Where Are They Now?
Community Assistance Fund Grant Recipients

Sustainer of the Year
Melanee Usdin

JLNO Loves Getting Involved in Governance
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On the Cover
Sustainer of the Year 
Melanee Usdin
Photo by: Jessica Bachmann
2018

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Spring is often seen as a time of renewal, a time of growth. This Spring issue of *Lagniappe* is my favorite, because we honor the Junior League of New Orleans Sustainer of the Year. This award is the highest honor and is given to a Sustainer that embodies the mission of the Junior League of New Orleans and who strives to improve the community through the effective action and leadership. The award also demonstrates the significant training that JLNO members receive during their years as active members.

As you will read, the Sustainer of the Year award recipient made a tremendous impact on the league during her active years, but it’s the impact she made after that has helped propel the League to where we are today. She continues to give freely of her time and talents and many organizations in New Orleans have benefited from the training she received from the Junior League of New Orleans.

We are proud of the impact our members make in the community. Our members put over 40,000 volunteer hours into the community annually and participate in over 10,000 training hours. JLNO is committed to Advancing the Wellbeing of Women through the use of trained volunteers providing direct service, educating the community, and advocating for issues that affect women. JLNO addresses its focus area within a portfolio of longstanding projects like Safe Sitter and new initiatives, including its Diaper Bank and its Woman Entrepreneur Fellowship.

As Spring approaches, I will use this time to evaluate my personal growth. Each day, I am reminded of the impact that we, the JLNO, are making in the community, the training I have received and the women that I have met. I hope that I can continue to make the impact in the community that the Sustainer of the Year has and will continue to make.

Sincerely,

Kristen Koppel
JLNO President
Preservation Resource Center’s

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Ten minute downpours, 80 degree days and tulips in City Park – that’s right, it’s springtime in New Orleans! Whether you’re relishing in the warm weather or already trying to find ways to beat the heat, this time of year is a wonderful one in our city and for the Junior League of New Orleans.

We have several exciting events planned in the coming weeks, many of them you will find detailed in this issue. Mark your calendars for more installments of our successful Financial Literacy program, the Women Entrepreneur Fellowship pitches, and the Women of Courage event (check out our Bulletin Board on page 8 for dates and times). Ready for wedding season? You will be once you take our Savoir Faire course on Wedding Etiquette on page 10!

Spring is traditionally the season associated with growth, so this issue we took an introspective look at some of the ways in which JLNO and our partners have grown. We checked in with some of our favorite Community Assistance Fund Grand recipients as well as took a detailed look at our growing partnership with the Giggles Child Development Center.

As is customary with our spring issue, we honor our Sustainer of the Year. For those of you who have not had the pleasure of meeting Melanee Usdin, take the time to read about this incredible woman and her dedication to our city and organization on page 18.

Lastly, speaking of new beginnings, I would like to congratulate our Assistant Editor, Lacy McManus, on the birth of her daughter, Clara! Lacy has been invaluable to this magazine and we are excited for her joyous news.

Cheers,

ECP

Emma C. Pegues
Editor
Where do people get the most out of each day?

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LEMONADE DAY UNIVERSITY

To supplement our children’s education programs with career skills, JLNO partners with Lemonade Day to teach youth how to start, own and operate their own business—a lemonade stand. Lemonade Day University will take place Saturday, April 21, 2018 and is free for children ages 8 to 12. More information and registration available at www.jlno.org/lemonade-day

NEW BLOOMIN’ DEALS HOURS

Bloomin’ Deals has changed its hours of operation. We are now closed on Mondays and open on Sundays. Our newstore hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

To increase financial literacy and in alignment with our focus on Advancing the Wellbeing of Women, JLNO has developed a Financial Literacy for Women curriculum which focuses on the five key financial topics of banking, borrowing, budgeting, saving and investing. All events in this program are free and open to the public.

