

A FAREWELL TO
THE BALLROOM

DEPELCHIN
GROUNDBREAKING

100 YEARS:
THE 1990s

Houston News



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HOUSTON NEWS STAFF

2023 - 2024 CONTRIBUTORS

EDITOR

Megan Anson

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Valerie Henderson

SUSTAINER WRITER

JeNeika Boone

SUSTAINER WRITER

Suzanner Kerr

SUSTAINER WRITER

Caroline Sabin

WRITER

Irene Giannakakis

WRITER

Dolores Haywood-Lozano

WRITER

Abbrarose Knudson

SUSTAINER ADVISOR

Sara-Nell Van Lant

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

Courtney Durham

CENTENNIAL COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Sarah Davidson

COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Laura Prus

DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCE COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Alana Adams

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION MANAGER - COMMUNICATIONS

Stacia Dancsak

MEMBERSHIP COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Julie Collado

TEA ROOM COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Blaire Burdine

AD SALES CHAIR

Jessica "Jess" McCreary

COMMUNITY PARTNER CHAIR

Michael Ann Singleton

PHOTOGRAPHY CHAIR

Kathryn Hinnant

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



Dolores Haywood-Lozano
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



Julie Collado
Membership Communications Manager



Blaire Burdine
Tea Room Communications Manager



Jessica "Jess" McCreary
Ad Sales Chair



Michael Ann Singleton
Community Partner Chair



Courtney Tauber
League Archives Chair



Stacia Dancsak
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager - Communications

The Junior League of Houston, Inc. is an organization of women whose mission is to advance women's leadership for meaningful community impact through volunteer action, collaboration, and training. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable.

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"We learned about gratitude and humility - that so many people had a hand in our success."

—Michelle Obama





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LETTER FROM THE

PRESIDENT

“I don’t have to chase extraordinary moments to find happiness — it’s right in front of me if I’m paying attention and practicing gratitude.”

— Brené Brown

As we wrap up the current League year, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for the unwavering support and dedication that the Junior League of Houston’s members, donors, supporters and patrons have shown. Your commitment to furthering the League’s mission is the cornerstone of our success.

The Junior League of Houston’s mission speaks to my soul. We are brought together by our desire to do a world of good in the Houston community. From there, we train, develop and highlight the potential of women leaders. And then, we unleash them to keep doing good in our community and our world. The passion for and dedication to our organization inspires me every day, and I am continually humbled by your generosity and commitment to “Building A Better Community.”

My theme for this League year has been *Grounded in Gratitude* and it has added a layer of reflection and appreciation to all that the Junior League of Houston does for our community. For me personally, it has added immense perspective. My cup of gratitude overflows because of the countless acts of kindness and generosity that I have witnessed throughout my years of service with the Junior League of Houston.

Gratitude can be defined in many ways, but at its core, it is defined as “the expression of appreciation for what one has.” Gratitude is a powerful emotion and mindset characterized by a deep appreciation for the blessings, experiences and people in our lives. It involves recognizing and acknowledging the good things we have received or experienced, regardless of their size or significance. Gratitude is not only about saying “thank you” but also about genuinely feeling thankful and expressing that appreciation authentically. It encompasses a sense of humility, recognizing that much of what enriches our lives comes from sources outside of ourselves, whether it be the kindness of others, the beauty of nature, or simply the gift of being alive. Practicing gratitude can lead to numerous benefits, including improved mental well-being, enhanced relationships, increased resilience, and a greater



overall sense of happiness and fulfillment. To put it simply, gratitude is everything.

The Junior League of Houston is incredibly grateful for the women who came before us to plant the acorns that grew into the trees whose shade we now sit under. This edition of *Houston News* showcases perfectly the wide variety of things that our organization is grateful for—the House Committee’s dedication to maintaining the original intent of the League building, the groundbreaking of the Junior League of Houston Volunteer Services Building at DePelchin’s Children Center in anticipation of the League’s Centennial Anniversary, the collaboration between the League, His Grace Foundation and Texas Children’s Hospital, the success of the 76th Annual Charity Ball, the League’s Community Assistance Grant Program, the winner of the Sara Houstoun Lindsey Outstanding Active Award and so much more! A special thank you to **Megan Anson**, *Houston News* Editor, and the entire committee who worked on the two editions of *Houston News* this year; you all perfectly captured the essence of *Grounded in Gratitude* in both words and pictures!

As the Junior League of Houston kicks off the celebration of our Centennial Anniversary, I encourage each of you 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. Although my journey as President is coming to an end, my belief in the power of the Junior League of Houston and its potential to make a difference remains resolute. It has been an honor of a lifetime to serve alongside each of our members. One thing that I know for certain is that each one of you have made a difference in my life. And for that, I am grateful.

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

“When eating fruit, remember the one who planted the tree.”

— Vietnamese Proverb

While we all know that thinking florals for spring is not groundbreaking, with longer days, warmer (*more humid*) weather, and the sight of flowers blooming, the spring and summer months always inspire a sense of optimism, hope, and renewal. The end of one League year on May 31 is always a hectic time as each of us wind down our roles and make sure all the boxes are checked on the League website, but it is also an exciting time as we get to start fresh on June 1 and put all our plans for the year ahead into place.

This season of optimism, hope and renewal is especially meaningful as we kick off the celebration of our Centennial Anniversary and get to put many, many years of research and careful planning into place. A once in a lifetime event, we will all remember this remarkable time in the League as we both reflect upon those trailblazing women that laid the groundwork before us and do the important and rewarding work to continue their legacy for generations of League members to come.

In this issue, you will read a history and farewell to our Ballroom before it undergoes renovations as well as a profile of the House Committee and the vital role they played in bringing these plans to fruition. We also feature the ribbon cutting and groundbreaking ceremony for the Junior League of Houston Volunteer Services Building at DePelchin Children’s Center made possible by our \$2 million Centennial Anniversary gift.

You will read about the years of collaboration between His Grace Foundation, Texas Children’s Hospital, and the League and be swept back “into the woods” for an overview of the 76th Annual Charity Ball: An Enchanted Weekend. This issue also highlights the Community Assistance Program and the truly inspiring grant recipients.

You will also read about the *League Legends* Annual Fund Donor Appreciation Cocktail Reception, which included a sneak peak of the Centennial Anniversary Coffee Table Book. Our Sara Houston Lindsey Award story reflects on recipient **Tara Merla Hinton’s**



contributions to our League. Also included are spotlights on our Spring Membership and Tea Room Events, DEI Happenings, and the Sustaining Club Spring Luncheon.

This issue highlights a long-term friendship fostered through Sheltering Arms and our Spring Focus Area Event where the League partnered with Girls Empowerment Network to support their Houston Radiant G Conference.

Our “100 Years Later” series continues with the 1990s, a decade that brought growth to both the Houston community and our League, reflecting a more diverse population, which the League started studying for the first time. This research led to the first JLH Diversity Plan and the stance that diversity represented potential and opportunity for all, a sentiment that continues today. Finally, this issue ends with reflections on gratitude with some of our League members.

It has been my honor to lead this publication and I am so proud of this issue, which is the result of the hard work of our entire *Houston News* team, including our contributors and **Valerie Henderson**, Assistant Editor. Both the Winter 2023 and this issue would not be possible without the wisdom and encouragement of both **Sara-Nell Van Lant** and **Courtney Durham**. Finally, I would be remiss not to express my immense gratitude for the strong leadership offered by **Dionella Martinez**.

I am forever astounded by the caliber of women we have within our ranks. Doctors, NASA engineers, cancer researchers, lawyers, teachers, designers, nurses, writers, mothers, accountants—women from truly all walks of life—who are some of the smartest, boldest, funniest and kindest women I have ever had the joy of knowing. As we begin our 100th League year, this issue is dedicated to the exceptional and inspiring women of our beloved organization. Sharing their stories with you has been an honor and highlight of my League career. I hope you enjoy reading them. ❁

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan N. Anson".

Megan N. Anson
Houston News Editor

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Farewell TO THE BALLROOM

by: Sarah Davidson, Communications Manager – Centennial



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Financial Vice President, 1987 – 1988
Tea Room Chairman, 1985 – 1986

Emily Shushtari
Building Chair

Amanda Hanks Bayles
President

Mary Lee Wilkens
President-Elect

Sarah Snyder
President, 2017 – 2018

Julia DeWalch
President, 2005 – 2006

Martha Ann Snyder
President, 1987 – 1988
Building/Plans Committee, 1984 – 1985 and 1985 – 1986

Martha Anne Tucker
President 1985 – 1986
House Committee Chairman, 1999 – 2000

Mary Eliza Shaper (not pictured)
President, 2008 – 2009



Relocation Steering Committee

To celebrate the Junior League of Houston's upcoming Centennial Anniversary, the League's House Committee is overseeing an exciting four-year project to extensively refresh the Ballroom, Tea Room, The Pantry, downstairs restrooms, hallways and more! League members bid farewell to the current Ballroom at the *League Legends Annual Fund Donor Recognition Event* on Thursday, May 2, 2024. With construction to follow during the summer of 2024, the renovation timeline will take place during off-peak times for hosting events in the Ballroom and Tea Room and ensure completion before the Centennial Anniversary celebrations planned for the 2024 – 2025 League year.

