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SUSTAINER WRITER

JeNeika Boone

SUSTAINER WRITER

Suzanner Kerr

SUSTAINER WRITER

Caroline Sabin

WRITER

Irene Giannakakis

SUSTAINER ADVISOR

Sara-Nell Van Lant

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

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CENTENNIAL COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Sarah Davidson

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PHOTOGRAPHY CHAIR

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LEAGUE ARCHIVES CHAIR

Courtney Tauber

DESIGN

LIMB Design

PRINTING

Bayside Printing



Megan Anson
Editor



Valerie Henderson
Assistant Editor



JeNeika Boone
Sustainer Writer



Suzanner Kerr
Sustainer Writer



Caroline Sabin
Sustainer Writer



Irene Giannakakis
Writer



Sara-Nell Van Lant
Sustainer Advisor



Kathryn Hinnant
Photography Chair



Courtney Durham
Communications
Director



Sarah Davidson
Centennial
Communications
Manager



Laura Prus
Community
Communications
Manager



Alana Adams
Development
and Finance
Communications
Manager



Stacia Dancsak
Diversity, Equity and
Inclusion Manager -
Communications



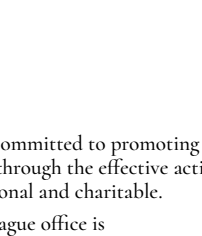
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Communications
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Communications
Manager



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WINTER 2023

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

“THE TRUE MEANING OF LIFE IS TO PLANT TREES,
UNDER WHOSE SHADE YOU DO NOT EXPECT TO SIT.”
-NELSON HENDERSON

When I started preparing for this League year and reflecting on my time with the League, I realized what a staunch and steadfast presence the Junior League of Houston has had in my life over the last eleven years. It has been ever-present in life’s ups and downs, and—more importantly—its members (i.e. the friends I have made as a result of being a member of this organization), have become an integral part of my life. They have been the cheerleaders as I started new jobs, the ears to vent to after I survived some doozies of bad first dates, the support system in times when I lost loved ones and the biggest celebrants when I got married. Through everything, the League has been the common denominator in my life, and my time with this organization has kept me grounded. It has given me perspective, insight and a deep desire to leave our community in a better condition than when I found it.

As I contemplated what could symbolize our organization, I came across a quote from Warren Buffet: “Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.” It finally dawned on me that the Junior League of Houston is just like an oak tree that was planted almost 100 years ago. It even created a perfect nod to the street, Briar Oaks Lane, our League building has called home for the past 37 years. Throughout the world, oak trees symbolize longevity, strength, stability, endurance and knowledge.

The Junior League of Houston is on the cusp kicking off the celebration of our Centennial Anniversary, and I cannot think of anything more meaningful for this League year than for us to reflect on and express gratitude towards the many momentous occasions and members that laid the groundwork—or planted the acorns—for the League we know and love today. What I have come to appreciate



about our organization is how much thought, planning and love has gone into everything we have done since our inception. I am so grateful to the 12 forward-thinking women and the thousands of women who have come afterwards that have helped give the Junior League of Houston an exemplary record of charitable achievement. We are certainly sitting in the shade of a tree that our past members planted a long time ago.

You will see the theme for this League year—**Grounded in Gratitude**—interwoven throughout this issue of *Houston News*. From reflecting on the League’s history to highlighting League members’ volunteer activities like Childspree and community placements, the League’s mission of promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women, and improving communities through the effective action is what grounds our membership into taking collective action. We are so grateful for the opportunities to learn more about the community we serve and spotlight the League’s sustainer members. In fact, there is no one who better exemplifies the meaning of gratitude than **Pamela House Lovett**, the 2023 Adelaide Lovett Baker Award recipient.

It is a true honor to serve as the Junior League of Houston’s 100th President. Throughout the first half of this League year, I have had a front row seat to watch this organization in action. The League’s incredible work allows its members to make an impact both inside and outside the League through effective action, mentorship and personal development. I am constantly in awe of everything that our members can achieve, and I am eternally grateful for all that they do. Thank you for your continued support of the Junior League of Houston. You help us build a better community each and every day!

With Gratitude,

Amanda Hanks Bayles

Amanda Hanks Bayles

President

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

“LEARN CHARACTER FROM TREES, VALUES FROM
ROOTS, AND CHANGE FROM LEAVES.”
– TASNEERN HARNEED

I was drawn to editing *Houston News* for the opportunity to be creative and to memorialize a year in our ever-continuing legacy and history. As we get closer to our Centennial Anniversary, I cannot help but think about the League’s 12 forward-thinking founding members and wonder what kind of women they must have been. I imagine them to be trailblazers—full of moxie and pluck, mettle and backbone, gumption and grit. But I recall their focus on service and think of them as kind and compassionate, thoughtful and bighearted, affable and gracious. I see this balance of grit and graciousness in the League women I am honored to serve with today.

One of these extraordinary women, our President **Amanda Hanks Bayles**, has created a theme, **Grounded in Gratitude**, that is especially meaningful as we prepare to celebrate 100 years of the League. As we look back, we have the opportunity to observe and appreciate the groundwork—or the acorns planted—by the members who came before us to help create the League we know and love today.

In this issue, you will read about our upcoming Centennial Anniversary Coffee Table Book, which will showcase photos and stories that commemorate the League’s impact in the Houston community and document the organization’s founding in 1925 culminating with the 2025 Charity Ball. You will also read about our Childspree back-to-school shopping event, benefiting Child Advocates, including the 15-year tradition of two of our members who volunteer at the event together. This issue also highlights one of our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Group Meetings, a Juneteenth Celebration that included a private tour



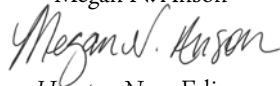
of Emancipation Park Conservancy’s grounds. Also included is a spotlight on some of our Sustainer members.

Our “100 Years Later” series continues with the 1980s, a decade that brought great change and flexibility to our League member demographic with more women than ever in the workplace.

The Adelaide Lovett Baker Award story reflects on recipient **Pam Lovett’s** contributions to our League and to the Greater Houston community through her commitment to “leading an integrated life.” Finally, this issue ends with an interview with Chiquapin Preparatory School alumna, **Melida Perez-Errasquin Van**, who is an active League member today, a testament to the League’s impact through mentorship.

It is my honor to lead this publication. I am so thankful to **Sara-Nell Van Lant**, sustainer advisor, who is always available with wisdom and a “Hey lady!” whenever I call and to **Courtney Durham**, Communications Director, who has provided constant support and encouragement. I am thankful to **Valerie Henderson**, assistant editor, and our entire *Houston News* team. Finally, I would be remiss not to mention my appreciation for the strong leadership offered by **Dionella Martinez**, Membership Vice President.

This issue is dedicated to gratitude but also grit, which may seem somewhat contradictory, but both are essential traits to carry us through the highs and the lows. Gratitude calls for us to stop and reflect, but grit pushes us to keep moving. In the past few years, we have endured much, yet we continue to serve and to give, more resilient than ever and with a future full of possibility.

Megan N. Anson

 Houston News Editor

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On May 22, 2023, **Anne Sears**, the outgoing president of The Junior League Of Houston, Inc., passed the symbolic gavel to her successor, **Amanda Hanks Bayles**. In that moment, Amanda assumed the high honor and responsibility of serving as the 100th president of one of the largest leagues in the world.

by: *Suzanne Kerr, Sustainer Writer*

Anne Sears' 2022 – 2023 “Better Together” theme grew out of Anne’s own League experience: “Through our collective efforts, we can have a greater impact on the community than we could as individuals. League membership offers women the opportunity to meet and engage with other women who share a commitment to “Building A Better Community.” The structure of our placements offer members the opportunity to try new things knowing that they have the support of other League members who are invested in their success.”

“Better Together” also aptly described the return of League members to in-person meetings and events after being apart for so long during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Anne’s accomplishments were many, but she is most proud of “being part of the planning for the League building’s refresh and participating in the selection of DePelchin Children’s Center to receive the League’s Centennial Anniversary Gift of \$2 million dollars.” The Centennial gift will help fund the construction of a new volunteer center.

