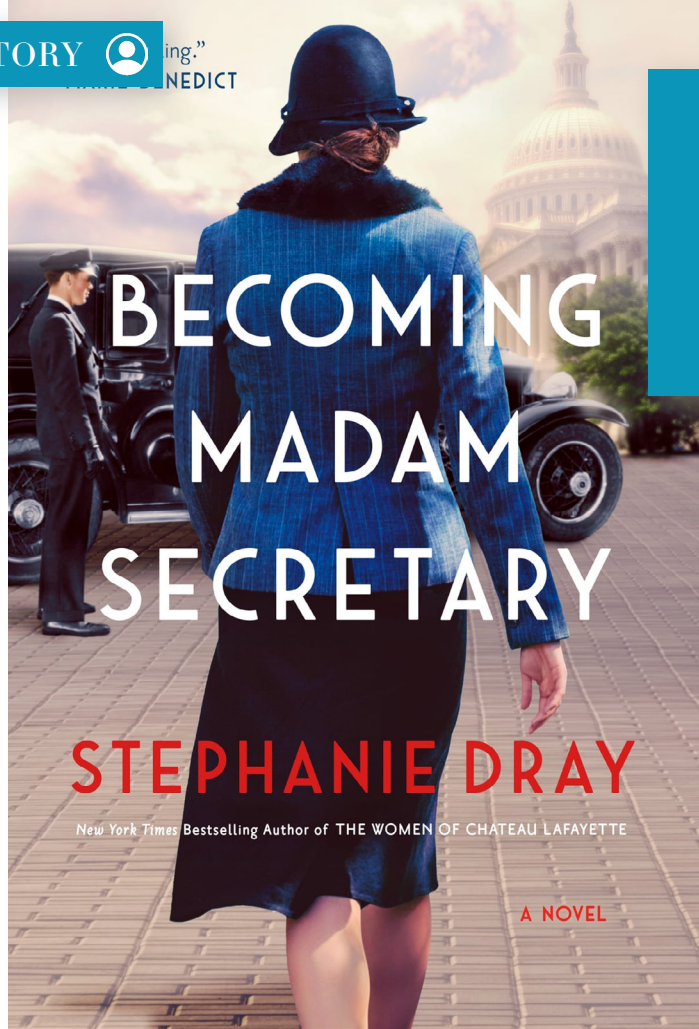


Sapna Patel is a spiritual teacher, holistic well-being advocate, entrepreneur, author, and artist. A proud Member of the Junior League of San Diego, she is deeply engaged in the Junior League community. With a background in biology, psychology, and accounting, Sapna draws from over 18 years of entrepreneurial experience. Her journey into mindfulness and self-discovery led her to integrate ancient practices such as yoga philosophy, sound therapy, and art therapy, empowering individuals to find inner peace and purpose. Sapna is committed to guiding Junior League Members and others on their journey to unlock their true potential, cultivate resilience, and embrace a more fulfilling life.

**Mindful Volunteering:** Stay fully present and engaged during volunteer activities. Focus on the task at hand and reflect on the positive impact it has on the community.

**Personal Development:** Integrate mindfulness training into Junior League development programs. This may involve workshops or sessions focused on mindfulness techniques and their benefits for personal growth.

Mindfulness offers a powerful way to navigate the challenges of life with grace and resilience. By incorporating mindfulness into your daily routine and Junior League activities, you can enhance your well-being and effectiveness. Start your mindfulness journey today and experience the positive changes it can bring to your life and leadership.



Stephanie Dray's new book prominently features Junior League founder, Mary Harriman, image courtesy of Jayda Justus



Becoming Madame Secretary Author, Stephanie Dray

## An Impactful FRIENDSHIP

Mary Harriman and Frances Perkins' Relationship Explored in New Book

BY JAYDA JUSTUS, JUNIOR LEAGUE OF RICHMOND, VA

For those who are new to Junior League history, the first League was founded in 1901 by New York City debutante Mary Harriman. She grew to become a leader in the settlement movement, which focused on the squalid conditions in which many recent immigrants lived in early twentieth century New York. During her time working in lower Manhattan tenements, Mary became best friends with fellow crusader, Frances Perkins, who would later become President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Labor Secretary and write key legislation enacting the New Deal. Frances was the first woman to serve on a presidential cabinet and is the subject of best-selling author Stephanie Dray's latest book, *Becoming Madam Secretary*.