HISTORY OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE

The Junior League of Houston is privileged to have the institutional knowledge and dedication of the House Committee, a special advisory group formed in 1989 at the request of active members. The purpose of the House Committee is to provide essential historical background, continuity and recommendations to help maintain the original intent of the League building. The House Committee is not a voting body, but instead maintains "artistic license" by presenting active leadership with design concepts and selections that are consistent with the building's original intended usage.

The 2023 – 2024 House Committee is composed of 10 League members who represent a mix of actives and sustainers. Led by the Building Chair, active committee members also include the President, President-Elect and Financial Vice President. Six sustainers also participate, including Past Presidents, as well as former members of the Executive Committee and former Tea Room Chairs.

THE EARLY YEARS IN THE BALLROOM

Dear friends and House Committee sustainers **Anne Tucker** (President, 1985 – 1986) and **Martha Ann Snyder** (President, 1986 – 1987) conduct a popular tour of the League building, which is offered upon request to transfer members, Tea Room patron members and the League membership. This tour provides a glimpse into the Ballroom's origins and the vision for its usage by the League members who designed it.

Anne recounts that by April of 1986, the League had moved to its current building at 1811 Briar Oaks Lane. The League's optimistic and determined membership had raised all funds to build and finish the 39,000 square foot Georgian Colonial-style building in less than one year! The Ballroom's brilliant blue wallcovering and its sparkling chandeliers were donated by Interiors Committee Member, **Mary Frances Couper**, who was known for her deep generosity and devotion to the League. A patron of the Theta Antiques Show, Mrs. Couper possessed "exquisite taste and knowledge of fine furnishings

CONSTRUCTION OF 1811 BRIAR OAKS LANE





*You are cordially invited to
the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony
for
The Junior League of Houston Building
1811 Briar Oaks Lane
on Tuesday, April 1, 1986
at noon
Open House immediately following
12:00 to 2:00 p.m.
5:00 to 7:00 p.m.*

that would please the most discerning League customers for decades to come,” according to Anne. Sparing no expense, Mrs. Couper had the magnificent silk Scalandre fabric custom-made in Italy to match her striking aquamarine-colored eyes.

The League’s Building and Plans Committee, which later became the House Committee, designed the Ballroom’s practical aspects with the hope of growing the League’s banquet business into a popular venue. Three sets of French doors along the Ballroom’s north side open to the adjoining outdoor courtyard to expand the space, and hidden doors fold into the north wall, rendering the room divisible into thirds for hosting smaller parties. Durable wood floors were selected to withstand the frequent rearranging of tables and chairs, since the League could host three large-scale banquet events in the same day. Anne notes, “In opening the new building in 1986, we made the bet of a lifetime that our dream would work, and it was a resounding success! In the nearly 40 years since then, I have hosted two wedding receptions and a debutante ball at the League. Together our members have celebrated successful Charity Balls and countless other occasions. We have danced the finish off the Ballroom floor!”

Martha Ann Snyder recounts the pride she experienced when she hosted the The Association of Junior Leagues International Inc. (AJLI) President and Area 5 Presidents at the League building during her 1987– 1988 presidential year. After operating for just one year, the League’s kitchen had been enlarged to serve a growing slate of parties and receptions. By the two-year mark, the Junior League of Houston had gained a reputation among other Leagues for owning the finest facility in the country. Some visiting AJLI members compared the new building to a palace and noted the attributes that set the Houston League apart including its ability to host its own council meetings, trainings and Charity Ball show practices onsite. At that time, the Houston League stood alongside only a few other Leagues with its own revenue-generating Tea Room.

In 1986 League members ambitiously planned to compete for event bookings with Houston’s finest venues, and for nearly four decades their dream has been a reality. The Centennial Anniversary update aims to revive the League’s decorative finishes while also modernizing its technical aspects, such as audiovisual equipment and lighting. Anne expresses her enthusiasm for the upcoming refresh: “Our Ballroom is due for a restoration and I expect the new design to be a showstopper. There will be nothing like it in Houston.”



Anne Tucker Ribbon Cutting



*Cynthia Colvin Building
and Plans Committee*



Fabric Samples



Mary Francis Couper

A KEY INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE OF OUR LEAGUE

Laura Thompson, Financial Vice President, is the member of the House Committee tasked with overseeing the budgetary aspects of the renovation. The Junior League of Houston is incredibly fortunate to be one of very few League's with a separate Foundation, consisting of a Community Endowment earmarked to grow the League's Community Program into perpetuity, and a Building Preservation Fund, earmarked specifically for the maintenance and capital preservation of the Building. Laura noted how appreciative she was for "the forward-looking League leaders before us and their foresight to establish the Building Preservation Fund, which not only provides financial support in the event of necessary capital maintenance, but also, will support this stunning renovation. I am thrilled to see the finished product, but above all, look forward to seeing the impact this investment will have on our revenue-generating banquet and Tea Room business. Investing in our Building will elevate the banquet and Tea Room facilities ultimately providing The Junior League of Houston with additional financial resources to support our mission of promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women and Building a Better Community today and for generations to come."

THE REFRESH BEGINS

The House Committee began planning the project during the 2021 – 2022 League year, led by Building Chair **Sydney Goss**. The scope was defined as the entire downstairs, absent the Underwood Room which was refreshed in 2020. The House Committee selected Houston-based interior designer Ann Wolf Interior Decoration, whose work has been published in House Beautiful, Veranda and Traditional Home and is named among Elle Décor's "A List". Sydney notes, "As the League moves forward and balances changes to its meeting spaces and technology, we are still very committed to remembering our history and honoring the desires of the League women who first opened our beautiful building."

Leslie Keyes, the Building Chair during the 2022 – 2023 League year, and owner of an eponymous interior design firm, viewed her year leading the House Committee as, "A time of quiet due diligence spent building the renovation team and obtaining quotations, where my League experience and professional experience converged." Leslie



Opening Day

oversaw the additions of an architect and general contractor to the project team to assist with the planning, budgeting, and execution of the renovation consistent with the League's original architectural plans. Hill Swift Architects, known for renovating the local St. Andrew's Episcopal Church and School, was retained alongside Forney Construction, whose projects include the Trellis Spa at the Houstonian, River Oaks Country Club and League partners Camp For All and Chinquapin Preparatory School.

This year's House Committee, led by Building Chair **Emily Shushtari**, is finalizing the architecture scheme and reviewing new fabrics and accessories. Emily recalled how, in selecting Ann Wolf, the House Committee chose to partner with a designer who shares its ethic of redesigning the spaces to complement the League's existing décor. Emily notes, "We are thrilled to team with Ann Wolf, who values the League's needs and style. We want to maintain the unique aesthetic of the League building, which our members and patrons value and to honor the generous donations of fine furniture and beautiful artwork from our sustainers and former members."

A BESPOKE BALLROOM

Perhaps the most impactful element of the building refresh is the choice of wallcovering for the updated Ballroom. The House Committee imagined a design spectacular enough to replace the Ballroom's iconic aqua silk walls and communicated this message to the design team: Viewers should recognize the Junior League of Houston from viewing a single photo. The Ballroom's iconic turquoise walls have adorned society pages through the years, as the venue for

countless wedding receptions, galas and Charity Balls, and viewers have come to associate the Ballroom with the League. To design this impactful wallcovering, the House Committee commissioned New York City-based watercolor artist Anne Harris, who has spent over one year hand-painting a whimsical watercolor toile featuring Houston's flora and fauna! See below for a preview of a hand-drawn sketch of the bespoke pattern. ❁



Artist Mita Corsini Bland's rendering of the vision for the new Ballroom

THANK YOU!

As the general contractor for the Junior League of Houston's upcoming project, we at Forney Construction are honored and excited to embark on this journey. This collaboration stands as a testament to our shared commitment to excellence, community service, and making a positive impact in the lives of those we serve. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Junior League and its dedicated team for entrusting us with this significant endeavor.



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DEPELCHIN GROUNDBREAKING

by: Sarah Davidson, Communications Manager – Centennial



League members present at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Junior League of Houston Volunteer Services Building at DePelchin Children's Center.

DePelchin Children's Center launched the construction of the Junior League of Houston Volunteer Services Building in a ribbon cutting and groundbreaking ceremony on Wednesday, May 22, 2024. Scheduled to open in June 2025, the new facility will provide a welcoming center for volunteer operations, quadruple the space for managing donated items and double the size of classroom and conference areas. The construction of the building is made possible by generous support from the community and was launched by the Junior League of Houston's \$2 million Centennial Anniversary gift, making the Junior League of Houston the lead funder of this new facility.

Jenifer Jarriel, President and Chief Executive Officer of DePelchin Children's Center, noted "I am incredibly grateful for the establishment of the new Junior League of Houston Volunteer Services Building, as it marks a pivotal moment in

our journey to bring more healing, hope and opportunity to the children and families we serve at DePelchin Children's Center. This facility embodies our commitment to engaging the community in our vital mission. Together, we can create lasting change and a brighter tomorrow for vulnerable children in our community."