PASSING OF THE GAVEL

Upon receiving the gavel, **Amanda Hanks Bayles**, remarked that she felt “grateful for all of the people who believed in me and for my fantastic team who inspires me each and every day.” She also felt privileged to have watched and learned from Anne: “If an issue presented itself, Anne would make sure she understood all of the facts and circumstances, and then work with her team to make sure everyone felt engaged as a path forward was created.” Amanda also admired “Anne’s public speaking skills and her ability to remain calm in any situation.”

Amanda chose “Grounded in Gratitude” as the theme of her 2023 – 2024 Presidency: “My time in the League has kept me grounded. It has given me perspective, insight and a deep desire to leave our community in a better condition than I found it.” One of Amanda’s challenges for every League member is “to practice gratitude daily.” The theme’s symbol is the Houston oak tree known for its strength and longevity. Amanda is “so grateful to the 12 forward-thinking women who founded the League in 1915 (thereby planting the tree), and to the thousands of women who followed the founders’ lead by planting acorns throughout our community, giving the League an exemplary record of charitable achievement.” Amanda will emphasize “some important lessons we can all learn from a tree: (I) remember your roots, (II) go out on a limb, (III) be content with your natural beauty, (IV) shelter others, (V) reach for the sky, and (VI) stay grounded.”

Anne has every confidence in her successor: “Amanda’s big picture thinking and analytical mind result in excellent decision-making. She is also an incredibly hard worker. Amanda has a huge

“GROUNDED IN GRATITUDE”



Amanda with husband Michael and parents Nita and Jerry Hanks



Members of the 2019 – 2020 Executive Committee



The 2022 – 2023 and 2023 – 2024 Executive Committees



Past, present and future League Presidents Jennifer Scheifley Roberts, Mary Lee Wilkens, Amanda Hanks Bayles and Anne Sears

love for the League and its members, which she expresses through creative and fun ways to foster team building and member engagement. I cannot think of a better combination to guide the League forward.”

With the reins of the League in her capable hands, Amanda will take to heart the advice Anne offered her:

“ENJOY ALL OF THE RELATIONSHIPS YOUR ROLE AS PRESIDENT CREATES AND STRENGTHENS.”



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Michael A. Belfort, MD
Obstetrician/Gynecologist In-Chief





Pamela House Lovett with Sustaining Club President, Amy Dunn Comiskey and Junior League of Houston President, Amanda Hanks Bayles

2023 – 2024

ADELAIDE LOVETT BAKER AWARD RECIPIENT

by: Caroline Jogerst Sabin, Sustainer News Writer

Pamela House Lovett

The Adelaide Lovett Baker Award was initiated in 2002 to recognize a sustainer member who has continued to serve and make a major impact on her community through her volunteer or professional work following her active involvement in the League. Adelaide Lovett Baker was one of twelve remarkable young women who founded the Junior League of Houston in 1925 to address community needs. She was an inspirational leader and served as the League's first president.

Business professional, community leader, daughter, wife, mother, grandmother and friend: this year's recipient of the Junior League of Houston's Adelaide Lovett Baker Award, **Pamela House Lovett**, sets the bar high for living a full and rewarding life. Living by her motto of "leading an integrated life," Pam has successfully combined caring for her family, working full-time and giving back to her community through her ongoing voluntarism and leadership with the Junior League of Houston for over 35 years.

Additionally, Pam has taken her skills beyond the League to various volunteer leadership roles at DePelchin Children's Center, The Rose and other business and nonprofit organizations in Houston. According to Dorothy Gibbons, co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of The Rose, "Pam epitomizes the ability to share community concerns as well as provide tangible support that enables us to implement needed changes. Her generosity extends beyond the customary gifts bestowed upon the nonprofit community and encompasses sharing her wisdom, time and profound understanding of human nature. One of her tidbits of advice shared often with board members has become my favorite, 'Noses In and Hands Off,'— that's our job as board members."

Pam has always viewed her volunteer work as a complement to her professional and family life. She credits her years as a Junior League active member while she was a young professional in helping her to develop new skills and a more comprehensive view of our city. She says her biggest take away from her Junior League experience was the ability to explore different aspects of Houston and to develop a broad and diverse group of friends. Pam continues to marvel at the League's successful annual leadership transition and the respect that League has earned with nonprofit organizations throughout



Pamela House Lovett with Adelaide Lovett Baker Luncheon Chairs, Maidie Ryan and Shannon Robinson

the city for its committed and trained volunteers who serve on many nonprofit boards.

Pam, a native of Arkansas, moved to Houston in the late seventies following college to assume a position in sales with AT&T. Pam considered pursuing a Master's in Business Administration, but instead decided on law school. She remarks that while she was sleep deprived from working and attending law school at the same time, she continues to value how studying law impacted her in many



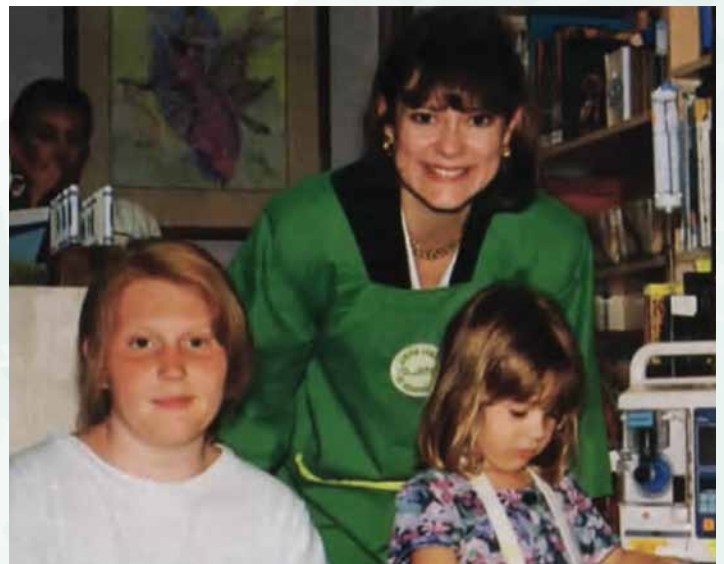


positive ways. Aside from its technical and structural aspects, she says that it taught her to see all sides of an issue, which greatly helps with decision-making. Pam credits both what she learned in law school and during her active League years with positioning her for her roles as President of Economic Development at the Greater Houston Partnership and later as Senior Vice President/Director of Business Development and Community Affairs at Comerica Bank.

Pam met her husband, Edgar O. Lovett II, around this same time and subsequently joined a family with a long legacy of community commitment. Pam was a perfect fit with this large family and its extensive engagement in Houston. Edgar's aunt was Adelaide Lovett Baker and his mother, sister-in-law and niece were all past League presidents. Other members of the extended Lovett family through several generations have also been actively engaged with the League, so it is very fitting that Pam is receiving this year's award for her exceptional service to the League and the Houston community.

When asked about her fondest Junior League memories, Pam is quick to recall working during her first pregnancy in the Tea Room Bar. She says that orange rolls became a beloved household staple as a result. She rates her most rewarding experience as her time spent at Texas Children's Hospital where she initially worked on special projects developing arts and crafts programs for children. Pam eventually served as chair of the project, which was like managing a small Junior League. She still recalls many of the children's names and faces with admiration for their resilience and positive attitudes in spite of their challenges.

Pam has continued to give back to the League. She has been active in the Sustaining Club and served as its president in 2015 – 2016. Pam has put her business development skills to work to raise funds for the Charity Ball Underwriting Committee and is currently hard at work on the Centennial Anniversary Fundraising Sustainer Committee. The League also benefits from her business acumen with her service on the Junior League of Houston Foundation Board. Pam states, "The League is a long-term affiliation, one that continues to fulfill my passion to help others while providing opportunities for new experiences and friends." The League continues to be an essential part in achieving her goal to lead an integrated life and we know that our Houston community and all of us benefit greatly from her work.





Pamela House Lovett with her family – Andrew Dolan, Julia Lovett and Gar Lovett

“Storms make trees take deeper roots.”

