

Spring 2017



## JUNIOR LEAGUE OF CEDAR RAPIDS

# IMPACT

What a year! It has been an honor and a pleasure serving as your Junior League Board President for 2016-2017. This is my 13th active year in League and I have spent some time recently reflecting on how far we have come.

What sticks out the most is our relationships with the kids who participate in AMP. When we began attending AMP, I remember going to the Four Oaks kitchen at the Bridge on 1st Avenue and we would just cook. The kids would curiously pass us by on the way to the rec room and our interaction was minimal. Now, fast forward 7 years or so and we know them and they know us. While few of us are at every AMP meeting, those kids decided that we would always be there and seem to have accepted us as a group. Whenever I go to the AMP meetings now, I am humbled by the comraderies between the kids and our members.

As an offshoot of our project, we diversified our funding income to include more grants. This year, our community project was 100% funded by grants by September and next year, our community support budget will double due to our enhanced resources. In addition, we ensure our fundraisers are accessible to the children we serve. Each year, children in foster care can attend Butterfly Kisses and Fostering Strength due to local company support and our generous members.

Correspondingly, we have matched our commitment to community impact and focused on our member impact we well. In 2016-2017, we doubled our training budget, allowing us to send more members to AJLI and locally sponsored trainings than we have since I transferred into this League 10 years ago. Our members return from these trainings inspired and with a host of new ideas to enhance our work.

We have all come a long way and I hope that each of our members feel like their experiences embody our mission to "promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women, and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers." As we look back at our accomplishments this year and look forward to future impact, I think what is most special is our collective impact on our community and each other.

Personally, I want to thank all of you for your hard work, enthusiasm, and friendship. It has been a blessing and I cannot wait to see what we can accomplish next year.

2016-2017 President, Abbie Covenah



## Butterfly Kisses

On January 29, 2016 the Junior League of Cedar Rapids hosted our 15th Annual Butterfly Kisses, a father-daughter dance, at the Cedar Rapids Marriot. This year was all about Ariel with a theme of Under the Sea! The dance went from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon.

Before entering the ballroom, the daddy/daughter groups could have a professional photo taken and the girls could have their face painted. The silent auction opened at this time and bidding stayed competitive throughout the dance.

Ariel made a special appearance and sang her signature song "Part of That World," along with the uber popular "Let It Go" from Frozen. The ballroom was filled with song and laughter as all the little girls sang along!



## A Weekend in Raleigh by Ellen Bardsley

I was so thrilled when I heard that I had been chosen to represent JLCR at the Junior League Organizational Development Institute in Raleigh, North Carolina in October. I joined JLCR with the desire to better myself and meet like-minded women and I looked forward taking a deeper dive into Junior League. Some fellow JLCR members told me to get ready to "drink the Junior League juice" and boy, were they right!

Every part of the conference was inspiring; from networking with women from Leagues of all sizes, the insight shared by the leader of my chosen track for the weekend, Membership and hearing from the Junior League legend, Vicki Clark. The memory from the weekend that sticks with me the most was hearing from a former President of the Junior League of Raleigh, Virginia Parker.

Her family had a long history with League; her grandmother and mother were both in League and instilled the drive to better herself and her community. She faced tremendous loss in her personal life, with the death of her mother in her teen years. When it came time for her to join League, she rose through the ranks and quickly found herself elected President.

Virginia detailed the time she put into her preparation for the first General Membership Meeting she would lead. The morning of the first GMM had blue skies and sunshine, Virginia was ready. Just a couple hours later, her entire League year would shift, as this bright and sunny day was September 11, 2001. Virginia and the entire Charleston League's mentality for the year became "How can we help?" It was a time of uncertainty and a time to put country before self.

Junior League women are a powerful force, ready to help at a moment's notice. If we see a need to fill in a community and we fill it. Virginia's words of inspiration lit a spark in myself and my fellow JLCR members at ODI. We brainstormed and strategized each night during the conference and met after returning to ensure all of the knowledge we absorbed at ODI would make a difference in the Junior League of Cedar Rapids.



## Membership Retention: Holiday Party

JLCR members gathered on Saturday, January 14 at the Early Bird in downtown Cedar Rapids to celebrate the holiday season. With the theme of Winter Wonderland, members mingled while enjoying beer, wine and appetizers from the local downtown business.