Jillian Owens, DePelchin Children's Center Chair, serves as the liaison between Junior League of Houston volunteers and DePelchin staff. "Since the early 1900s, DePelchin and the Junior League have worked hand-in-hand. I have seen firsthand how the League has impacted DePelchin positively with ongoing volunteer support and by referring Junior League of Houston members to serve as DePelchin Board members. My favorite part of my role is seeing the life changing relationships formed between League volunteers, DePelchin staff and the children." ❁



Laura Whitten, Alle Houstoun, Shine George and Laura E. Thompson at the Groundbreaking Reception.



Representatives from the Funding Partners of DePelchin's "Big Hearts, Bright Futures Capital Campaign" at the Groundbreaking Ceremony.



Past and present members of the League's Centennial Anniversary Committee breaking ground on the Junior League of Houston Volunteer Services Building at DePelchin Children's Center.



Amanda Hanks Bayles speaks at the Groundbreaking Ceremony.



Sherene Flemmings, Pam Lovett and Peggy Roe at the Groundbreaking Reception.



Jenifer Jarriel speaking for DePelchin Children's Center at the Groundbreaking Ceremony.



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UBS Institutional Consulting
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craig.rathjen@ubs.com

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Rathjen Consulting Group
Financial Advisor Associate
713-350-8122
beau.rathjen@ubs.com

Jake Boyer

Wealth Strategy Associate
713-350-8121
jake.boyer@ubs.com

Marshall Miller

Client Service Associate
713-350-8120
marshall.miller@ubs.com

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UBS Financial Services Inc.

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In the heart of Houston, a remarkable journey unfolds within the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit (BMTU) of the Texas Children's Cancer and Hematology Center. Partnering with His Grace Foundation (HGF), the center transforms the hospital experience for young patients and their families by creating meaningful activities and events that offer normalcy and positivity in the often challenging treatment environment.

HIS GRACE FOUNDATION, TEXAS CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, AND THE LEAGUE:

A HISTORY OF COLLABORATION

by: Irene Giannakakis, Houston News Writer



Since 2016, the Junior League of Houston and His Grace Foundation have collaborated to support this mission. Their partnership includes grant assistance, investment, outside board representatives and volunteer support. The League provides essential resources and endorses HGF's mission through its investments.

Rebecca Gentry, Chair of the Board of Directors for HGF and Junior League Sustainer, values the League's connection to Texas Children's Hospital and His Grace Foundation. "Texas Children's Hospital is the home of the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit, where HGF

operates its programs and cares for patients and their families.

The three organizations are tied together by mission commitment, volunteers and sometimes staff members who are—or have been—League members."

HGF provides physical, emotional and financial support to the patients and families of the BMTU, which serves those with very rare blood disorders and immunodeficiency syndromes often not covered by most cancer support charities. The caregivers of these patients face severe isolation due to the fragile immune systems of their loved ones,



The partnership between Texas Children's Cancer and Hematology Center and His Grace Foundation, bolstered by the Junior League of Houston, exemplifies a community coming together to provide comprehensive care and support to individuals who need it most. By addressing the physical, emotional and financial needs of patients and their families, this collaboration creates an environment of hope and healing amidst the challenges of life-threatening illnesses. ❀

and with visitors not allowed, one parent typically steps away from the workforce to become a dedicated caregiver. HGF staff are among the few friendly faces parents see during a hospital stay that can last from four to six weeks.

Often described as the "last hope for a cure," bone marrow transplant patients suffer from life-threatening diseases such as leukemia, lymphoma, neuroblastoma, severe combined immunodeficiency, sickle cell disease and other types of cancer. Every year, His Grace Foundation serves more than 150 inpatient children receiving a bone marrow transplant, along with hundreds more who visit the outpatient clinic.

Patients treated at TCH often reside in the Greater Houston area, though many travel from other cities, states and even countries. These families leave behind their local support systems, entering an isolation period that can last from six to eight weeks. Under such enormous strain, HGF's support becomes a crucial lifeline. To provide a moment of warmth upon arrival to the BMTU, patients are greeted with an HGF Welcome Basket. These baskets are designed specifically for the child and overflow with age-appropriate items of interest and necessities for family members who may not have had the opportunity to pack appropriately given the urgency of most transplants. HGF's additional services include free parking, weekly catered meals, access to emergency funding, educational support and scholarships, holiday and birthday celebrations and educational enrichment activities. The foundation also provides five apartment homes for outpatient families who are often required to stay close to the hospital.



Enchanted

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF HOUSTON
2024 CHARITY BALL

AN EVENING
ONCE UPON
A TIME

THE 76TH ANNUAL CHARITY BALL: AN ENCHANTED WEEKEND

by: *Alana Adams, Communications Manager – Finance and Development*



The Charity Ball Committee

The Junior League of Houston has been a pillar of support in the Houston community for nearly a century. With a legacy spanning close to 100 years, the commitment to service and philanthropy shines brightly, as evidenced by the resounding success of the 76th Annual Charity Ball themed “Enchanted: An Evening Once Upon a Time.” This year’s Charity Ball, held on Friday, February 2 and Saturday, 3, 2024, began with a kick-off party on Thursday, February 1, 2024. Over the course of three enchanting evenings, the League raised more

than \$800,000, all of which directly support the League’s community projects and mentorship programs.

The festivities began with a cocktail party on Thursday, themed “Into the Woods,” where guests were transported to a realm of magic and whimsy, thanks to DJ Mohawk Steve and dueling pianos. As Friday and Saturday unfolded, the League transformed its premises into a fairytale landscape. Guests were greeted by League volunteers serenading them with melodies as they made their way to the League building.

A true highlight of the gala was the immersive outdoor experience for all guests. Seated amidst lush greenery, twinkling string lights and elegant decorations, the seated dinner and captivating speeches provided a truly breathtaking evening. Throughout both evenings, guests had the opportunity to bid on an array of auction items, including both silent auctions and two Big Board auctions. The introduction of a “paddles up” segment in place of a live auction proved to be a hit, surpassing expectations. The VIP whiskey lounge, featuring premium libations served in glasses etched with the evening’s theme, was a major hit too.

The Charity Ball Committee’s dedication and efforts contributed significantly to the success of this year’s gala. **Ashley Seals**, Charity Ball Chair, recollecting on the event, saying, “It was an honor to serve as the 2024 Junior League of Houston Charity Ball Chair. When I reflect on the journey of planning the ball, my fondest memories are those working side by side with the committee and member volunteers. I am inspired by their commitment to ensuring a better community for today and tomorrow.” With such heartfelt sentiments, the dedication of the committee shines through, reinforcing the League’s commitment to service and philanthropy.

Entertainment throughout the weekend included singers and ballet dancers captivating guests with their mesmerizing performances. As each night progressed, guests transitioned from dinner to dancing the night away in the League’s transformed Ballroom. Friday’s live performance featured Radio Live, while Saturday featured the five-piece Texas band, Satellite.

All three nights were a dazzling success thanks to the ongoing dedication, countless volunteer hours and unique imagination of Charity Ball Chair, Ashley Seals, and the entire Charity Ball Committee. ❁



The 2023 — 2024 Executive Committee













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COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE GRANTS

by: **Julie Collado**, Communications Manager – Membership



Community Assistance Committee



Community Assistance Grants Reception

The Community Assistance Program supports the Houston community through direct financial support to agencies for which the Junior League of Houston does not provide consistent volunteer support. For 68 years, the League has served the community in this manner, not only giving millions of dollars in financial support, but also establishing relationships and cultivating partnerships with agencies across the Greater Houston area.

The 2023 – 2024 Community Assistance Grants are supported, in part, by the Barbara and Roy Adams Endowed Community Grant Fund. This endowed fund was made possible through a generous estate gift from Barbara Beardmore Adams (1904 – 2014), a Junior League member from 1982 – 2014.

This year, the League dispersed \$175,000 to 17 deserving organizations, each of which were honored at a check presentation reception on Monday, January 22, 2024, in the Tea Room.

Sydney Goss, Community Assistance Chair, noted, “It was a privilege to be a part of the Community Assistance Program this year. Getting to know the grant recipients and being able to help support their incredible work in the Houston community was truly inspiring.”



CHILDREN'S TRANSPLANT INITIATIVE provides information, services and support to children and their families, easing the burden and lessening the fears of the organ transplant process. Their mission is to be a part of the circle of care for transplant families, allowing parents to focus on their child's well-being during this life-changing journey. The \$15,000 grant will support the agency's "R" Rooms - no-cost hospitality housing in private apartments near the Texas Medical Center (TMC) for low-to-middle-income families traveling from medically underserved areas for their children's life-saving organ transplants at the TMC.



GIFT OF ADOPTION provides adoption assistance grants to complete the adoptions of children in vulnerable circumstances, thereby granting them permanent families and an opportunity to thrive. The \$10,000 grant will support Gift of Adoption, awarding grants to complete the adoptions of at-risk children into families living in Brazoria, Fort Bend, Harris and Waller Counties, Texas.