~Dolly Parton



*Pamela House Lovett with Past Adelaide Lovett Baker Award Recipients:
Andrea Davidson, Cynthia Adkins, Dorothy Ables, Jan Redford, Flo McGee and Joanie Haley*

SPOTLIGHT ON COMMUNITY PROJECTS

by: *Laura Prus, Community Communications Manager*

TAKE A LOOK AT A FEW OF THE HOUSTON ORGANIZATIONS
WHERE THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF HOUSTON IS MAKING AN IMPACT.

the Houston Museum of *natural science*

HOUSTON MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCE

The founding principle for the Houston Museum of Natural Science (HMNS) was simple: Science can enhance everyone's life. For the Houston Independent School District (HISD) students that visit the museum each year, Junior League of Houston volunteers ensure this theory rings true.

League volunteers have an opportunity to impact every fourth and seventh grade class in HISD—these students are among the more than half a million school children that visit the museum on field trips each year. During their shifts, volunteers spend time at the museum district campus and serve as touchcart and tour docents.

The League's volunteers engage the children through presenting artifact touchcarts in the museum's exhibit halls and working alongside museum staff and HMNS volunteers to give tours to promote learning, awareness, exploration, and discovery for all. League volunteers have the opportunity to learn about the museum for themselves, then share a wide range of scientific knowledge to visiting students.

In addition, the League recently provided funding to assist HMNS in reaching a wider audience. Pascale Rucker, Senior Development Officer for the museum stated, "Thank you so very much for the grant funding to provide Spanish translations for the museum's digital guide! We are grateful for the opportunity to make our halls more accessible to the Houston community."



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Ronald McDonald House Houston offers a home away from home, providing care, compassion and hope to families with seriously ill children being treated in Texas Medical Center member institutions. League volunteers provide a warm welcome to these families by serving meals; providing engaging games, crafts and socialization; as well as maintaining family rooms.



**Children's
Museum
of Houston**

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM OF HOUSTON

The League is well-versed in the history of the Children's Museum of Houston. After the museum's name was registered in 1981, and a Board of Directors was assembled, a JLH committee traveled the country to study children's programs of art and science museums, as well as the few existing children's museums. The ideas culled from those programs were used to engage audiences in support of the new museum.

Today, the Children's Museum of Houston serves more than one million children and families. Among them are the fourth-grade girls enrolled in Title I schools who take part in the Overnight Adventures – a unique program that provides an unforgettable opportunity to spend the night in the Children's Museum of Houston exploring exhibits and taking part in activities led by League volunteers. Across four Friday nights throughout the school year, League volunteers spend the night at the museum with the girls to provide educational opportunities and guide them through craft projects during their night in the museum.



*Iris Hill Crabtree and Olivia Giese volunteering at
Children's Museum of Houston*



CHILD ADVOCATES, INC.

On any given day, there are more than 2,000 kids in foster care that have been removed from their homes because of life-threatening abuse or neglect. League volunteers support Child Advocates, Inc. to make a profound difference for these children through the creation of Life Books and hosting event... Life Books Volunteers create scrapbooks for the children showcasing how important each of them are and their progression from birth to the present. Special Project Volunteers work on a variety of events supporting the children including a holiday party, the Houston Children's Festival and wrapping holiday gifts. "We are always grateful to renew this special partnership that makes such an impact for the children we serve," shared the agency.



PICTURE PALS – THE WESTVIEW SCHOOL

The Westview School is one of only a handful of schools in the world and the only school in the greater Houston area that specifically focuses on both academics and social skills. League volunteers assist upper elementary and middle school students by being their Picture Pal. Through a letter exchange format, volunteers use pictures to build the foundation of a meaningful social exchange. "We sincerely appreciate the Junior League's support of our special little school through the Picture Pals program and the generous contribution to our scholarship fund. Both of these programs provide tremendous opportunities for our students."



League volunteers at Dress for Success Houston

1,300 STRONG:

HOW ACTIVE LEAGUE VOLUNTEERS ARE "BUILDING A BETTER COMMUNITY"

by: Laura Prus, Community Communications Manager

Imagine a Houston where there is always a helping hand. It is a place where families can flourish, resources are plentiful and children grow into their overflowing potential.

Through the contribution of 1,300 active volunteers and approximately \$2 million in volunteer time and financial support, this is what the Junior League of Houston hopes to achieve. Each day, the League's members strive to "Build A Better Community." What began with 12 women and the League's first community project, the Junior League Health Center, has flourished into a robust and far-reaching organization.

Today, the League partners with 32 non-profit agencies to address a variety of critical needs in the community including basic needs, health care, abuse and neglect of children, abuse of women, literacy, cultural enrichment, the elderly, teen pregnancy and mentoring young women.

In addition to providing volunteer support through its members, the League also serves agencies through community assistance grants, the outside board representative program, emergency and resource

contingency grants and through IMPACT volunteers, who assist with short-term projects.

"The community projects within the League provide assistance in a myriad of ways," said **Laura Whitten**, this year's Community Vice President. "Our organization can provide volunteers and expertise – solutions that can help drive change for our neighbors and fellow Houstonians. Not only that, but through community voluntarism, our members can be on-the-ground with non-profit groups, serving the community and witnessing their impact first-hand."

Community volunteers are required to complete 60 hours during each active year of service—donating over 37,500 hours to the community each year. Their time is spent in community-based placements, generally at a non-profit agency, which fall into one of five impact areas: culture and enrichment, education and mentorship, family support, health and well-being and neighborhood outreach.

Volunteer activities range from serving as camp counselors, to acting as a docent at one of the city's rich cultural establishments, to

providing mentorship to school-aged children, offering meals, assembling crafts, providing companionship through song and many other activities. League members are encouraged to explore new opportunities for each of their active years, ensuring a robust experience through voluntarism.

“There are so many opportunities for our volunteers to find a way to give back,” says Whitten. “As a volunteer you can push the boundaries of your comfort zone, channel your talents for good or discover an unforeseen passion to connect with one of the incredible organizations. It certainly makes an impact with the agency and it is also personally rewarding.”

While volunteer activities had to be adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic, the League is pleased to continue pursuing partnerships with the following organizations for in-person volunteer activities for the 2023 – 2024 League year.

“Trees give peace to the souls of men.”

~Nora Waln



CULTURE AND ENRICHMENT

These agencies promote learning, awareness, exploration and discovery for adults, children and families.

- Children’s Museum of Houston
- Holocaust Museum of Houston
- Houston Arboretum & Nature Center
- Houston Museum of Natural Science
- The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston



EDUCATION AND MENTORSHIP

These agencies support children through mentoring relationships, as well as children with health issues.

- Books Between Kids
- ChinquaPals – Chinquapin Preparatory School
- DePelchin Children’s Center
- Pen Pals
- Picture Pals – The Westview School
- Star of Hope



FAMILY SUPPORT

These agencies address basic needs, family cohesiveness and support those who have been neglected or abused.

- BEAR...BE A Resource for CPS Kids
- Bo’s Place
- Casa de Esperanza de los Niños
- Child Advocates, Inc
- Houston Area Women’s Center
- Kids’ Meals
- Ronald McDonald House Houston



HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

These agencies focus on providing comfort, companionship, and emotional and social support to people of all ages.

- Camp Hope – Allies in Hope
- Baylor Teen Health Clinic
- Camp For All 2U
- Camp Janus
- Camp Rainbow – American Diabetes Association
- Texas Children’s Hospital
- The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center



NEIGHBORHOOD OUTREACH

These agencies connect volunteers with the Houston community through outreach.

- CPR
- Dress for Success Houston
- Houston Food Bank
- IMPACT
- Project C.U.R.E.
- Sing Along With Seniors (SAWS)
- VIEW (Volunteers in Evening Workshop)





CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY COFFEE TABLE BOOK

by: *Sarah Davidson, Centennial Anniversary Communications Manager*

Centennial Anniversary Book Celebrates “A Century of Building A Better Community”



Centennial Anniversary Book Committee members conduct research in the League archives

In the spring of 2023, the Board of Directors approved an exciting project—a coffee table book celebrating The Junior League of Houston’s Centennial Anniversary. While the Junior League has extensive publishing experience with seven titles throughout its history, the newly formed Centennial Anniversary Book Committee is tasked with creating the League’s first true coffee table book.