Although the book is primarily focused on Frances Perkins, Mary Harriman is highlighted prevalently throughout the story. Dray explains that, though there is no record of exactly how Mary and Frances met, it is likely to have been when Frances was volunteering at Hartley House in Hell's Kitchen, which provided vital community services in a densely populated and impoverished section of the city. Mary and other Junior League Members volunteered in settlement houses and supported other philanthropic endeavors in the city, so this is likely the period when Mary and Frances' paths crossed. At the same time, Frances served as the Executive Secretary of the New York City Consumers League. Although no one is certain, Dray notes that it would not be outside the realm of possibility that, because of Eleanor Roosevelt's membership in the League, Mary may have been the link between Frances and the Roosevelts.

Mary and Frances both wanted to help the community, especially the underprivileged, and found in each other a kindred spirit. The women had different yet complementary ways of achieving their goals – Mary was focused on voluntarism and used her high society connections to raise charitable funds, while Frances eventually worked for the government, ensuring the federal policies matched the needs of the people.

According to Dray, they also had differing personalities that were likely a result of their upbringing, as Mary was a charismatic member of the upper-class in New York who enjoyed parties, while Frances was raised as a middle-class New Englander who shied away from the spotlight.



Mary Harriman and family, image courtesy of The AJLI Digital Collections

Dray didn't find any evidence that Frances thought about joining the Junior League, which may be attributed to this difference in their paths. As they entered new stages of life with marriages, children, and family commitments, Frances became too busy with her government responsibilities to join. Despite this, the women relied on their close friendship to help them through personal tragedies, including the death of Mary's husband in a car crash in his early thirties and Frances' husband's struggles with mental health.

As Dray describes, their professional careers and geographical locations also dovetailed. In 1933, Frances moved to Washington, DC, to serve as the Labor Secretary and Mary, remaining in New York, was named chair of the Consumer Advisory Board of the National Recovery Administration, the first government consumer rights group. Throughout these changes in their lives, the two friends supported each other through their personal and professional ups and downs until Mary's untimely death from a horse-riding accident in 1934.

Dray recommends several historical sites to learn more about the relationship between these two incredible women – the Frances Perkins Center in Newcastle, Maine, as well as the Labor Department's Museum in the Frances Perkins building in Washington. To imagine more about Mary and Frances' work together in New York City, visit the Tenement Museum in Manhattan's Lower East side.

Dray believes that Frances and Mary would both appreciate the continued service of Junior League volunteers and their long-lasting influence on communities around the world. Mary and Frances' work outlives them whether it's in voluntarism or government policies, and for that, we are all grateful.

If you would like to contribute to a future issue of *The League Life*, please [click here](#).

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jayda Justus is a former President of the Junior League of Richmond and is the creator/writer of The History Mom, where she provides detailed reviews of US and European historical sites for families with corresponding book recommendations. She loves interacting with the bookish world through podcasts, literary events, and social media, especially #bookstagram. Hailing from the historic town of Kings Mountain, North Carolina, she is a former legislative director for a Member of Congress and now lives in Richmond, Virginia with her family where she is currently working on her first novel.



# Mind *Your* Words

## USING LANGUAGE TO CREATE SAFER SPACES

BY ALMETRIA TURNER, JUNIOR LEAGUE OF OXFORD, MS

Aretha Franklin said it best. R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Find out what it means to me. D-E-I-J-A-B. Take care. T-C-B.

Are you taking care of business when it comes to giving others the respect they deserve or by acknowledging the importance of DEI/JAB – diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, accessibility, and belonging – in all societal spaces?

During the late 60s and 70s, at the height of the Vietnam War, civil rights, and feminist movements, Aretha Franklin’s rendition of Otis Redding’s “Respect” became a global anthem for racial and gender equality. People were advocating against war, racism, and gender inequality. All they wanted was a little R-E-S-P-E-C-T. However, what about D-E-I-J-A-B?

While this is a play on words using Franklin’s song lyrics, respect and DEI/JAB are interconnected when ensuring equitable rights for all individuals.

Yet here we are in 2024 still advocating for reproductive, LGBTQ+, and women’s rights, ensuring DEI/JAB in all spaces, closing the gender wage gap, and promoting the use of inclusive language.

DEI/JAB comprises various intersectional layers. It demonstrates how we show up amongst family, friends, work colleagues, volunteers, and community members amongst all variations and combinations of identities.

As Junior League Members, does your League reflect the values of DEI/JAB in all aspects of League life, from the look of your membership, Board Members and how you show in the communities you serve? What about the use of inclusive language on your website, in your marketing materials, on social media, in public, or in your committee meetings?