CLOTHED BY FAITH provides clothing and shoes to individuals in need through partnerships with agencies and nonprofits. Their goal is to not only provide essential clothing, but also to ensure that each recipient feels loved, comfortable and dignified. The \$15,000 grant will support one week's supply of gently used clothing to at least 500 children in need throughout the Greater Houston area.



SPRING BRANCH COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER provides quality, affordable healthcare services to the underserved and uninsured communities of Spring Branch and West Houston. SBCHC's mission is to increase the number of healthy families in our community by providing high quality, comprehensive health services. The \$15,000 grant will combine the agency's prenatal education and nutrition initiatives.



MAIN STREET MINISTRIES assists individuals in obtaining official state-issued identification and related documentation through their Operation ID (OPID) program. They recognize the significant barriers individuals face without proper identification, including limitations in securing employment, housing, education, banking services and exercising basic rights like voting. The \$10,000 grant will support and expand a special Operation ID project at Wheatley High School.



COMMUNITY OF RESOURCES HOUSTON partners with school staff members serving Houston Independent School District's most economically disadvantaged students. Their mission involves working closely with these staff members to fulfill essential item requests from students. The \$14,500 grant will support the purchase of over 700 hygiene packs consisting of underwear, menstrual pads, a pack of wipes, bra, shampoo, conditioner, soap and a resource sheet.



C.G. JUNG EDUCATIONAL CENTER OF HOUSTON facilitates dynamic conversations across various disciplines and perspectives on matters of significance in our lives. Through events, exhibits and performances both in-person and online, the Jung Center provides a platform for individuals to explore deeper aspects of themselves and the world around them. The \$10,000 grant will support two half-day workshops for crisis counselors and one half-day workshop for school nurses during each of the fall and spring semesters.



THE HOUSTON FURNITURE BANK works with over 82 social service partner agencies to provide essential furniture to families in need. The \$10,000 grant will support the No Kids on the Floor Project that provides twin mattress sets to children without a bed or a bed of their own in the Greater Houston eight-county area.



RE:MIND DEPRESSION AND BIPOLAR SUPPORT provides free and confidential support groups for individuals living with, or family and friends affected by, depression and bipolar disorders. The \$10,000 grant will expand education and awareness of children's mental health awareness and free support groups for adolescents both in schools and in the community.



HOUSTON CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY CRAFT is dedicated to advancing education about the process, product and history of craft. The Center's major emphasis is on objects of art made primarily from craft materials including clay, fiber, glass, metal, wood and found/recycled materials. The \$10,000 grant will support Craft Camp scholarships for low-income children and HCCC's bringing high-quality art experiences directly to teachers and students in a Title 1 low-income school.

PARTNERSCHOOLS, INC. creates collaborative partnerships between schools in the community, fostering exchange and learning opportunities for students and faculty. The \$5,000 grant will connect the Music, Art, Theater and Creative Writing departments from two different schools and facilitate their collaboration on interactive projects.

GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE HOUSTON provides free therapeutic and educational programs for individuals with Down syndrome, from prenatal diagnosis through adulthood. They offer a variety of programs focused on developing gross and fine motor skills, literacy, cooking, social skills and confidence. The \$10,000 grant will support the launch of its 1:1 Math Tutoring program for participants and support the program through the pilot and first year of implementation.



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Mariam is in her fifth year as a League member and currently serves at the Houston Museum of Natural Science. She loves Mid-Century Modern houses, restoration, antiques, reading, long walks at Memorial Park, and the perfect espresso martini.

Mariam Hejazi

Broker Associate

832.465.6458

mariam@marvelousinhouston.com

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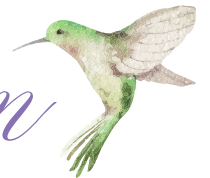
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2023 – 2024

SARA HOUSTOUN LINDSEY AWARD WINNER



Tara Merla Hinton



by: *Suzanne Kerr, Sustainer News Writer*

The Sara Houstoun Lindsey Award is presented each spring to an outstanding active member of the Junior League of Houston who furthers the mission of the League and its vital role in the community. This year's recipient is **Tara Merla Hinton**.

Take a look at Tara's profile on the League's website and you will quickly notice that Tara was a "go-to" for administrative placements from the very start. In addition, her professional

resume contains roles requiring not just brains, but people skills and patience. Combined, it is no surprise Tara was honored with this prestigious award.

After Tara completed her biology degree from The University of Texas at San Antonio, she moved back to Houston for work and to be with her family. Tara soon joined the Junior League of Houston at the urging of her older sister and current League



sustainer, **Tanya Merla Leiber**. Among her many Junior League of Houston roles, Tara served as Membership Vice President, Membership Training Chair, Placement Chair, Strategic Planning Implementation Manager and Training and Education Director. Tara has also served on the Nominating Committee and has been a mentor to numerous provisional, transfer and active members.

Tara's first big placement was during the 2012 – 2013 League year as Charity Ball Entertainment Chair. With it, came the joy of working with **Bill Bartlett** (Director of the Show) and **Mistie Porter** (Choreographer) and the challenge of managing over 50 volunteer performers, as well as several male volunteer performers! Tara was able to stretch a tiny but mighty budget to cover everything needed including costume needs. Tara says this early role taught her leadership skills she did not know she had—and she had a ball doing it!

Tara's passion for membership development was ignited during her time as Membership Training Chair in 2014 – 2015. During her tenure, outside speakers were brought in to provide general leadership programs, as well as workshops for honing specific leadership qualities and skills. Over the years, in Tara's roles as Training and Education Director and Membership Vice President, these activities were further developed by Tara and other leaders. JLH now offers an internal Leadership Institute Training (LIT) Program for members who want to rise in JLH leadership. Tara is proud to have been a part of this evolution.

Tara described her service as Community Assistance Chair during the 2021 – 2022 League year as an eye-opening and heartwarming experience as it “connected the dots” for her in terms of the needs of the Houston community and how the League helps local nonprofits meet those needs. Tara currently volunteers for one of the Community Assistance grant recipients, His Grace Foundation, which provides physical, emotional and financial support to the patients and families of the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit at Texas Children's Hospital.

Professionally, Tara worked in healthcare managerial roles including eight years with Texas Children's Hospital (Texas Children's) – an experience bolstered by her League leadership. **Carrie Rys**, fellow League volunteer, heard Tara speak before an audience of about 300 people and went away impressed. At the time, Carrie was the Director of Business Services at Texas Children's and needed to fill a challenging position. Knowing that a capable Junior League member could handle the job, she contacted Tara, already a Texas Children's employee. Tara



Tara, Husband (Brad) and Son (Zach)



Tara and Family at the Sara Houstoun Lindsey Reception



Amanda Hanks Bayles presents the award to Tara Merla Hinton



2021–2022 Community Assistance Grant Reception



Tara with prior award recipients (Katie Hackedorn, Maidie Ryan, Rachel Regan, Melissa Garlington, Tara Merla Hinton, Wendy Lewis Armstrong, Megan Ryan, Whitney Walsh, Courtney Baker and Susan Richardson Barnes)

rose to the occasion by serving as an “ambassador” between Texas Children’s international patients and families and their embassies who paid their medical bills. Tara helped make the hospital’s billing more understandable for the parties and built trust with her embassy counterparts by meeting with them in Washington, D.C. on a quarterly basis. When Tara left this position six years later, she was replaced by multiple people!

In late 2022, Tara stopped working to become a full-time wife to her supportive husband, Brad, and mother to her now seven-year-old son, Zach. However, true to form, Tara has continued volunteering in the Houston community and looks forward to remaining an active member throughout the League’s Centennial Anniversary Year!

Tara’s commitment to community service is genuine and broad. She has been a member of the Latin Women’s Initiative, served on the Gala Committee for Camp For All, served for 10 years on the

Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo’s Breeders Greeters Committee and held numerous church and school volunteer roles at St. Thomas More Catholic Church.

When nominating Tara for this honor, current Sustaining Club Board President **Amy Dunn Comiskey** shared: “Tara loves the League and gives her heart to everything she participates in. Her humility and willingness to work tirelessly behind the scenes without seeking recognition demonstrate a truly selfless nature.” The time, talent and devotion Tara has joyfully given to both the League and the Houston community clearly demonstrate that Tara has furthered the mission of the League and its vital role in the community. Congratulations, Tara, on being named the Junior League of Houston’s 2024 Sara Houston Lindsey Award Recipient; the League is grateful for your continued service and dedication to the Houston community. ❁



Training and Education Committee (2015 – 2016)



Executive Committee (2018 – 2019)



UNDERSTANDING SECONDARY INFERTILITY: *A Guide from CCRM Fertility of Houston*

WHAT IS SECONDARY INFERTILITY?

Secondary infertility is a less discussed, yet equally challenging, condition faced by couples. It occurs when a couple cannot conceive or carry a pregnancy to term after previously having a child. Unlike primary infertility, which affects those who have never conceived, secondary infertility brings its own set of emotional and physical trials, affecting approximately 11% of couples worldwide.