In celebration of the League’s upcoming 100th anniversary, the book will showcase photos, mementoes and stories that commemorate the League’s century of impact in the Houston community and document a timeline from the organization’s founding in 1925 through the 2025 Charity Ball. Throughout the summer, the 12 members of the newly formed Centennial Anniversary Book Committee have been busy researching, compiling historical documents and anecdotes and organizing pre-sales to launch the book’s production.

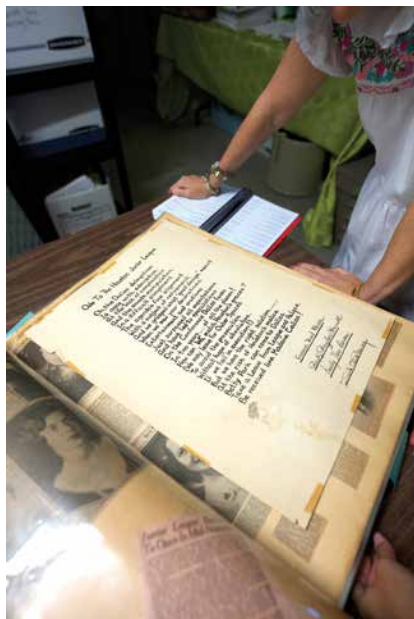
The Centennial Anniversary Coffee Table Book is intended to serve as a stand-alone piece of history that League members can purchase as a celebratory memento or gift. League archive materials,

personal interviews and historical reports, both internal and external, will highlight the ingenuity and forward-thinking mindset that has united League members over “A Century of Building A Better Community.” Together these resources will detail the rich history of the organization and illustrate what the League has meant to its members and the Houston community for decades.

Due to the scope and significance of the project, the Centennial Anniversary Book Committee, chaired by **Margie Sutton**, is unique in composition with eight active members and four sustaining members; all members contribute to the research and book organization with the sustainer members offering perspective and guidance. Margie shared, “We are so thankful for the creativity and time our sustainer members provide, both those members serving on the committee and those reaching out to generously share their advice and personal memories. The true partnership of active and sustainer members on the committee and throughout the League is a testament to the strength of the League’s stated values.” President-Elect **Mary Lee**

Wilkens, who oversees the Centennial Anniversary Committee, reflected on the importance of sustainer perspectives for the book: "Given the significant historical context of the Centennial book, we are excited to use this opportunity to capture memories, particularly of our sustainer members. Each League member's experience is unique yet linked, and we hope the book tells the stories that reflect the spirit and community that the Junior League of Houston has meant to generations of volunteers."

The Centennial book will be available in limited quantity for pre-order this fall for \$100. All League members, supporters and friends who purchase the book prior to Friday, March 1, 2024, will be included in a special book cover reveal, with the first 500 purchasers receiving a commemorative gift upon book pick-up.



Please visit the League's website to share your own League memories and stay tuned for opportunities to purchase this incredible piece of Junior League of Houston history!

CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY BOOK COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Actives:

- Margie Sutton,
Centennial Anniversary Book Chair
- Melissa Craig
- Claudia Estrada

Courtney Nunnally

- Catherine Powers
- Shelly Skrehot
- Kathleen Song
- Meredith Symonds

Sustainers:

- Emily Capps
- Andrea Broussard Davidson
- Mary Itz
- Maidie Ryan

In celebration of "A Century of Building A Better Community," the Junior League of Houston is proud to launch pre-sales of the commemorative Centennial Anniversary Coffee Table Book. Look back on the rich history of the Junior League and its impact on the Houston community through dedicated volunteer efforts and developing the potential of women. Through pictures and storytelling, the book will document the incredible legacy of the League, its members and its treasured community partners from the last 100 years and inspire future generations to come. The book will be available in limited quantity and will be released in Fall 2025. Pre-order yours today on the Centennial Anniversary webpage to own a piece of JLH history!

Members who pre-order their copy of this limited edition print by Friday, March 1, 2024, will get an exclusive sneak peek of the cover design in Spring 2024!

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JUNIOR LEAGUE OF
HOUSTON HISTORY



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PROVISIONAL ENGAGEMENT EVENTS / PROVISIONAL TRAINING

by: *Julie Collado, Membership Communications Manager*

The 2023 – 2024 Provisional Class attended a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) workshop led by the DEI Committee on Monday, July 24, 2023. The energy in the Junior League Ballroom was nervous excitement. The Ballroom was configured in a way where provisional members could sit with other members of similar “identities,” including “Swifties,” “New to Houston,” “Runners,” among many others. The table themes served as easy conversation starters, but more importantly, created an environment where members could celebrate their authentic selves. After introductions from Provisional Chair, **Jordan McPhail**, and DEI Director, **Marie Newton**, DEI Manager - Training **Brianna TenBrink**, taught shared language and led an exercise in acknowledging and sharing our identities.

The DEI workshop is one of numerous training and education opportunities in the Provisional Course. The intent of the Provisional Course is to educate new members on the mission and operations of Junior League and to build cultural competency to better serve the Houston community. When provisional member, **Anais Ubaldo**, was asked about what she has enjoyed the most about the Provisional Course, she noted, “My favorite part of the provisional training/ engagement process has undoubtedly been the DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) training ... One of the most powerful aspects of this training was the opportunity it provided for all of us to be vulnerable and share our identities. It was truly eye-opening to listen to others’ stories, understanding how their unique backgrounds and experiences have shaped them into the individuals they are today.”

In addition to training and education, engagement events are built into the Provisional Course to help members make new friends and foster a sense of inclusion. Provisional member, **Breana Carrier**, moved to Houston three years ago. As a newcomer, she “yearned to



Provisional members attend training

find a community and make a difference.” She attended the first engagement event in the spring at CIEL Restaurant and Lounge and “... walked in only to suddenly realize, I didn’t know a soul! Immediately, everyone welcomed me and congratulated me and the other provisionals on coming and embracing JLH!”

As an additional resource, provisional members are paired with

provisional mentors. Provisional mentors help new members enjoy their first exposure to membership, provide guidance on the Tea Room and community placements and answer various questions. **Helyna Bledsoe Thompson**, an active member in her 11th year of service and past Membership Vice President, decided to serve as a provisional mentor because of the impactful connections she has made in the League. When asked what she remembered most about her provisional year, she shared a fun story: “Susan Barnes, the Texas Children’s Chair at the time, organized an Opening Style Show table for provisionals ... I took a chance and signed up to sit at the table of strangers. Even though I started the night with lots of anxiety, by the end of the evening, I’d made a great connection with another provisional. With time, that connection developed into a friendship; I was even a bridesmaid in her wedding a few years ago! Now I cheer her on in her role as the Junior League of Houston’s 100th President!”

This year’s provisional class reflects the most diverse body of women in the League’s history. Roughly 48 percent of provisionals identify as non-White/Caucasian. The percentage of provisional members aged 30 and older has nearly doubled from 10 years ago and over 90 percent of provisionals work outside the home. Thanks to the efforts of the League leadership team, the Provisional Course has evolved to support its changing membership, strengthened by a wide set of talents, skills, perspectives and life experiences.

“Like branches on a tree, we may grow in different directions, yet our roots remain as one. Each of our lives will always be a special part of one another.”

~Unknown

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CHILDSPREE 2023

by: *Sarah Davidson*, Centennial Anniversary Communications Manager

On Saturday, August 5, 2023, the Junior League of Houston hosted and sponsored its sixteenth-annual Childspree, a back-to-school partnership in conjunction with JLH's community project Child Advocates, Inc.

Through the generosity of Target, stores across the Greater Houston area open in the early morning hours on a Saturday each August to host children living in foster care for back-to-school shopping. This year, over 40 League members participated at the Central Target in Sawyer Heights, where children arrived at the store before sunrise and set off on a shopping spree with a list of needed items prepared by their guardians. Ranging in age from four to 18 years, the students selected clothing, undergarments, shoes and accessories for the approaching school year with assistance from League members. Each child was given a \$125 gift card donated by the League and enjoyed breakfast provided by McDonald's after the shopping concluded.