- April 10, 2018 – Credit Report
- May 8, 2018 – Preventing Foreclosure

Sessions begin promptly at 6:30 p.m. at the Broadmoor Arts and Wellness Center (3900 General Taylor) unless otherwise indicated. More information and registration at www.jlno.org/financial-literacy

RUN FRERET

On April 8, beginning and ending at JLNO’s Bloomin’ Deals Thrift Shop, this 5K and half-mile fun run:
- Showcases a vibrant economic corridor
- Promotes family fitness
- Raises funds for JLNO’s community projects and volunteer efforts
For more information and to register, visit www.jlno.org/freret5k

GIVE NOLA DAY

GiveNOLA Day is a 24-hour, online giving event organized by the Greater New Orleans Foundation to ignite philanthropy in Southeast Louisiana. Part of JLNO’s mission is to promote voluntarism and improve communities, and participating in GiveNOLA Day, May 21, is one way we can celebrate generosity and elevate the conversation about philanthropy in Metropolitan New Orleans. More information at www.jlno.org/givenday

DON’T FORGET

March 30 Good Friday - Bloomin’ Deals closes at 3 p.m.
JLNO Headquarters Closed
April 1 Easter
April 15-21 National Volunteer Week
May 13 Mother’s Day
May 28 Memorial Day - Bloomin’ Deals Closed
JLNO Headquarters Closed

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

March 20 - Attend the Woman Entrepreneur Fellowship Pitch during New Orleans Entrepreneur Week.
March 21 - Join us for Women of Courage, a special event featuring personal accounts from two extraordinary survivors of WWII.
March 23 - New Member Application Deadline
April 24 - General Membership Meeting
April 24-29 Placement Week
May 15 - General Membership Meeting

DIAPER BANK

Did you know that JLNO’s Diaper Bank accepts opened packages of diapers? Do you have diapers that your baby has outgrown? Donate them to a family in need by bringing them to JLNO Headquarters, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

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Wedding Etiquette 101
Advice From Three Crescent City Wedding Specialists

By Jill Holland

The most important thing to remember when discussing etiquette is that “you don’t get a second chance at a first impression,” said Sustainer Claudia Kelleher, Owner of In Any Event, Inc., a New Orleans based event planning business. Whether you are a bride, groom or guest this rings true. Here are some wedding etiquette highlights to help you make a good impression.

The Invitation

The invitation “is the first glimpse and impression of the celebration,” said Anna Dearmon Kornick, JLNO Communications Council Director and owner of the calligraphy and hand-lettering business The Welcome Note. It is important to address the envelopes appropriately, using a guest’s title and full name, making sure that names are spelled correctly. Anna suggests using Emily Post’s etiquette advice as a guide for inner envelopes. “The names on the inner envelope indicate exactly who is invited, or if your guest may bring a plus one,” Anna explains. “It is a compliment to receive an invitation,” said Claudia. This is one of the reasons that as a guest, it is important to know what your invitation indicates. Reading the invitation correctly and respecting your host’s wishes is important. They have put a great amount of thought and planning into this event, and extra guests can affect budget, seating charts, and other aspects of the big day.

The Planning

As the couple and their families plan the wedding and rehearsal dinner, Claudia pointed out that remembering to be inclusive is crucial, “This is your new family — it is important to make everyone feel included.” In doing this, you are laying a foundation for future interactions. If you have children, she said, “(your in-laws) will be their grandparents.” So, as you plan, reach out to your new family and make them a part of the celebrations.

And while the guest list is traditionally dictated by the bride’s family (who pay for the wedding and reception), it is a nice gesture on the part of the hosts to allot a certain number of guests for the groom’s family and friends — and vice versa as the groom’s family plans the rehearsal dinner.

Active Lara Mintz, of LaMintz Wedding Coordination, recommends “having open conversations with the families about who gets to invite who.” This is also important when deciding the size of the wedding. Discussing it openly will help keep everyone on the same page, and planning will go much more smoothly.

The Attendants

It is an honor to be asked to stand in a wedding, and being a bridesmaid or a groomsman is a lot of fun. Along with the fun, though, there are obligations that are often not considered. As an attendant, you will be asked to attend showers and parties as well as purchase your attire for the big day.

Claudia and Lara both touched on this topic. “When you accept an invitation to be an attendant, you are accepting a financial responsibility,” said Claudia. If you have been asked to stand in a wedding and you cannot manage the monetary commitments that will come along with it, it is OK to politely say so. “Offer to help host a shower or help in some way on the day of the wedding,” said Lara.