THE CAUSES BEHIND SECONDARY INFERTILITY

The journey to understanding and addressing secondary infertility begins with recognizing its causes. Age plays a significant role; women's egg quality and quantity decline with age, and men see a decrease in fertility around the age of 45. This natural reduction can increase the risk of miscarriage and lower the chances of successful pregnancy. Other factors include complications from previous pregnancies, lifestyle changes, hormonal issues, endometriosis, and certain health conditions like diabetes.

WHEN TO SEEK SPECIALIST INTERVENTION

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists advises that couples under 35 try for a year, and those over 35 for six months, before consulting a fertility specialist. Given that infertility issues are equally likely to stem from either partner, a comprehensive fertility work-up for both is essential for identifying the root cause and planning the next steps.

FERTILITY TREATMENTS: HOPE FOR THOSE STRUGGLING WITH SECONDARY INFERTILITY

CCRM Fertility of Houston, under the guidance of its expert team including Drs. Tim Hickman, Katherine McKnight, Jaime Nodler, Rashmi Kudesia, and Beth Zhou, offers hope for individuals and couples facing secondary infertility. Treatment options mirror those for primary infertility, with a personalized approach to each person's unique situation.

For older women and those who have experienced multiple miscarriages, in vitro fertilization (IVF) with preimplantation genetic testing for aneuploidy (PGT-A) is often recommended. This advanced technique involves screening day-5 embryos for chromosomal abnormalities, significantly improving the chances of a successful pregnancy by ensuring only chromosomally normal embryos are transferred.

THE PROACTIVE APPROACH: EGG FREEZING

Understanding the impact of age on fertility, CCRM Fertility of Houston emphasizes the option of egg freezing. A proactive measure for women in their 20s and 30s, egg freezing allows women to preserve their fertility potential at a time when their eggs are most viable. This can be invaluable for those who choose to delay conception for personal, career, or health reasons.

CCRM FERTILITY OF HOUSTON: COMPREHENSIVE CARE IN YOUR JOURNEY

CCRM Fertility of Houston is more than a fertility clinic; it's a comprehensive care center dedicated to providing patients with the highest quality care and outcomes. With an all-inclusive treatment center, state-of-the-art IVF laboratory, and the expertise of dedicated physicians, CCRM stands at the forefront of fertility science. All genetic testing is meticulously carried out by the CCRM Genetics Lab, ensuring the highest standards of accuracy and care.

Secondary infertility poses unique challenges, but with the support and expertise of CCRM Fertility of Houston, couples have access to advanced treatments and technologies to help them achieve their dreams of expanding their families. Through personalized care, innovative treatments, and a commitment to excellence, CCRM offers assistance every step of the way.



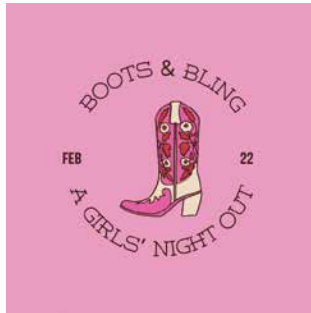
Tea Room

SPECIAL EVENTS

by: *Blaire Burdine*, Communications Manager – Tea Room

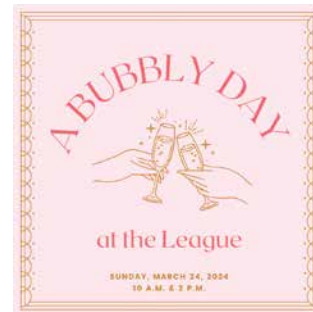
BOOTS & BLING: A GIRLS' NIGHT OUT

On Thursday, February 22, 2024, the Tea Room welcomed members looking to kick off rodeo season with a Boots & Bling Girls' Night Out. Bo Bottoms provided entertainment for guests to enjoy as they mingled and enjoyed heavy appetizers. Community Champion, Valobra Master Jewelers, hosted a "bling lounge" to add a bit of extra sparkle to the evening. Additional vendors fit perfectly with the rodeo theme and included a hat bar by Magnolia Mercantile, Petite Paloma Boots, Magnolia Boone Paperie and Community Champion Traveler's Table.



A BUBBLY DAY AT THE LEAGUE

On Sunday, March 24, 2024, guests were treated to A Bubbly Day at the League! Whether guests preferred the morning seating that featured a traditional “Bubbles & Brunch” atmosphere or the afternoon seating that offered traditional “Champagne Tea” service – both events delivered delicious food and delightful bubbles. League members modeled the latest fashions by The Avenue and jewelry by Mignonne Gavigan, and guests were treated to stories about the founding of both brands by the founders, Lyndsey Zorich and Maggie Gavigan, who attended both seatings. Both brands were available after the event for attendees to have the chance to shop their latest trends.





MEALS WITH MALCOLM

On Thursday, April 4, 2024, Malcolm Rowland once again dazzled guests with his ability to craft a bespoke menu paired with unique wines. Upon arrival, guests were greeted with a glass of bubbly as they mingled about the Tea Room. This year's five course dinner featured a global theme and transported guests to France, South Africa, Australia, Uruguay and the United States. Spring flowers adorned the tables and, as always, Malcolm was on hand to visit with attendees, imparting knowledge about the wines and answering questions about pairings.

FAJITAS & RITAS

On Sunday, April 24, 2024, the Tea Room Special Events Committee brought back a favorite member event, Fajitas & Ritas. This event has always been a great way to share the League with friends and family, and also catch up with League friends before the year ends. Houston's first all female Mariachi Band performed and activities were available for all ages. Everyone enjoyed fajitas with all the fixings.



MOTHER'S DAY LUNCH

On Sunday, May 12, 2024, League members, Tea Room Patron members and their families celebrated the special women in their lives at Mother's Day Lunch. The Ballroom was impeccably decorated for the season, and a spring-themed buffet meal delivered something for everyone. Guests enjoyed the opportunity to venture out to the Rose Garden for a portrait session to commemorate this special day. ❁





“Cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you, and to give thanks continuously. And because all things have contributed to your advancement, you should include all things in your gratitude.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson



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DEI Spring Happenings



by: *Stacia Dancsak, Communications Manager – DEI*

It has been a bustling spring thus far for the League's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee with several group meetings and engagement events. Kicking off the 2024 year was the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, followed by an array of other group meetings including the Cultural Competency Workshop, Celebrating the Legacy of the Four Prominent Black Sororities and a Bitty and Beau's Coffee shop tour.

After inclement weather led to a reschedule of the original Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade in Houston, DEI Community Manager, **Rochelle Brown-Anderson**, pivoted quickly and was able to coordinate a new date for the DEI Committee's Day of Service. On Saturday, February 10, 2024, six League members gathered at Hermann Square on Houston's City Hall Grounds for the Black Heritage Society's annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Parade. Members provided an interactive learning experience educating attendees about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. through arts and crafts and games.

The DEI Committee also hosted the Cultural Competency Guidelines virtual group meeting on Thursday, February 1, 2024, where League members took a deep dive into the Junior League of Houston's Cultural Competency Guidelines. This meeting received highly positive feedback with suggestions for incorporating components of grief guidance in the future. Updated Cultural Competency Guidelines were voted on by the League's Membership

Council and the Board of Directors in March 2024.

On Wednesday, February 27, 2024, the DEI Committee hosted a group meeting Celebrating the Legacy of the Four Prominent Black Sororities at the League



building. Members heard from speakers **Andrea Bonner**, Vice President of Programs for the Alpha Kappa Omega chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., **Dr. Maria Starling**, immediate past President of the Houston Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., **JeNeika Smith Boone**, chapter President of the Lambda Zeta chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., **Dr. Karen Williams**, Executive Director of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., and **Gia Lott**, Graduate Member of Alpha Kappa Omega chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Gia Lott is currently an active Junior League of Houston member and JeNeika Smith Boone serves as a League sustainer member. This event informed its 24 attendees about the Divine Nine sororities and their historical significance. In addition to educational background, members also learned the significance of "stepping and strolling" and were given demonstrations. Both League members as well as the speakers found value in the event. Members shared that they would like to see this topic offered again in the future!





in every community. Today, Betty & Beau's Coffee has grown to 19 shops across 11 states with over 400 employees and has been featured on The Today Show, Rachael Ray, CNN, Good Morning America and many more. Members enjoyed learning about the store through an interactive tour and conversation with Houston branch owner, **Kelly Scoggins**, who serves on the Junior League of Houston Foundation Board of Directors, and sustainer, **Judy Simon**, also attended the event. ✨

In celebration of Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, the DEI Committee also hosted "Changing the World Through Coffee," a group meeting at Betty and Beau's Coffee shop on Saturday, March 9, 2024. Twenty members toured the shop and learned more about Betty and Beau's Coffee, described as "a human rights movement disguised as a coffee shop," in Rice Village. With over 80 percent of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities unemployed nationwide, the founders of Betty & Beau's Coffee created a path for people with disabilities to feel more valued, accepted and included





GROUNDING IN

Gratitude

THE ENDURING FRIENDSHIP OF
KALIKO VEISEH AND CAROLYN BERTRAND HODGES

by: *Dolores Haywood-Lozano*, Houston News Writer

Artwork by Carolyn Bertrand Hodges

In a world where relationships are often temporary or short-lived, the enduring friendship between League member **Kaliko Veiseh** and **Carolyn Bertrand Hodges** stands as a testament to the power of genuine human connection. Originally paired through the Junior League of Houston's partnership with Sheltering Arms—a nonprofit dedicated to the health and well-being of older adults—their bond transcends simple volunteerism. Observing Kaliko and Carolyn, it becomes evident that theirs is a friendship grounded in gratitude.