Former Community Special Projects Chairs **Karen Burke** and **Stephanie "Steph" Magers** have volunteered together at Childspree almost every year since the event's inception in 2008. Now League sustainers, both women still make a point to participate together in Childspree each year, finding time to visit over breakfast after the event concludes. Friends for over 20 years, the two first met as members of the Houston Texas Exes chapter and later served on the Junior League of Houston's Community Council together.

Karen, who chaired the first-ever Childspree event in 2008, and has volunteered every year since then, reflects on the event:



“He who plants a tree, plants a hope.”

~Lucy Larcom



Members of the 2023 – 2024 Executive Committee, Elizabeth Kendrick, Amanda Hanks Bayles, Mary Lee Wilkens, Laura Whitten and Dionella Martinez

“Childspree is always an amazing morning! Seeing the children’s excitement and hearing how they have looked forward to shopping with us is so rewarding. A short amount of volunteer time invested makes such a big difference for a student’s school year.”

Steph, who has volunteered at Childspree since 2009, chaired the event in 2012 as Community Special Projects Chair. She notes, “Childspree is the League event that I look forward to the most each year. It’s so much fun to see the smile on a kid’s face when they receive a new item. It may be the first brand-new thing that they have ever received, or they may be shopping to attend a new school. A small contribution by the League makes them feel confident and happy.”

Child Advocates, Inc., which directly benefits children who are in the custody of the state due to abuse or neglect, has been a League partner for almost 40 years. This year, over 20 League volunteers are assigned to the Child Advocates placement where they serve as either Special Projects Volunteers or Life Books Volunteers. Special Projects Volunteers participate in the Houston Children’s Festival and host quarterly birthday parties for the Child Advocates children. Life Books Volunteers prepare scrapbooks which serve as therapeutic tools for the children to show that they are important and to demonstrate their progress from birth to the present.



League sustainer and Past President, Stephanie “Steph” Magers, League sustainer, Karen Burke and Community Vice President, Laura Whitten



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DEI GROUP MEETING: JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION

PRIVATE TOUR OF EMANCIPATION PARK CONSERVANCY'S GROUNDS

by: *Stacia Dancsak, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager – Communications*



Juneteenth is celebrated each year on June 19th to commemorate the date in 1865 when, in the wake of the American Civil War, Major General Gordon Granger ordered the final enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation in Galveston, Texas. In June of 2021, President Joe Biden forever memorialized this event in history by declaring June 19th a national holiday. The Houston community, in particular, has a close tie to the significance of this event due to the proximity.

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee was grateful to honor Juneteenth this year, by hosting a private guided tour and presentation about the historical Emancipation Park Conservancy (EPC) on Saturday, June 10, 2023, where over 37 people attended, including League members and their families. The 10-acre Emancipation Park, located in Houston's Third Ward, was purchased by four former enslaved people in 1872 and served as a location to celebrate Juneteenth. Until the 1950s, it was the only public park and swimming pool in Houston open to African Americans. The new Emancipation Park is designed as an interwoven tapestry of buildings

and landscape celebrating the park's rich history and embracing the present and future of its community.

The DEI committee hosted a welcome breakfast, consisting of donuts and kolaches, for all to partake prior to the start of the in-person event. Junior League members enjoyed the opportunity to tour Emancipation Park Conservancy's grounds, led by the park's devoted staff members. In addition to the expansive outdoor space, EPC houses a beautiful indoor space which consistently showcases African American exhibits and artwork. At the time of the tour, the exhibit consisted of photographs dating back to the park's original Juneteenth celebrations in the early 1900s. Additionally, the expansive indoor auditorium space featured an exhibit, sponsored by HEB, highlighting notable African American innovators from both Houston and across Texas. The in-person event was followed by a virtual tour of the park on Monday, July 31, 2023, where over 50 League members continued their conversation on the park's relevance to the Houston community.

During the tour, Junior League members discovered more about the park's rich history in our city. As one of the city's oldest parks, it was



Junior League members enjoyed the opportunity to tour Emancipation Park Conservancy's grounds, led by the park's devoted staff members.

given by its owners to the city of Houston in 1916 and remained the only park open to Black Houstonians until the end of the Jim Crow era. In 2007, the park was named a historic landmark and in 2019 underwent a \$30 million dollar renovation to develop what is now Emancipation Park Conservancy. At this time, it was designated by the United National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as a Site of Memory Associated with the Slave Route Project.

The park boasts a beautiful public swimming pool, tennis court

and pickleball courts, a baseball diamond and state of the art fitness facility where they offer free group fitness classes. The space is available for rent and in the past has been the location of family reunions and corporate events. Opportunities to tour the park both virtually and in-person are available through the park's website. Please do not miss this opportunity to learn more about Houston's rich history and take advantage of the beautiful space Emancipation Park has to offer.

Thank you to all who attended these events to honor Juneteenth.

“And into the forest I go, to lose my mind and find my soul.”

~John Muir



Members enjoy the indoor exhibit, highlighting significant African Americans throughout Texas history.

TEA ROOM

SPECIAL EVENTS

by: *Blair Burdine, Tea Room Communications Manager*

BACK TO SCHOOL BASH

School is back in session! On Sunday, August 27, 2023, parents and kids kicked off the new school year at the League's annual Back to School Bash. Everyone enjoyed a picnic-style meal that featured fan favorites such as chicken fingers, mac and cheese bites, watermelon iced tea and ice cream. Attendees had the opportunity to donate their gently used infancy, toddler and booster seats for the refugee families the League serves via the Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston Car Seat Drive on the day of the event. The indoor bowling was a huge hit and parents loved the first day of school picture frames their kids made and took home. Back to school shopping was made easier thanks to the vendors that included Gram & Grain, Color Primavera, Parker Joe, Playfully Engaged, Stems by Claire and Prickly Pear.



OPENING STYLE SHOW:

PRESENTED BY TEXAS CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

PREMIER COMMUNITY PARTNER

Members and guests were able to preview all things fall fashion at “An Autumn Fairy Tale” Opening Style Show, held on Thursday, September 14, 2023. Houston’s own David Peck played the role of Prince Charming as members of the League walked the runway in daytime, cocktail and evening looks. Whimsical floral arrangements were scattered throughout the ballroom and the three-course menu featured thoughtful touches of autumn woven throughout the fare. Finally, guests were able to relax in the *Ride in Style* lounge, which was graciously hosted by the League’s Community Champions, Alto and David Peck.



Designer David Peck with Junior League of Houston Opening Style Show models



Executive Committee with David Peck; Dionella Martinez, Laura E. Thompson, Mary Lee Wilkens, Amanda Hanks Bayles, Elizabeth Kendrick and Laura Whitten

BUBBLES AND BRUNCH

It was once recommended that one start the day with a smile and finish it with champagne... and this year's Bubbles and Brunch attendees got to do just that! On Sunday, October 8, 2023, guests enjoyed a New Orleans style three-course seated brunch and bubbly libations, while League members modeled the latest fashions from BURU throughout the Tea Room. Morgan Hutchinson, founder of BURU, attended the event and shared how her brand is designed and styled for the modern mother. BURU provided a fun shopping experience, with a give back to support the League.



Amanda Hanks Bayles, President, Morgan Hutchinson, BURU Founder and Elizabeth Kendrick, Development Vice President



Morgan Hutchinson, Founder of BURU, with Junior League of Houston Bubbles and Brunch models



JLH MINOR LEAGUERS PRESENT:

THE PUMPKIN PARADE

Once again, the Junior League Minor Leaguers showed us all they were too cute to spook! On Sunday, October 29, 2023, League members and their littles gathered in the Ballroom for the Pumpkin Parade Style Show, where children had the chance to practice their trick or treating walk as they strutted down the runway in their Halloween costumes. When not enjoying the buffet lunch, crafts and service activities provided ample entertainment for all attendees.