While all aspects of the DEI/JAB acronym are important, this article explores how employing inclusive language demonstrates having respect for your Members, potential Members, community partners, and the communities you serve.

### Principles to Remember:

**Words matter.** The use of derogatory, condescending, and inappropriate language, euphemisms, and metaphors can make people feel excluded, offended, and create barriers for having meaningful conversations and group dynamics. Think of the seven “-isms” – sexism, ageism, racism, classism, sizeism, ableism, antisemitism, and heterosexism. Before speaking to others, showing up in the community, writing website or social media content, or responding to that email, consider whether your words might perpetrate the exclusionary assumptions in any of these “isms.”

**Opt for language that embraces rather than excludes.** Use wording that acknowledges, accepts, and celebrates differences, and creates a welcoming environment for everyone.



“  
It’s essential for individuals and League Members to use inclusive and respectful language to foster growth, personal and professional development, and effectively serve others.  
”

...  
By consistently prioritizing inclusive and respectful language in all aspects of your League’s service, your League, its Members, and the community will reap the benefits.  
”

**Use people-first language.** Focus on the person, not their characteristics. For example, instead of saying “a deaf person”, say “a person who is deaf.” Centering individuals by prioritizing them over their descriptors ensures that the conversation focuses on the person rather than their characteristics.

**Focus on what matters.** Only refer to characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, religion, race, or ability when they are pertinent to the discussion or topic being addressed.

**Ask if you aren’t sure.** Inclusive language is nuanced, ever-changing, and reflects people’s personal style and preferences. Consider asking your colleagues how they prefer to be referred to if you’re unsure. If you make an honest mistake, apologize without centering your guilt or shame, correct it, and move on.

**Use your voice.** As an ally, when you see or hear something that’s inappropriate or someone is misgendered, say something. Gently correct the mistake or infraction, then move forward if it’s an isolated incident. If the situation happens repeatedly amongst colleagues, it might be appropriate to privately address it by saying something like, “I’ve noticed instances where you were referred to with the wrong pronoun or faced microaggressions, which can be hurtful.” Ask them if they would be comfortable with you speaking privately to the individuals involved, reminding them about the correct pronouns or explaining why certain language is inappropriate.

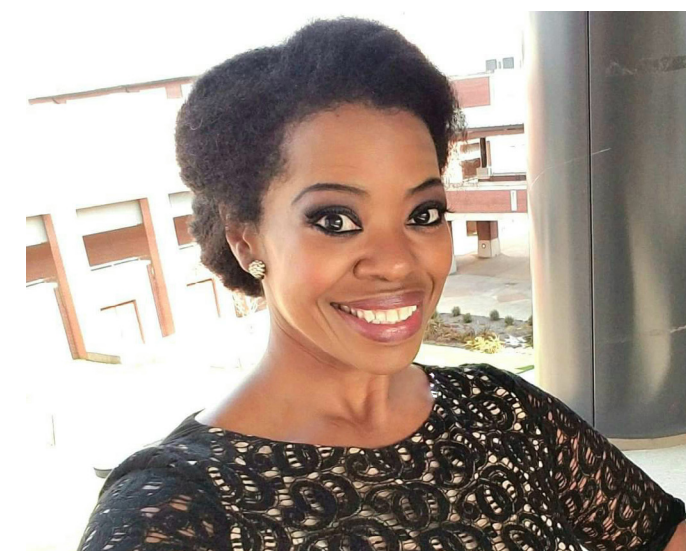
Showing your support and allyship, you could also encourage and stand by them if they decide to report it to their committee chair, the board, or choose to address it in front of others. These are the moments where allyship is crucial – in name and through our presence and voices.

It’s essential for individuals and League Members to use inclusive and respectful language to foster growth, personal and professional development, and effectively serve others.

Although change won’t occur overnight and mistakes may happen, it’s important to recognize that you may lose some Members or community partners along the way. However, by consistently prioritizing inclusive and respectful language in all aspects of your League’s service, your League, its Members, and the community will reap the benefits.

**Here’s** an inclusive language guide and definitions by the American Psychological Association. This list is not exhaustive and is ever-changing, because inclusive language is fluid.

It may seem daunting at first to make the effort to use inclusive language as, for many of us, the words we use are reflexive and are the product of our environment. However, it is for this reason specifically that using inclusive language is a necessary endeavor. If we want to change our environment and make our Leagues a place where others feel welcome, we must start with our words.