## Sustainer Holiday Party



JLCR sustainers gathered on December 10 for the 2016 Holiday Party. This year's event was graciously hosted by Danielle Rings and Nina Brundell at MODE in Cedar Rapids. Drinks and hors d'oeuvres were served and the ladies enjoyed a great evening of fun shopping and conversation. The group included a wide variety of attendees including current board members, recent sustainers and even lifetime members. Board members enjoyed the opportunity to discuss our current fundraisers and Bridging the G.A.P. project.

Thank you to all who attended this year's Holiday Party and a huge thanks to MODE and to Danielle and Nina for hosting.

## Community Relations by Adriane Moline

### Families Helping Families Closet Restock

This DIAD was offered twice a month for two hours on every other Sunday from October to December. The duties included sorting through donations of clothing and then hanging/displaying those items for foster families to choose from. Also, general tidying of the clothing closet. If a family came in to shop then we would make sure they filled out the paper work and easily found what they were looking for. If someone was donating then we would help them unload and make sure they filled out donation paper work. There is always a board member there to help with the duties and for general guidance.

I volunteered twice and had different experiences with each time I volunteered. The first time it wasn't very busy with families so myself and another JL member sorted clothing and learned more about the how and why of FHF. The second time I volunteered it was just me and the board member and we had quite a few families come through. Along with helping to find the right size for the children I had the opportunity to get to know some of the kids by reading books and answering their curious questions about the closet. It was nice to be a bit of entertainment for them while their foster parents could shop.



For myself personally I have learned so much about the services provided by FHF and an understanding to take the time to search for an outlet on how I can contribute to my community. The volunteer hours have been very satisfying, but knowing that I can donate items to a place where it will directly impact children here in our community is rewarding. To actually see the need in front of you, moves you. I am forever grateful for FHF letting us come in and volunteer. Even though the DIAD opportunities have passed it shouldn't stop me (or maybe you) from volunteering again. Anyone can do it and it's a great place to give back.

### **PATHS Program Clothing Drive**

During the November GMM, members brought in work attire to donate to Jane Boyd's PATHS Program. This program provides career development skills training, coaching, internship placement, and job search support for its participants. The clothing drive was an incredible success, with over 40 members donating multiple articles of clothing to the program. Upon completion of the program, participants were able to "shop" the donations to wear for interviews and jobs. Their excitement and appreciation is clearly shown in these photos!



### **Families Helping Families Clothing Closet**

Twice a month from October through December JLCR members volunteered at the Families Helping Families Clothing Closet. The Clothing Closet is a free store for foster families to find clothing and other necessities for their foster kids. JLCR members regularly get to interact with foster kids through our Bridging the G.A.P program, however, this gave us the opportunity to also interact with the families providing a temporary or permanent home for these kids. Those who were able to participate got to feel and see the service these families provide and the continual support they need from our community.



## **Membership: New Members**

Each year, the new member committee works together on a project and this year's class organized a Stuff the Truck event with Stuff Etc. The event was meant to gather goods for Stuff Etc. to sell, with JLCR to receive 50% of the final price on items donated in the name of JLCR.

In total, this event raised approximately \$1,400 worth in items, which are for sale at Stuff Etc. Currently, JLCR has

\$125 in our account. As a reminder, anyone can drop off items at Stuff Etc. at anytime for the JLCR account. The money for items sold stays on the account for two years after the date of sale. JLCR members do not need the number just let the employee know the JLCR name.



### **Welcome to all Junior League of Cedar Rapids New Members!**

**Cassi Forbes ♦ Destini Hoth ♦ Kristie Hunter (Kemp) ♦ Jessica Kaspari ♦ Monique Kuhns ♦**

**Amanda Lyons ♦ Anne Morman (Schmalenberger) ♦ Karelyn Pohl ♦ Brandy Pregon ♦ Becky Robinson**

**Kristen Svalstad ♦ Kate Walters (Wiebke) ♦ Anna Weddle ♦ Kristiana Wright**

## Project: Advocate



### Day on the Hill

Earlier this year, JLCR members LaShonda Kennedy, Angel Burns and Christy Logan traveled to the Iowa State Capitol to advocate with other Junior League women from Des Moines and the Quad Cities for Junior League Day on the Hill.

### Little Black Bag Challenge

“Wait, are you actually carrying trash in that thing?”

This was just one of the countless questions my fellow Junior League of

Cedar Rapids women answered during our Little Black Bag Challenge. For one week, we transferred all the contents out of our purses and into black trash bags.