CHAMPAGNE TEA WITH ROB LANDES

On Sunday, November 5, 2023, Rob Landes tickled the ivories for a captive audience during this year's Champagne Tea. The afternoon tea service provided guests the chance to enjoy a variety of teas, tea sandwiches, pastries, scones and champagne, all while being entertained with an intimate piano concert. And the pop-up gift market offered guests the opportunity to get a head start on their holiday shopping!



MERRIMENT WITH MALCOLM

Always a highlight of the holiday season, Tea Room General Manager Malcolm Rowland's Merriment with Malcolm wine dinner was a night full of delicious food and laughter. The holiday theme provided a warm and festive environment for guests to enjoy a delicious five-course seated dinner, paired with wines curated by Malcolm himself.





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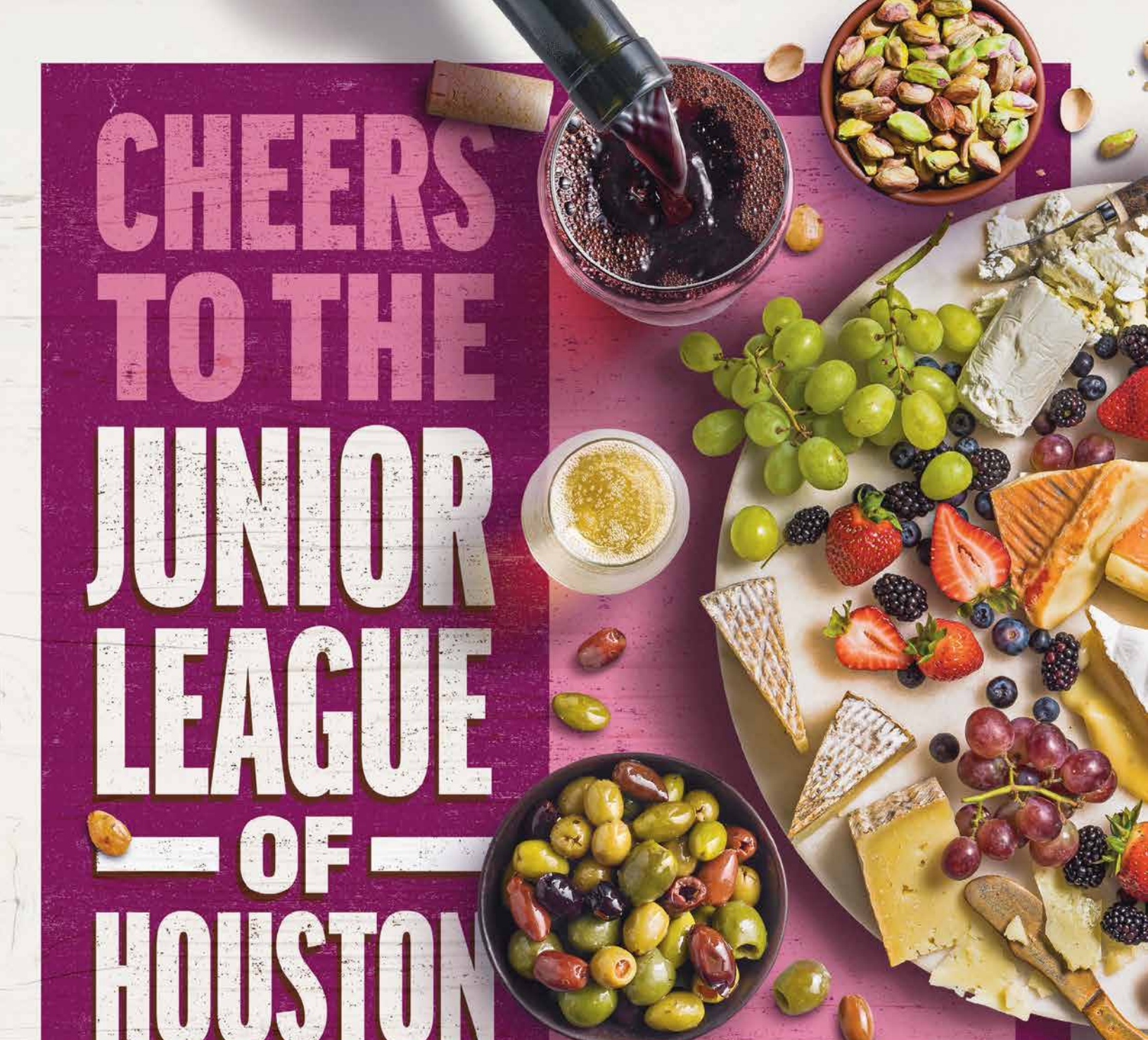
LUNCH WITH SANTA

PRESENTED BY TEXAS CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL
PREMIER COMMUNITY PARTNER

Jolly Old Saint Nicholas once again steered his sleigh to the League building to celebrate the annual favorite, Lunch with Santa. With the stunning décor of the League as a backdrop, guests were treated to complimentary photos with Santa, a service activity the whole family enjoyed, and a creative menu showcasing holiday stories from around the world.







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SPOTLIGHT ON SUSTAINER MEMBERS

VOLUME 1

by: Irene Giannakakis, Houston News Writer

ONE OF THE GREATEST ASSETS OF THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF HOUSTON IS ITS MEMBERSHIP. WITH A BASE OF OVER 4,000 MEMBERS, JLH IS ONE OF THE LARGEST LEAGUES IN THE COUNTRY. EVERY VOLUNTEER BRINGS THEIR UNIQUE TALENTS, PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES TO THE LEAGUE.



The list of outstanding and inspiring women who have graced our membership is truly remarkable. As a training organization, the Junior League of Houston has equipped thousands of women to be outstanding leaders in their personal and professional lives. **Wendy Lewis Armstrong, Joni Fichter, Lauren Brown Kupor, Elizabeth Love and Perry Ann Reed** are five such exemplars whose commitment to improving their communities upholds the League’s legacy of leadership, volunteerism and service above self.

Outside of her duties as the Chief Auditor and Director of Internal Audit for Houston’s Noble Corporation, Wendy Lewis Armstrong is committed to serving organizations like the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, the HCA Houston Healthcare Northwest Board of Trustees and the Alpha Kappa Omega sorority. Her

service to the League has greatly enhanced her involvement with these organizations. “JLH provided an opportunity for me to connect with amazing professional women with genuine, warm hearts and love for our beloved City of Houston,” says Wendy. These connections have cultivated her communication and leadership styles centered on leading with grace. Her leadership service in the League during the worst period of the COVID-19 pandemic taught her the value of reassessing priorities and approaching situations with the belief that everyone operates from good intentions. “You get out of the League what you put in, if you put in good faith with good intentions,” shared Wendy when asked what advice she would give to a new member. Wendy’s recent recognition as one of 2023’s Top 30 Influential Women of Houston is but one example of how her time in the League has contributed to her professional and personal success and how she has, in turn, used this experience to enrich our community.

To Joni Fichter, service to others is a way of life. Not only has she been a member of the League for 30 years, her professional experience as the owner of a career placement firm shows her commitment to



Wendy Lewis Armstrong



Joni Fichter

improving the lives of those in her community. When asked to share a powerful lesson from her time in the League, Joni said, “As a leader, learning to recognize the strengths in those whom we serve, and then helping each person capitalize on her own strengths for the betterment of the team, has been very valuable.” She

believes the empowerment of women to find solutions to community needs is one of the League’s greatest legacies over its 100 year history. This empowerment is evident in the many leadership roles she holds outside of the League, most recently joining the board of Cristo Rey Jesuit in 2021 where she chairs the school’s Corporate Work-Study program. In 2022, she was named as one of Houston’s Women of Distinction, honoring her passion for helping others.

Lauren Brown Kupor credits the League with empowering her to build strategy, be forward thinking and lead a team, skills she depends on daily as the communications director of a leading energy and home services company. “Always give people grace,” remarked Lauren when asked to share an impactful lesson from her time in the



Lauren Brown Kupor

League. She exemplified this belief regularly as Training and Education Director and as a member of the Nominating Committee. As Lauren reflects on the League’s 100-year history, she attributes the firm foundation established by the League’s steadfast volunteers which has kept it running smoothly for the

last century. Lauren’s commitment to service is exemplified further by her leadership to both The Shlenker School and Hermann Park Conservancy. In its next 100 years, Lauren believes that the League will continue pushing its members to innovate and find new ways to empower the communities they serve.