Through her League placement in Sheltering Arms, Kaliko was matched with Carolyn, a vibrant artist and senior. Despite the

sunset of the formal Sheltering Arms program through the League, Kaliko and Carolyn maintained their connection.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, Kaliko remained a steadfast presence in Carolyn's life. She made daily phone calls, visited Carolyn, and ensured she had the essentials, knowing that Carolyn's mobility was limited. Kaliko would regularly bring her kids along when visiting Carolyn, bearing gifts of Perrier and biscotti cookies, Carolyn's favorites. Carolyn always showed genuine interest in Kaliko's children. Kaliko's also daughter often accompanied her to Carolyn's art shows, where Carolyn's unique perspective on life and art enriched their world.

“Carolyn is a get-er-done woman,” Kaliko shared, emphasizing Carolyn’s indomitable spirit. Despite facing physical challenges and financial constraints, Carolyn continued to create art, finding solace and purpose in her craft. Her journey as an artist, from her teenage years studying under Robert C. Joy at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston to her exhibitions at prestigious galleries, demonstrates her resilience.

For Kaliko, the lessons learned from Carolyn are invaluable. “If you want to do something, do it,” she emphasized, reflecting on Carolyn’s determination to pursue her passions despite adversity. Their friendship embodies the essence of intergenerational relationships—sharing experiences, passing on knowledge, and preserving stories for future generations. Kaliko emphasized the importance of learning from one another: “Where we are in life, everyone has had experiences, successes, and failures. It’s everyone’s job and responsibility to pass on their knowledge. We must learn from the older generation and pass on their stories. That’s how our community thrives, and our history lives on. Knowing that generations before us did remarkable things, we can build on that legacy.”

As Carolyn approaches her 98th year, her art remains her lifeline. “Art is a redeeming factor,” she expressed, highlighting its importance in her life. Through her art, Carolyn leaves a lasting legacy—a reflection of her creativity, resilience, and unwavering spirit.

Their friendship, grounded in gratitude, serves as a reminder of the power of human connection to uplift, inspire, and enrich our lives. During times often marked by division and uncertainty, Kaliko and Carolyn’s bond shines as a beacon of hope and resilience, reminding us of the profound impact of kindness and companionship. ❁



Carolyn Bertrand Hodges, Kaliko’s son Makoa and Kaliko Veiseh

“LET US BE GRATEFUL TO THE
PEOPLE WHO MAKE US HAPPY; THEY
ARE THE CHARMING GARDENERS
WHO MAKE OUR SOULS BLOSSOM.”

—MARCEL PROUST

Carolyn Bertrand Hodges

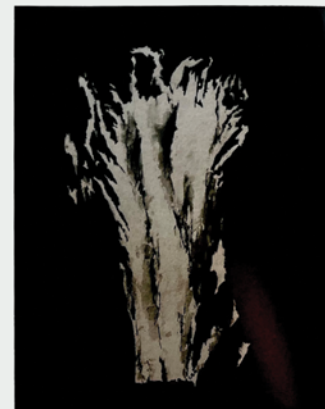


Exploring Contemporary Art

Carolyn Bertrand Hodges

When I was barely 19 during the 40s I was selected as a scholarship student at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia and also given the privilege to attend free classes at the Barnes Foundation to view and study that fabulous collection of modern Art.

I don't have an exact tabulation of when or where I traveled after that, I've always, sort of lived like a gypsy, that is, being a wanderlust, living alone and liking it. Yet, I've always returned to Houston. After traveling around I arrived back in Houston during the 70s.



Night Wiles
pen & ink drawing
13.5 x 10.5 inches



Located in Houston, Texas, Bel Inizio, (which means beautiful beginning in Italian), is a nonprofit that helps disadvantaged women develop self-confidence and life skills through fitness and nutrition. Participants train to complete a 5K, which helps prepare them for the ultimate race — the race for a better life.



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SPRING FOCUS AREA EVENT:

GIRLS EMPOWERMENT NETWORK

by: **Julie Collado**, Communications Manager – Membership

Since its founding in 1925, the Junior League of Houston has been dedicated to uplifting the lives of those in need throughout the Houston area. Through strategic initiatives and volunteer efforts, the League has continuously adapted to address the evolving challenges faced by the community. As part of its on going commitment to effecting positive change, the League chose Mentoring Young Girls and Women as its focus area for this League year.

Mentoring plays a pivotal role in shaping the lives of young girls and women, providing them with guidance, support and inspiration as they navigate through various stages of life. Recognizing the importance of this critical need, the League

partnered with Girls Empowerment Network to support their Houston Radiant G Conference – an empowering day-long event tailored for girls in grades three through eight and their caregivers.

Originally called The Ophelia Project, Girls Empowerment Network was created in 1996 by 12 concerned mothers raising adolescent girls in Austin, Texas. Its mission is to teach self-efficacy, which is a girl's belief in her ability to succeed. Through their curriculum, they help girls overcome challenges such as low self-esteem, bullying, academic struggles and unhealthy relationships. They help girls recognize their self-worth and ability to succeed and capability to thrive in all aspects of their lives.





The Radiant G Conference was held on Saturday, May 4, 2024, at Hogg Middle School in the Houston Heights neighborhood and kicked off with an opening rally. League members lead chants and encouraged participation as part of the spirit squad. At lunchtime, a carnival was held, which included face painting, a friendship bingo table, creating affirmation bookmarks table, and fishing for a relatable role model letter. League volunteers lead games and activities during the carnival to create opportunities for interactive fun and socialization. League members also assisted with the check-in and information desks and helped as workshop assistants.

Jennifer Williams, Community Outreach Events Chair, observed, “I enjoyed watching the girls make new friends as they worked together to ask the questions on the bingo page for friendship bracelet prizes. I also enjoyed watching the girls dance while the DJ was playing music. Their bubbly personalities shined through!”

The partnership between the Junior League of Houston and Girls Empowerment Network highlights the importance of empowering and inspiring young girls to have confidence in themselves and their abilities, which they will carry with them throughout their lives. ✨



“Gratitude is a powerful catalyst for happiness. It’s the spark that lights a fire of joy in your soul.” — Amy Collette



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SUSTAINING CLUB

Spring LUNCHEON

by: *JeNeika Boone, Sustainer News Writer*



Spring was in bloom as the Junior League of Houston Sustaining Club hosted the 2024 Spring Luncheon on Monday, April 22, 2024, in the Tea Room. The Spring Luncheon is an annual event hosted to connect sustaining members and celebrate the successes of the year. Sustainer friends, old and new, gathered to salute the season. Bright and cheerful attire was the order of the day. The Tea Room was decorated in shades of blue and green with lovely floral arrangements indicative of both spring and this year's theme of "Gather and Grow."

Guests noshed on variety of beautifully arranged and delicious light bites and enjoyed delightful spring-themed drinks and desserts curated by the Tea Room. Smiles and greetings abounded as sustainers greeted each other warmly, some of whom had not seen each other in several years.

Special thanks to **Emily Capps** and **Christina Altenau**, Sustaining Club Spring Luncheon Co-Chairs, **Amy Dunn Comiskey**, Sustaining Club President, **Tara Merla Hinton**, Sustainer Chair (Active), **Amanda Hanks Bayles**, JLH President, and all who contributed to ensure the luncheon was successful and enjoyed by each attendee! ❁





