



INSPIRING PEOPLE



RACHEL REGAN

President— The Junior League of Houston, Inc.
Extraordinary Leadership Through COVID-19



“The Junior League is filled with smart, strong women who put their full energy into what they do—and as a result, quietly and profoundly change our city.”

Rachel Regan



The Junior League provides an estimated \$2 million annually in trained volunteer time and financial support.

For information, see:
www.jlh.org

When Rachel Regan conceived the Junior League of Houston’s theme for her upcoming term as President for 2020-2021, she had no idea how prescient “Imagine” would turn out to be. She had taken inspiration for the theme from the well-known Christian song, “I Can Only Imagine,” which had helped her following her beloved father’s death.

“My Dad had loved the League, and his memory was very influential in my decision to say ‘yes’ to being President,” said Rachel, who had already served for years in many leadership capacities, not only in the League but in other charitable organizations in Houston.

As it turned out, “Imagine” is something she and all League volunteers would have to do to get through this year of COVID-19 (Covid). The theme, she said, was truly a “God thing.”

“The Junior League of Houston is the largest League in the world, with 5,000 members, 1,500 of whom are active or provisional members, and each one is required to fulfill approximately 60-70 hours of volunteer work every year,” said Rachel. “The League serves 34 agencies across the city of Houston. But with Covid, everything changed.”

She and the League’s Executive Team had to figure out how to safely deploy 1,500 women into community service. “These volunteers needed structure, to be trained, to show up,” said Rachel. “Many also were dealing with job loss and home-schooling. And how could we allow those volunteers to go out safely?”

The “re-imagined” solution was to create a new, temporary Volunteer IMPACT Placement for the year with a flexible, online calendar. This placement offered more than 40 unique “shifts” from agencies across the city that provided different opportunities for volunteers to serve the community (shifting virtually or according to new limitations) for each month of July, August, and September. “League members and agency partners have embraced this change and have shared tremendously positive feedback,” said Rachel.

What have been some of the League offerings under Rachel’s leadership? She quickly names one after another. “For Sheltering Arms Senior Services, volunteers have called seniors daily to make certain they were doing well and had what they needed. And for the Ronald McDonald House Houston, although League members could not be onsite in the traditional volunteer capacity, they have continued to deliver needed meals for clients each week. “

Rachel and the Junior League leadership teams continue to “Imagine.” She says that volunteers have put together craft bags and literacy kits, delivering them to the Children’s Museum for children to take home—and create and learn. The Houston Food Bank and Kids Meals, on the other hand, have remained open, supplying increased needs of Houstonians, and they welcomed League volunteers for multiple shifts every single week. These are only a few.

So where did this extraordinary leader come from? “I grew up in West, Texas, which has Czech roots,” said Rachel, whose maiden name is “Podsednik.” “I learned at an early age from my parents to give back.” After graduating from Baylor University with a Bachelor of Nursing Degree, she eventually moved to Houston to be a Trauma and Emergency Room Nurse for Memorial Hermann Hospital. Today, she is married to Tom Regan (“He is amazing.”), and they have two children, Ella and Wynn. In addition to her family life and philanthropic works, she is also Senior Vice President of Exclusive Resorts. “I like working on different things at once,” she laughs. “It keeps me on my toes!”

This year, however, the Junior League, in its 95th year, is her focus. What motivates her in this job? “I love to mentor and watch women learn new things, rise to beautiful new places,” she said. “During this difficult year, League members have risen in every possible way, have pivoted to create new opportunities to give back to our community, committed and with an unwavering desire to serve. Certainly, it’s been challenging, but also beautiful and inspiring—and a testament to this tremendous organization. The innovative efforts of the Junior League this year truly demonstrate that *Imagination* does create *Reality*.”

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