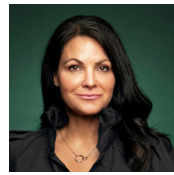


### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Almetria Turner, CCHW, CLES, CPPC, CPST, CMHE, RYT, RPYT, REC-C, MA (she/her) is a Multi-Hyphenate Wellness DisruptHER, Full Spectrum Doula, Reproductive Justice and Health Equity Advocate redefining holistic, community, and maternal health to improve better performance, positive outcomes and healthier lifestyles.

She is a fifth year Active Member with Junior League of Oxford. Currently, she serves with the Training Collaborative of Junior Leagues. She was the past VP of DEIB and interim Communications VP with the Junior League of Oxford, past 2022-2023 AJLI WOC Board of Directors Program Chair, and a recipient of the 2021-2022 Training Volunteer of the Year Award with the Junior League of Memphis.

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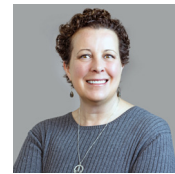
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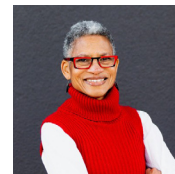
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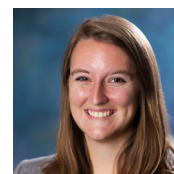
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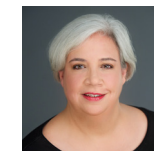
**ANNE DALTON**  
Sr. Director, Advocacy and  
Engagement / League Success  
Manager



**JACQUELYN BAUMAN**  
Director of Conferences  
& Meetings



**ASHLEY BOWLES**  
Director of Special Initiatives



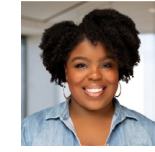
**INÉS SUCRE**  
Sr. League Success  
Manager



**PAMELA ANTOINE  
WEEKES**  
Sr. League Success Manager



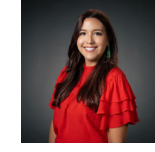
**LESLIE COOK**  
Data Membership Customer  
Service Coordinator



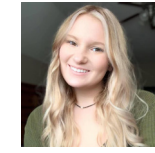
**HEATHER GAYLORD**  
Digital Media Data Specialist



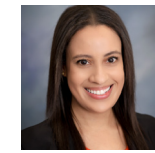
**KAT GOODMAN**  
Member Engagement and Fund  
Development Coordinator



**KATELYN GRAY**  
League Success Manager



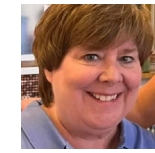
**MADELINE NEYENHAUS**  
Executive Communications Manager



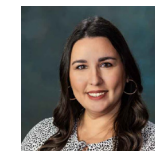
**CHIAKA NWOSU**  
Digital Media Coordinator



**LISA RHYAND-VAUGHAN**  
League Success Manager



**PAM SMITH**  
Special Projects Manager



**NICOLE STREET**  
League Success Manager



**ELIZABETH WHITED**  
Social Media, Graphic Design Manager

## TRAVEL AND VOLUNTEER ABROAD IN INDIA

### BRIDGING GLOBAL CULTURES (BGC)

invites all Junior League Members to travel to India to explore the culture and its many beautiful sites and landmarks, with a focus on volunteering abroad. Enjoy traveling to different cities, such as Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, and Bundi, just to name a few.



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## LEAGUE ANNIVERSARIES

# LEAGUE ANNIVERSARIES

Join us in celebrating Leagues with Milestone Anniversaries this year!

### 110 YEARS (1914)

Detroit, MI  
Kansas City, MO  
St. Louis, MO

### 105 YEARS (1919)

Buffalo, NY  
Denver, CO  
Omaha, NE  
Poughkeepsie, NY

### 100 YEARS (1924)

Colorado Springs, CO  
Evanston-North Shore, IL  
Jacksonville, FL  
Lancaster, PA  
Lexington, KY  
Minneapolis, MN  
New Orleans, LA  
Reading, PA  
San Antonio, TX  
Seattle, WA