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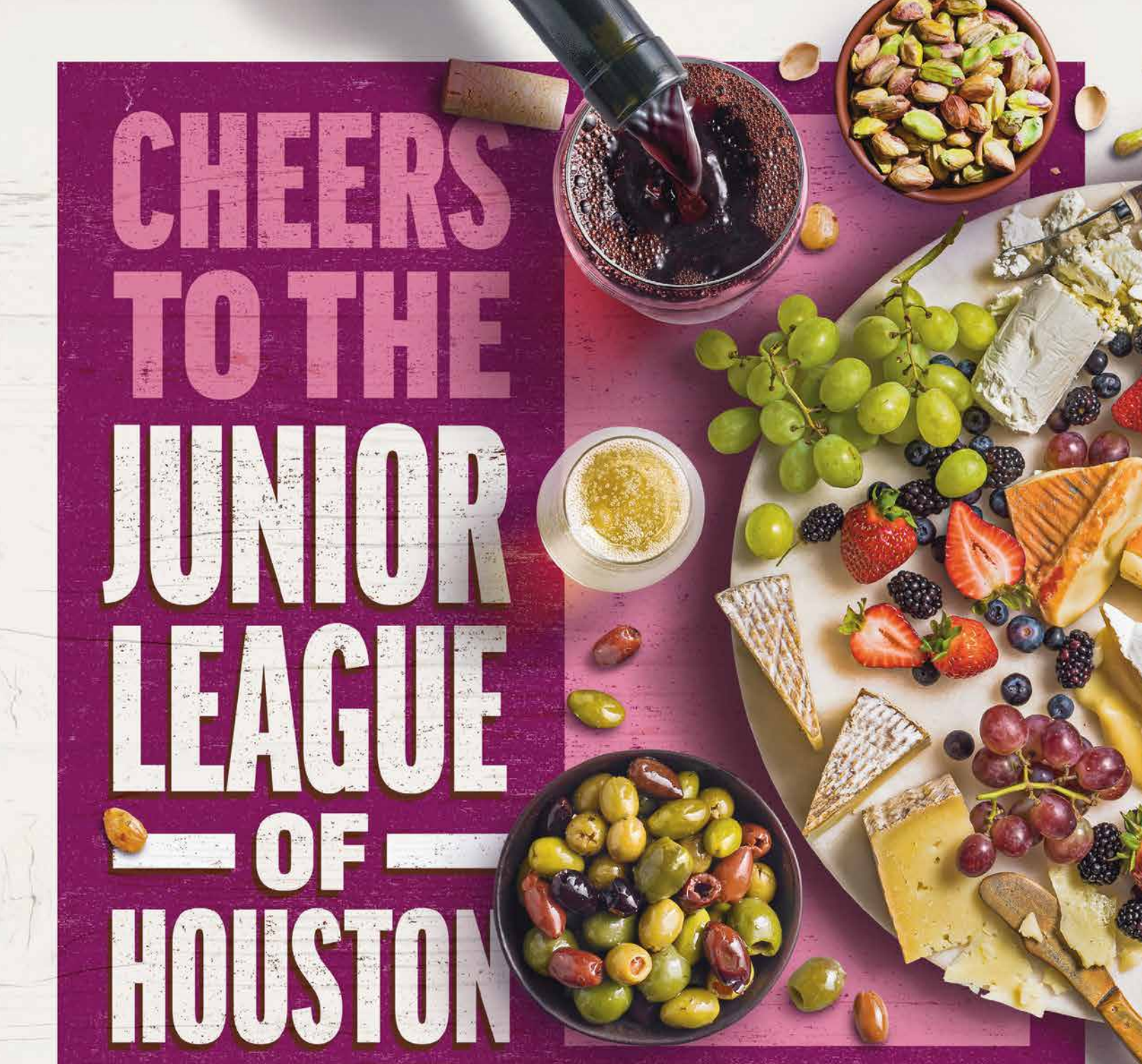


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MEMBERS

MEET AND MINGLE

ENGAGEMENT EVENTS OFFER CAMARADERIE AND CONNECTION

by: *Laura Prus, Communications Manager – Community*

Although the Junior League of Houston is a mighty force of approximately 4,300 trained volunteers driving an immeasurable impact in the community, it strives to make a big league feel small among its membership.

There is no better way for members to step outside their comfort zone than through membership engagement events, which are specifically designed to foster connections and build friendship among League members.

HAND LETTERING CLASS

Wednesday, January 17, 2024

Talented League member and owner of Cinnamon Lane events, **Amy Strickland**, shared her talents at this fun event. Members learned how to create beautiful hand-lettered cards and envelopes to help customize their post-holiday notes. During the lesson, members were also encouraged to write a thank you letter to a fellow League member who has made an impact on their time in the League.



TEA ROOM HAPPY HOUR TO WELCOME NEW TRANSFER CLASS

Monday, January 22, 2024

Cheers to the new Transfer Class! This special group of members, who joined the Junior League of Houston from chapters around the country, gathered in the Tea Room for a toast of champagne and dessert. Prior to the event, transfers were introduced to special League traditions, as it followed the annual Community Assistance Grants Reception and January General Meeting.

AZALEA TRAIL GARDEN WALK

Sunday, March 10, 2024

Decked out in spring dresses, florals and hats, members gathered to partake in a Houston tradition, the River Oaks Garden Club Azalea Trail. This year, the 87th anniversary of the event offered Houstonians an enjoyable weekend to learn about architecture, flower arranging and horticultural possibilities in our region. Trail proceeds were given back to the community for projects in horticultural education, conservation and civic beautification.



BEGINNER MAHJONG CLASS

Monday, April 15, 2024

Mahjong, a tile-based game originally from China, has taken the nation by storm. For members just learning the game, this event in the Tea Room uncovered the basics of all 144 tiles, the symbols of each suit and how to achieve a winning hand. Spots were also available for more advanced players to ramp up the competitive spirit!



NEEDLEPOINT CLASS

Saturday, May 18, 2024

Membership events offer more than just education; there's also an opportunity for members to connect through shared hobbies. Such was the case with the recent needlepoint class. Members gathered to work on their custom Junior League of Houston needlepoint canvas, which was available to order through The Pantry earlier this year.



Gratitude Walk



Night at the Museum



Polo Club Event

This spring, members learned new hobbies, enjoyed the beauty of our community and enjoyed camaraderie in the Tea Room. Special thanks to the Training and Education team for organizing these amazing opportunities. ✨



CHALLENGES AND CHANGES

by: *Caroline Jogerst Sabin, Sustainer News Writer*

Many of today's active members may recall accompanying their mother to the JLH building as she volunteered or they may have wondered what in the world she was doing when she told them she was "off to the League."

During the 1990s, active members took their volunteer work seriously as they worked hard to dispel the "social club" stigma by emphasizing the myriad of contributions made by trained and committed volunteers.

Houston's population had grown significantly over the previous decade and was fast becoming a cosmopolitan urban center with its newcomers reflecting a more diverse population. Of special note was the dramatic increase seen in Houston's Hispanic and Asian populations. The well-respected sociologist from Rice University, Dr. Steven Klineberg, remarked at the time that Houston would grow more diverse. Concurrently, a major paradigm shift in the region's workforce would reveal that 57 percent of all job growth was attributed to women entering the workplace, while traditional manufacturing jobs were decreasing as the region transitioned to a knowledge-based economy.

Traditional assumptions had become overshadowed by new realities. Former JLH President, **Debbie Brown Robinson**, remarked in a 1996 *Houston News* article, "the Houston League has changed more over the last five years than any five years in its 71-year history." A key strength of the League has always been its ability to evolve as an institution while balancing its membership's needs with those of the community. Given





Ben Milam Elementary



Habitat for Humanity

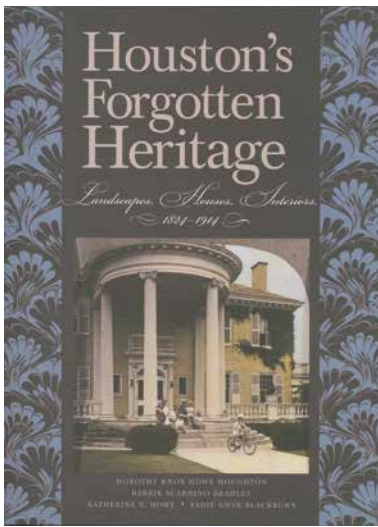


Third Ward's FU.U.S.A ribbon cutting ceremony

this mindset, the League initiated its first major community collaborative effort in 1990. Project Apple was simple in concept, yet far-reaching in impact. The League provided trained volunteers to staff Houston Independent School District classrooms while first through third grade teachers were trained in multisensory literacy teaching techniques by the Neuhaus Education Center. During the collaborative's three-year run, 320 teachers were trained, impacting 130,000 students.

During the 1993 – 1994 League year, the League began to reach out further to Houston's neighborhoods in need to develop partnerships. Given the inequities throughout Houston's major school district, the League decided to adopt a school, Ben Milam Elementary, providing supplies and volunteer support. Following the success of Project Apple, a second collaborative initiative emerged with Third Ward's FU.U.S.A (Families Under Urban & Social Attack aka Change Happens) to address families in crisis. The emphasis on underserved

----- continued



communities continued with League volunteers building a house with Habitat for Humanity. To ensure a stronger link to the community, the League also instituted the Community Advisory Board composed of some of our city's most influential leaders to provide input for its projects. The Community

Advisory Board's mission lives on today through the League's current CAP program, which is focused on maintaining a strong connection to the community.

During the 1995 – 1996 year in response to Houston's changing landscape, the League took another pivotal step by studying the issue of diversity. The research process culminated with the development of the first JLH Diversity Plan. This plan took a broad view in interpreting what diversity meant. It focused on a culturally competent approach to its volunteer projects through collaboration and increased efforts to establish a membership more reflective of the community. The Junior League of Houston took the stance that diversity represented potential and opportunity for all, a sentiment that continues today.

Community outreach continued along this same trajectory. During the 1996 – 1997 League year, the League convened two large forums representing Houston's diverse women's volunteer service

organizations with the purpose to explore common interests and investigate collaborative opportunities. This proactive approach was expanded further when the Junior League of Houston hosted a symposium titled "Finding Community Solutions through Volunteerism and Literacy Initiatives" in partnership with the

Greater Houston Community Foundation, the Volunteer Center and SERVE Houston. Local literacy organizations, volunteer service organizations, faith-based organizations and corporate representatives participated along with keynote speakers, Barbara Bush and the Chief Executive Officer of the Points of Light Foundation.