When asked what she hopes JLH will accomplish in its next century of service, Elizabeth Love believes the League’s historical success in developing its members to serve as community leaders will be an enduring feature. Elizabeth is no stranger to serving as a leader in



Elizabeth Love

her community as the CEO of the Jacob and Terese Hershey Foundation and as a member of five nonprofit boards. She is a recent recipient of the Gregg Cooke Award for Environmental Leadership, awarded by the Texas Energy Summit to recognize individuals whose efforts yield tangible improvements in the

lives of marginalized communities. “Through the League,” remarks Elizabeth, “I gained a better understanding of the challenges facing the Houston community and the organizations that are working to address them.” It is her commitment to navigating these challenges that provides an example for current and future members who, as Elizabeth says, “will shape what Houston is and will be in the future.”

As the current president and COO of Nicklaus Children’s Hospital, the only freestanding children’s hospital in south Florida, Perry Ann Reed credits her time in the League with equipping her with many key skills that have contributed to her professional success. Finding common ground and developing a united message among people with differing opinions and viewpoints are just a few

of these skills. Serving as JLH President and archivist are among Perry’s favorite memories of her service to the League, through which she was “filled with profound admiration for the remarkable women who paved the way for the present-day accomplishments.” Perry Ann is indeed one of those remarkable women.

Her service in numerous boards and organizations led to her being recognized with the Outstanding Community Volunteer Award from Texas Children’s Hospital. Perry Ann credits her effectiveness as a leader in the dynamic healthcare sector to decades of experience in JLH that “underscored the importance of emotional intelligence, trust, genuine collaboration and servant leadership”—values which will certainly guide the League towards fulfilling Perry Ann’s hope for continued excellence into its next century.



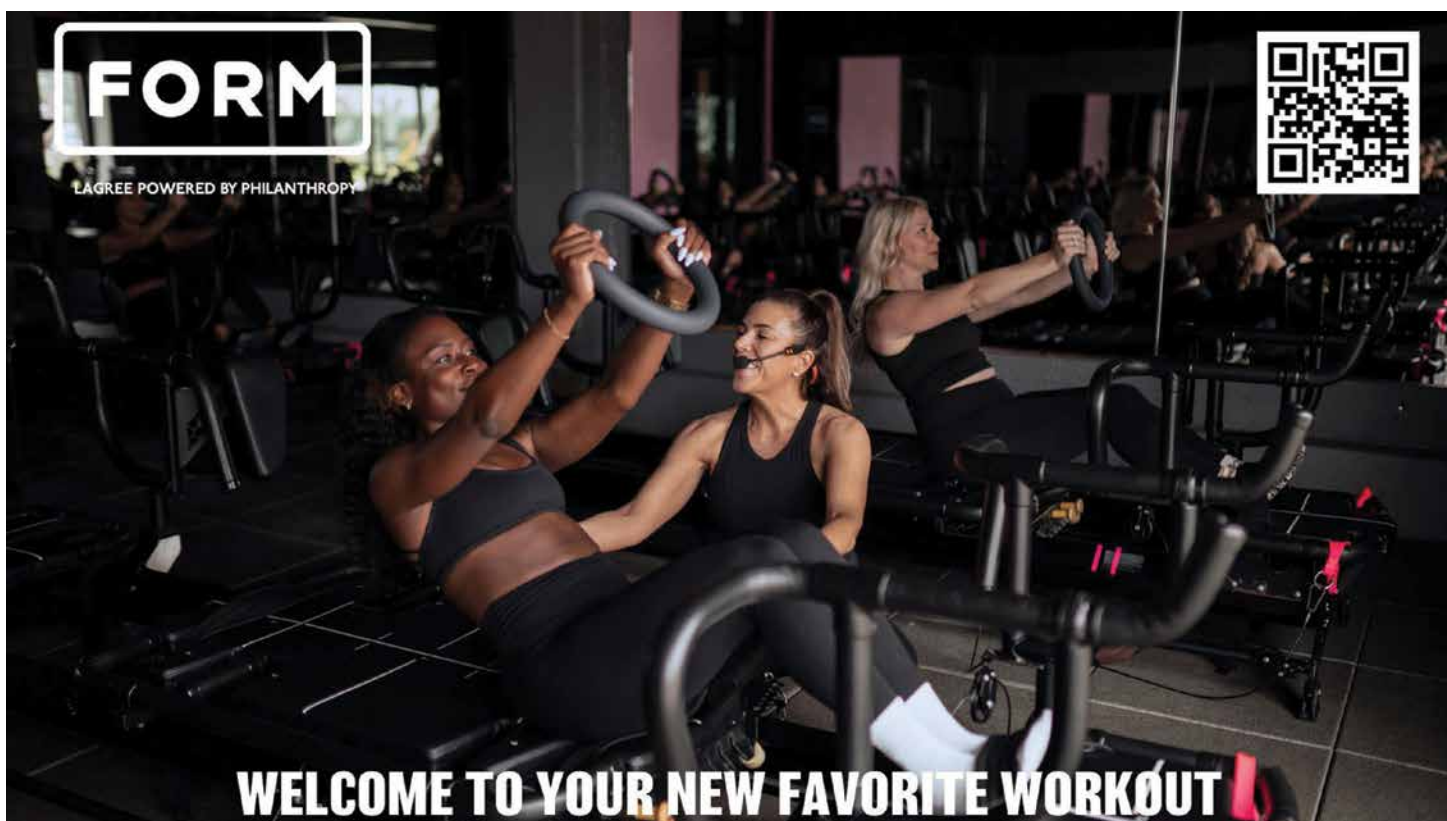
Perry Ann Reed

SPOTLIGHTED SUSTAINERS' FAVORITE LEAGUE MOMENTS



Thanks to many of the skills developed and enhanced in their time at the League, Wendy, Joni, Lauren, Elizabeth, and Perry Ann exemplify the League’s commitment to community, empowerment, leadership, and above all else—service. Their stories are but five

examples of the many women who are going above and beyond both inside and outside of JLH in all walks of life. It is this continued pursuit of excellence that will guarantee the League’s impact on Houston well into—and beyond—its next 100 years.





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100 YEARS

TOTALLY JLH: THE 1980s

by: **JeNeika Boone**, Sustainer Writer

As the 1970s ended and the 1980s began, the Junior League of Houston, Inc. was in the midst of profound transformation. As more active members entered the full-time workforce, the League worked to balance the needs of the community with the training and development needs of the membership. The League also had to shift to meet the demanding schedules of League members, many of whom were wives and mothers, along with their professional and community endeavors. With the typical “can do” spirit of Junior League members, the League met the challenges of the 1980s head on with enthusiasm!

Jan LeMaster Redford, 1980 – 1981 League President and the board kicked off the decade with the following goals:

- Look into the future,
- Improve administrative operations,
- Continue becoming a working part of AJL (Association of Junior Leagues) and
- Expand training opportunities for members.

These goals set the tone for the League’s strong focus during the decade on training volunteers and continuous adaption to the growing and changing needs of the membership. In the

September 1980 edition of *Houston News*, Jan noted “I think training is going to become an important facet of Junior League membership. I see this education as an addition to volunteer training, however, not as a substitute. As we become skilled in group dynamics, public speaking, or financial management, we can better serve our community in whatever capacity we choose.”

In line with that future focus and improvement of administrative operations, the Community Vice President role was added to the Executive Committee for the 1981 – 1982 League year. The Community Council was formed, with oversight for community projects and initiatives. When asked about the duties of the new council and Community Vice President, 1981 – 1982 President **Sarah Jones Baker** said “The Community Council and the Community Vice President are new and exciting additions this year. The Council hopes to provide information to the Board and to the membership about community programs, and to act as an information resource for Project Research, Project Study, Community Assistance and the Education Committees. The Council will approve and recommend to the Board all Project Research reports.”

“The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn.”