Very often, as foster youth age out of the system or move homes, they are handed a black trash bag, asked to gather their belongings and leave. The Little Black Bag Challenge was intended to advocate for foster youth in a unique way. Carrying around a trash bag instead of a purse draws attention. Once we garnered that attention, we took the opportunity to chat about the work JLCR does and how it impacts foster youth.



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Taking place April 17 –23, the challenge was the perfect way to build momentum for Fostering Strength. We engaged with each other throughout the week on social media with #LittleBlackChallengeJLCR.

Advocacy work can be hard to pin down and doesn't always have a tangible elements. The Little Black Bag was the perfect way to involve a broad group from the membership into our advocacy efforts. Look for this challenge again next year, this time bigger and better!



## Project: Provide

This year, we distributed 40 "apartments in a suitcase" through Foundation 2, DHS and Families Helping Families to youth aging out of the foster care system, which is an increase from last year. We also provided 30 refresher packs, including fifteen regular refreshers and fifteen baby refreshers to youth in Aftercare. The re- fresher packs consist of frequently used household items that are distributed to youth on a case-by-case basis to alleviate some of the financial stress of making ends meet on their own.

This year was the second year that JLCR offered a scholarship fund to youth in the foster care system as well as to those who've aged out. We received a variety of requests and were able to spend almost \$6000 out of the \$6500 allotted in the budget. We distributed funds to youth for the purchase of beds, utility bill assistance, car repairs, rental costs, tuition assistance, a stroller and car seat and more.

We also filled 36 backpacks with school supplies, including five graphing calculators that were distributed to our partners at Families Helping Families. Thank you to all of the JLCR members who



## Resource Development

Resource Development set a goal for the 2016-2017 Annual Fund to raise \$7,000.

We blew that goal out of the water by raising a total of \$8,727! This is an incredible accomplishment and the resource development committee would like to thank everyone who donated to make this possible!

## Fostering Strength

What advice would you give your 21 year old self? Keynote speaker Gigi Edwards Byrant walked us through the advice that she would have given her 21 year old self at Fostering Strength on Thursday, May 11, 2017. Her story is inspiring.

At 21, Gigi was a former foster youth and a single mom working on making ends meet. In past, she looked back at countless foster home placements, many involving abuse. Her future? Unclear. While her grandmother was in her life and provided emotional support, Gigi had no other family to provide financial, emotional, or spiritual support.

The ideals and lessons she learned are what allowed her to finish her bachelor's degree over the course of a decade and continue to grow in a career, which eventually lead to her becoming chairwoman of the Texas Department of Family Protective Services Advisory Council. At this point, she was finally was able to help change the system and be an advocate for foster youth across her home state. Fostering Strength attendees were moved by her story of empowerment and bravery.

Again this year, de Novo Alternative Marketing create three beautiful videos that encompassed out Bridging the G.A.P. Project. Click the images below to view each video.



Thank you to everyone's support, Fostering Strength 2017 brought about \$36,000! These funds will continue to support Junior League of Cedar Rapids' Bridging the G.A.P. Project. A special thank you to our co-hosts: Lydia Brown, Danielle Rings, Martha Ruffalo, Jennifer Smith; all of our table sponsors, those who donated a market item, and to every Junior League of Cedar Rapids member who came out to support our largest fundraiser.

Thank you to our Fostering Strength Sponsors: Kittd, Skogman Realty, CliftonLarsonAllen, The Gazette, Ryan Companies, Four Oaks, Aerotek, Foundation 2, Iowa Women Lead Change, Forman Ford, Skywalk Group UFG Insurance, Bohr, Damn, Greifer & Associates, de Novo, United Way of East Central Iowa, MODE, TrueNorth Companies and Transamerica.



## Annual Meeting

Thank you to all that attended our Annual Meeting on Tuesday, May 16 at the Coe College Clark Alumni House! It was a night to celebrating the many accomplishments of the year and toasting to next year's leaders. Here's the awards from the night:

### Leadership Award

Caitlin Mattes

### Unsung Hero Award

Stacey Przyslecki

### You Name It Awards

Stickin' To It: Jenn Draper

Mama Bear: Brie Steffens

Inner Beauty: Michelle Foley

### Wheels in Motion Award

Adriane Moline

### Spirit Award

Amber Blomme

### Rising Star Award

Anne Moran

### Sustainer of the Year Award

Danielle Rings

### Robert O. Daniel Community Service Award

Kittd

**Thank you to all of Junior League of Cedar Rapids' sponsors!**



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