As the League responded to our fast-changing community, it did not overlook its own members' needs. Members were challenged to balance child care, elder care, work and home responsibilities, not to mention their own self-care. The percentage of women working outside the home had grown to nearly 70 percent of the membership, necessitating the creation of more flexible volunteer opportunities and more realistic annual membership requirements. Recognizing that more young women were moving to the suburbs and to ensure a strong base, the Junior League of Houston expanded its geographic boundaries to include Fort Bend and Waller Counties, later adding Brazoria County.

Another positive outcome of these shifting dynamics was the gravitation of more League members to careers in the nonprofit sector. Many women discovered that their volunteer League experience and skills gained could translate into professional equivalents. With skills emphasized in the League's training



curriculum (such as board management, fundraising, budget analysis and leadership, in high demand) many League members ended up in leadership positions at nonprofit organizations, acting as executive directors or program directors as well as filling board positions—all of which further leveraged the League's impact.

KEY JLH BENCHMARKS IN THE 1990s:

This period marked a surge in membership growth as a result of the Baby Boomer generation, more people moving to Houston for work opportunities and a growing interest in community service. Overall membership surpassed 4,000 and the Junior League of Houston became one of the largest leagues in the nation.

- The Casa de Esperanza de los Niños placement was established.
- *Junior League Cookbook* publishing was brought in-house in 1990 – 1991; an additional 15,000 anniversary copies of both books were published in 1992.
- Building renovations in 1993 added extra meeting rooms, a volunteer lounge and restrooms to accommodate members.
- The Community Advisory Board was initiated in the 1993 – 1994 League year.
- The Junior League of Houston celebrated 50 years of service at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, which was recognized by the gift of two Pre-Columbian sculptures.
- The Long Range Planning strategic process shifted in 1994 from an annual focus to a three-year rotation.
- In 1994, the Annual Fund and Be an Angel Campaign was launched to solicit direct contributions for community projects.
- In 1994, the League's first Habitat for Humanity house was built.
- The first Junior League of Houston video, "Building Beyond our Building" was released in the 1994 – 1995 League year.
- During the summer of 1994, the movie "A Woman of Independent Means" was filmed in the League Ballroom; heat from the camera lights set off the sprinkler system ruining the Ballroom wallcovering.
- In the spring of 1995, a Tea Room patron member gave birth to her baby in the Tea Room bathroom with assistance from Tea Room General Manager, **Malcolm Rowland**.
- The League celebrated its 70th Anniversary in 1995 with a gift to Playground for All at Hermann Park.
- Publication of Houston News was reduced to four issues and *Houston Notes* was created in 1995.
- The League's Diversity Position statement was issued in 1995 and a formal plan was adopted in 1996.
- The cookbook, *Stop and Smell the Rosemary*, was published in 1996, selling over 120,000 copies in its first four years of publication.
- In 1996, League volunteers began placements at the Houston Food Bank.
- The Junior League of Houston developed its first website in 1996.
- The provisional program was moved entirely to Texas Children's Hospital; the average provisional class consisted of 225 to 250 members with the average age skewing higher.
- Charity Ball was brought to the League building in 1999, netting \$712,000 for the Community Trust Fund.
- The Community Endowment was created in 1999 to finance and sustain the Junior League of Houston's Community Program, and a \$10,000,000, three-year Endowment Campaign was launched to fund the principal.



The 90s culminated with preparations to celebrate the League's 75th anniversary in 2000 with an eye towards its future role in the new millennium. Following extensive research combined with community input, the League committed to addressing health care inaccessibility for underprivileged children with a \$1 million gift. The gift provided a staffed, mobile pediatric

clinic in partnership with Baylor College of Medicine, Texas Children's Hospital, Harris County Hospital District and the City of Houston Health and Human Services Department for three years. In 1999, the League capped off the decade with the creation of a Community Endowment Fund to support the League's community program into perpetuity.

As it has for nearly 100 years, the Junior League of Houston continues to evolve and respond proactively to Houston's diverse needs. The heart of the League, with its mission to promote voluntarism, develop the potential of women and improve communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers, remains even more relevant today. ❁

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A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a vibrant, patterned dress with a mix of geometric and floral motifs in shades of green, orange, and brown. The dress has a wrap-style front with a matching fabric belt tied at the waist. She is standing in a well-lit, arched doorway or alcove. In the background, there are wooden chairs and a potted plant. The overall aesthetic is chic and bohemian.

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"I am grateful!"

President, **Amanda Hanks Bayles**, shared her theme for the year, "Grounded in Gratitude," to guide and inspire all League members. She encouraged members to practice gratitude daily this year, simply making taking moments to express gratitude to the loved ones and friends in your both in and outside the League. League members shared what gratitude means to them and what they are thankful for in the League:



Jazmin Jarrell
Years in the JLH: 5
Current Placement: Bo's Place Chair
 "I am grateful for the incredible women I've met in the League! I have made friendships that will, no doubt, last a lifetime. I couldn't imagine a better way to serve my community. The reach we have in the Greater Houston area is unmatched and I am proud to be a part of that!"



Courtney Reynolds
Years in the JLH: 8
Current Placement: Neighborhood Outreach Assistant Chair
 "I am grateful for the way The Junior League of Houston diligently

equips leaders through education, mentorship and access to historical documentation."



Jacqueline Torres
Years in the JLH: 2
Current Placement: Tea Room Front Office/Pantry Head Active – Weekend
 "I am grateful for the dedicated support of league leaders and mentors that have gone above and beyond to support fellow members – including

myself. I am grateful for those who cheer me on when I need it the most and those who are there when I need a hand. Above all, I'm grateful for the opportunity to be a part of a team and work with such a dynamic group of women."



Debbie Robinson
Years in the JLH: 41
Current Placement: Nominating Sustainer Advisor
 "To me, gratitude means a thankful heart and expressing your thanks and appreciation through words and actions. The Junior League has provided me with countless

expressions of gratitude: the people I have been able to assist via my volunteer activities, the lessons of leadership I have learned through the years and last, but certainly not least, the treasured friendships of over 40 years I have made through my league service. My membership in the Junior League of Houston is the gift that keeps giving and that is why I continue to accept opportunities to serve."



Julie Collado
Years in the JLH: 10
Current Placement: Membership Communications Manager

"I define gratitude as the recognition, acceptance and appreciation of the human condition — the good and the bad. I believe there is something to be learned from every experience. I am grateful for the privilege to serve the Houston community through the incredible organization that is Junior League of Houston, and all it has given to me."



Sarah Swink

Years in the JLH: 3

Current Placement: Child Advocates, Inc. Life Books Head Active

"I'm grateful for the League giving me opportunities to get out of my comfort zone and try new things. It is nice to be a part of something in my community and create friendships

with women that are in both similar and different stages of life as me."



Brianna TenBrink

Years in the JLH: 2

Current Placement: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager – Training

"I am grateful that the League has taught me how to value, leverage and maximize my natural talents and strengths, leading to me excelling in my career path and as a League

leader. I am also grateful that the League explores and immerses our members in diverse and unique community events, programming, and celebrations to ensure culturally competent volunteers."



Dorothy Ables

Years in the JLH: 43

Current Placement: Board of Directors Sustainer Advisor

"I am grateful to be the sustainer advisor on the board as I witnessed first-hand the commitment of these women to impact our community and train volunteers into our next century of service."



Rayna Crier

Years in the JLH: 4

Current Placement: Internal Social Media Manager

"I believe that gratitude is a deep sense of clarity and contentment. I'm grateful that I can approach each new League year with excitement because I know that I can always expect genuine

community engagement, operational excellence and smiling faces no matter where we are. I am content knowing that the JLH will always show up with good intentions and it fills me with gratitude to represent such an amazing organization!"



Renée Shockley Davis

Years in the JLH: 49

Current Placement: Sustainer

"I am grateful for the League's meaningful work and the friends I've made doing that work."



Suzanne Rismiller

Years in the JLH: 3

Current Placement: Tea Room Support Assistant Chair – Actives/Sustainers

"I'm grateful that the League has given me the opportunity to work alongside the most incredible women in doing real, tangible work for our community."



Seante Johnson

Years in the JLH: 6

Current Placement: Admissions Assistant Chair – Sponsor Assistance

"I am grateful for the IMPACT program at the Junior League of Houston. It has played such a major part in the success of Birthday Bash Box. IMPACT volunteers have

given so many Birthday Smiles to the children we serve and I'm so incredibly grateful for everyone."



Alli Whitton

Years in the JLH: 2

Current Placement: Community Assistance Committee Member

"I'm grateful for the amazing community of women we have built up that help to make changes we wouldn't be able to accomplish on our own. I think the League makes

such a difference in the Houston area and I am always so excited and thankful to see the impact we have when we all work together to achieve our common goal. Finding volunteer opportunities in the Houston area isn't difficult, but the League does an amazing job of vetting worthy causes that are guaranteed to make an impact. Through a lot of hard work from a lot of inspiring women, it has taken the guesswork out of volunteering and ensured that our time in the community is maximized." ❁

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