### 75 YEARS (1949)

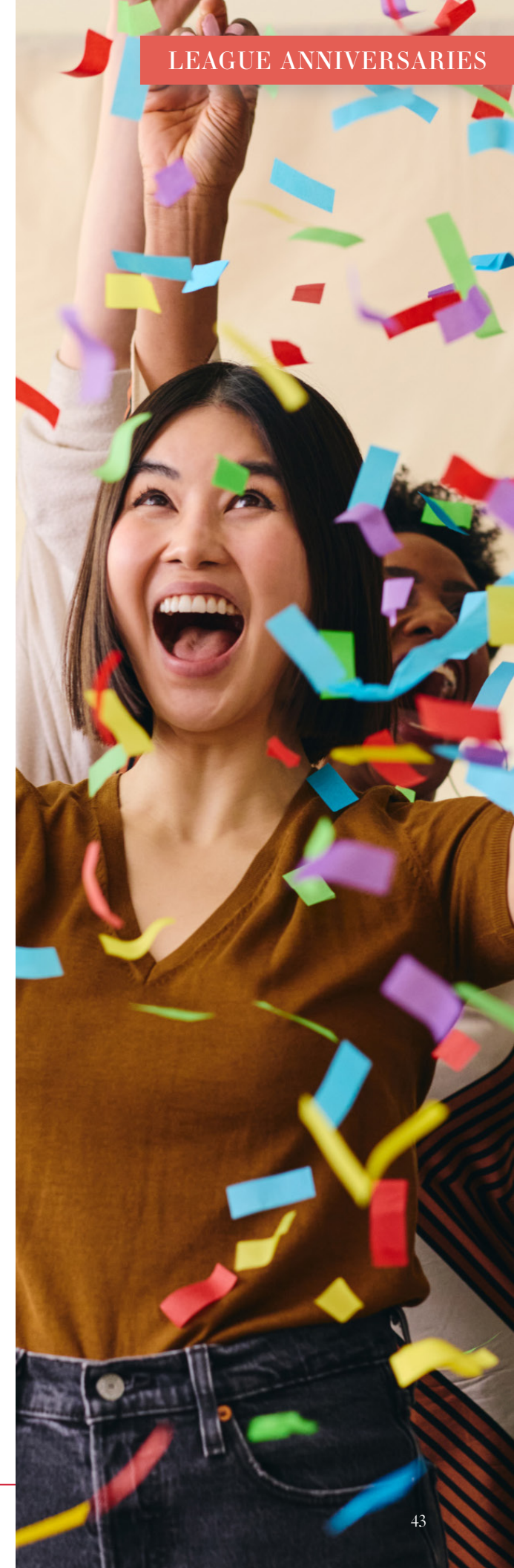
Galveston County, TX  
Wyandotte & Johnson Counties, KS

### 50 YEARS (1974)

Lafayette, LA  
Greater Lakeland, FL  
Owensboro, KY

### 25 YEARS (1999)

Greater Covington, LA  
Northwest Arkansas



# JUNIOR LEAGUE COOKBOOK FEATURED RECIPE

## GREEN CHILE CHICKEN ENCHILADAS Gluten Free

Submitted by Nicole Drake  
Junior League of San Antonio

10 almond flour tortillas  
2 cups finely chopped cooked chicken  
2 (4-ounce) cans diced green chiles  
2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese  
2 cups shredded Pepper-jack cheese  
½ tablespoon taco seasoning  
1 (15-ounce) jar red enchilada sauce, divided  
1 bunch green onions, chopped

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Cook the tortillas in a skillet over medium heat just until lightly toasted. Combine the chicken, green chiles, 1 cup of the Cheddar cheese, and 1 cup of the Pepper-Jack cheese in a large bowl. Add the taco seasoning and 1/3 cup of the enchilada sauce and mix well. Spread 2 tablespoons of the enchilada sauce over the bottom of a 9x13-inch baking dish or foil pan. Spoon 3 tablespoons of the enchilada sauce onto a plate. Dip both sides of a tortilla in the sauce to coat lightly. Spoon a heaping 1/4 cupful of the chicken mixture onto the tortilla. Roll the tortilla tightly to enclose the filling. Place seam side down in the prepared baking dish. Repeat the procedure with the remaining tortillas and chicken mixture, adding additional enchilada sauce to the plate if needed to coat all of the tortillas. Spread the remaining enchilada sauce over the enchiladas. Sprinkle with the remaining 1 cup Cheddar cheese and 1 cup Pepper-Jack cheese. Bake, covered with foil, for 30 minutes. Bake, uncovered, for 10 minutes or until the cheese is light brown and bubbly. Let stand for 5 to 10 minutes. Sprinkle with the green onions. Serve immediately.

*Note: Goat cheese may be substituted for the Cheddar cheese.*

Serves 8 or more.



## Centennial Flavors

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF SERVICE



Image courtesy of the Junior League of San Antonio

## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTING WRITERS/EDITORS

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