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Interest groups were formalized under the Community Council. Throughout the remainder of the decade, the League continued to refine the board and executive officer structure, eventually moving to a new board structure, as well as executive officer structure (consisting of President, President-Elect, Community Vice President, Financial Vice President, Membership Vice President, and Recording Secretary) during the 1985 – 1986 League year. Rotating day and night committee/council meeting times were offered to fit the schedules of members serving in those roles.

The 1980s also saw the League purchasing and programming its first computer, which allowed automation of many League tasks later in the decade, such as computerization of placement histories, interview data, Charity Ball information, administrative interests and placement requests. The League also purchased a top-of-the-line photocopier, which copied a speedy 70 pages in one minute! League leaders and staff rejoiced at these timesaving tools!

The League has always been on the frontlines in community and public affairs, and the 1980s were no exception. Community projects during the decade included Camp Rainbow, Children’s Theater, CPR, DePelchin Children’s Center, Child Advocates, Inc. (CASA), Harris County Juvenile Probation Department, Houston Area Women’s Center, Joyce Goldfarb Adult Development Clinic, Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of Natural Science, Musical Therapy, Puppetry, Ronald McDonald House, Sheltering Arms, Texas Children’s Hospital and VIEW (Volunteers in Evening Workshop). Position statements on topics such as children, voluntarism, water and the welfare of the elderly were adopted. AIDS education also became an important part of the training, education, and advocacy for League volunteers. Through its JLH Productions arm, the League produced a one-hour television special called *Child Abuse: Breaking the Cycle*, which aired on Channels 8 and 26, and a 30-minute documentary called *Homeless in Houston* that aired on Channel 8. Additionally, the League produced public service announcements on topics such as child abuse, smokeless tobacco, pollution in Buffalo Bayou, child immunization, retiree volunteers and Sheltering Arms Alzheimer’s Day Treatment Center. Finally, during the League’s 60th anniversary year in 1985 – 1986, a \$100,000 gift was made to Houston Child Guidance for a library.

Several development activities supported the League’s community programs during the decade. The number of Tea Room patron members increased to 5,800 in the 1980 – 1981 League year and to 6,000 during the 1981 – 1982 League year. Individual Tea Room patron member dues were \$20 per member. A mixed beverage license was acquired in 1982. By the end of the decade, the total revenue from Tea Room patron member dues exceeded \$168,000.



1980s Puppeteers



1980s Volunteer



CPR Training

Charity Ball net revenues increased year over year. The 41st Anniversary *Charity Ball Moonlight Masquerade*, held at the Westin Galleria, netted \$479,000. Additional themes during this time included *Under the Big Top* (1982), *New York New York* (1983), *A Celebration of Color* (1987), and *Born in the USA* (1988). In September 1983, the League's second volume of recipes, *The Star of Texas Cookbook*, was published by Doubleday. The cookbook was the result of several years of research and development, and lots of recipe testing and tasting! It was well received and a welcome accompaniment to the League's 1968 volume, *Houston Junior League Cookbook*.

Beginning in the late 1970s, the League considered whether the existing League building was sufficient space to house the growing membership. It was first decided to renovate and expand the existing building; however, an opportunity arose that the League could not pass up. In November 1983, the membership overwhelmingly voted to approve the simultaneous sale of 1626 Post Oak Park Drive to Tenneco and purchase from Tenneco Parcel #7 in Post Oak Park, located at 1811 Briar Oaks Drive. The official groundbreaking ceremony was held in October 1984, and construction began in January 1985. The fundraising goal of \$3.5 million for the building was reached in February 1985. The Post Oak Park Drive building was turned over to Tenneco on March 31, 1986, and the grand opening of 1811 Briar Oaks Drive was held on April 1, 1986, for League members and the community. An open house was held for Tea Room patron members on Sunday, April 6, 1986. League

members supervising the building and decorations process found it a labor of love and were excited about the possibilities enabled by the move into a larger facility. After the first year in the Briar Oaks Drive building, Tea Room patron member dues resulted in \$164,000 of revenue, which was a 41 percent increase from the



1980s Talent Show



1980s Charity Ball



prior year. Members and Tea Room patron members alike continue to enjoy the beauty and elegance of the JLH building which was so thoughtfully designed by the dedicated League volunteers of that time.

Membership training options were plentiful. League members benefitted from a myriad of group meeting options, prominent general meeting speakers and training on such topics as Assertiveness and Administrative Orientation and Communication Skills and Volunteer

Career Development. New admissions policies were enacted to comply with changes from AJL. Additionally, the SET (Special Event Team) requirement was introduced for actives and provisionals as a membership requirement. In April 1989, League membership totaled 3,442 members. By the end of the decade, the League had successfully navigated many of the challenges presented by the changes in membership and was poised for continued future growth during the 1990s.

“I took a walk in the woods and came out taller than the trees.”

~Henry David Thoreau





Melida Perez-Errasquin Van,
ChinquaPals volunteer

FULL CIRCLE:

Chinquapin Alumna and League Active member
mentors middle school girls through ChinquaPals Program

by: *Megan N. Anson, Houston News Editor*

If you told me when I was in middle school at Chinquapin that I would be back to volunteer, I would not have known how that would work, but it makes sense that I would come back full circle as a volunteer through the League,” said **Melida Perez-Errasquin Van**.

Melida was born in Mexico City and moved to Houston with her parents at an early age. Her parents heard of Chinquapin Preparatory School through word of mouth. They encouraged Melida to apply to be immersed in a setting where she could reach her full potential. Melida was accepted and started to attend Chinquapin during her last year of middle school and continued through graduation from high school in 2014.

Chinquapin is a private college-preparatory school founded in 1969 for students in grades six through twelve located 20 miles east of downtown Houston. Chinquapin prepares students from Houston’s under-resourced communities and schools for college through their unique mission which provides students with a high-quality education through small class sizes and intense preparation. More than 85 percent of their alumni graduate from college.

For over 16 years, the Junior League of Houston has provided volunteers, program support and grant funds in support of Chinquapin. League members assist the students through a mentorship program called ChinquaPals where the students improve their writing and communication skills and instill an appreciation for reading. They also participate in activities which include a book club and five other events (a holiday event, end of year celebration, cultural enrichment activity, a service project and an etiquette dinner). These activities allow significant interaction with League volunteers and provide the students with opportunities to strengthen their self-image and self-esteem. The interaction and activities help both the seventh-grade students and League volunteers appreciate and consider a broad range of perspectives. The League also provides grant support toward the salary for the head of the Middle School, the liaison for ChinquaPals.

“While voluntarism has always been important to Melida,

Chinquapin further instilled the value of giving back through its school motto, *Quid pro Quo*, or “Something for Something.” Students live this motto by participating in activities to give back to their school and to their communities.

During her Chinquapin years, Melida was involved in many different clubs and activities including drama club, speech and debate, tennis, basketball and served as manager for the flag football team. She became close with her fellow students and some of her teachers, one of which attended her November 2023 wedding in Vietnam. Chinquapin was a challenging school and both the curriculum and extracurricular school activities kept Melida busy, which she appreciated as it provided her with a strong foundation for college.

Through its small class sizes, Chinquapin also provided Melida with a sense of community, which she described as, “Making a big world feel a little smaller.” Melida continued to seek this out as an engineering student at the University of Tulsa and as a young professional working as a field engineer for Schlumberger in Midland, Texas. Seeking friendships, volunteer opportunities and remembering her League mentors from Chinquapin, Melida joined the Junior League of Midland.

Melida recently moved back to Houston and transferred into the Junior League of Houston. Her current placement is in ChinquaPals where she serves as a mentor to eighth graders like herself just a few years ago. Melida has enjoyed meeting with the students and other ChinquaPals volunteers at the League for etiquette classes. They visit the Chinquapin campus for book club and goal-setting events as well as events to help the students start their own practices and habits of volunteering. In between meetings, the volunteers and the students send letters back and forth. Melida remembers how excited she was as a student to get those letters from League mentors and she gets just as excited now to write and send them to the students.

Melida recalls feeling fortunate as a teenager for the League members who came to volunteer at Chinquapin. Now that she has seen the mentorship and impact from the other side, she appreciates the relationship and the impact it provides from a new perspective.

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