Sometimes, a bride assists attendants by covering the cost of hair and makeup and/or jewelry. Some families offer to take care of the hotel rooms for the wedding party. Every budget is different. Finding a way to assist your wedding party, if possible, is a way to say thank you for participating in your big day.

The Gifts

In this age of the internet, there are all types of wedding registries and ways to send gifts. Whether you receive a gift from a local store or through Amazon, it is imperative that you send a thank you note. “When someone sends you a gift, they have made an effort to spend time thinking of you,” said Claudia. She stresses the importance of sending handwritten thank you notes. If all else fails, she advises calling the gift giver, but says there is no substitute for putting pen to paper. Etiquette dictates that you have one year from your wedding date to send your thank you notes — but being prompt with your gratitude is always preferred.

Whatever your role at a wedding, it is important to navigate the “I Dos” and “I Don’ts” with good manners, courteous communication and a positive attitude. This proper etiquette is a way of showing respect for those around you as well as yourself.
Active Emma Pegues’ wedding shower had signage explaining the rules of a game the ladies were to play during the party. Photo provided by: Emma Pegues

To Plug or Unplug?

Cell Phones and Social Media at the Wedding

While there is no official rule about having cell phones out during a wedding, the unofficial rule is to keep your digital device pocketed during the ceremony. “Cell phones will distract from an otherwise beautiful picture,” said Anna. Claudia also said having phones out during the ceremony is a faux pas.

If you would prefer to have an “unplugged” ceremony, Anna recommends having hand-lettered signage for guests to see as they enter the sanctuary or venue (For example, she said, “Honor the sanctity of our sanctuary. Please silence your electronic devices and put them away during the ceremony.”)

You may also opt to include a note regarding cell phones as part of the wedding bulletin. Often, the officiant reminds guests to silence their devices before the ceremony begins.

At the reception, on the other hand, let the guests help you capture the day. Having signage stating, “Let’s be social,” and including your personalized hashtag is a great way to keep track of all those candid and posed pictures that are snapped at the party. Your hashtag can also be used ahead of the big day at showers and engagement parties.

If you choose to use a hashtag, Anna advises, “Search it first! If two thousand other pics on Facebook and Instagram have your same same hashtag, your guests’ photographs will get lost among all of the others.” Anna’s own hashtag, #keepingupwiththeKornicks was a success, and she was able to experience her wedding day through the eyes of her social media savvy guests.
Getting Involved in Governance

By Autumn Town

The first Junior League was founded in New York City in 1901. Inspired by a lecture on social reform, Mary Harriman Rumsey created the League initially to promote the Settlement Movement, with a goal of providing resources and education to help break the cycle of poverty in poor urban areas. Junior League chapters have since evolved as charitable women’s organizations, with a shared focus of voluntarism and advancing the causes of women. As shared in its Mission Statement, The Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc. (AJLI) works to improve its communities by “promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable.”

From its inception, The Junior League has been active in social issues. In 1901, women had legally been able to own property for only one year, still did not have the right to vote, and domestic violence had yet to be outlawed in all 50 states. Given the sociopolitical environment of the time, it is no wonder that The Junior League was developed hand in hand with activism.

The Junior League of New Orleans has recently formed a Legislative Affairs/Advocacy Committee, which is currently in its second year. Vice-Chair Candice Caccioppi said she believes, “this committee, at this moment in time, elevates and leverages the work JLNO is doing to advance the wellbeing of women.” The primary goal of the committee is to serve as an arm for policy education. Candice notes that when we “lever- age our collective voice by educating our membership and community on policy issues, it offers a really great opportunity.” Although the committee is non-partisan, it will focus on those issues that advance the wellbeing of women, and directly impact women, children and families. President-Elect Alice Glenn agrees that before taking a position on a particular issue, “we need to do our homework and due diligence and make this a very carefully thought out and crafted exercise.” She believes the rule should be to educate on issues. “It is unfortunate that so many issues have become partisan in nature, and you find out that’s not really case when you sit down and talk to someone. It is really only in the solutions that our opinions differ.”
With a secondary goal of advocacy, the committee wants to represent JLNO interests, which would require conversations with members and engaging them about issues. “We need to start a dialogue with other [Junior] League members to determine what issues we care about,” Candice suggests.

Alice also believes that “female leadership in the government affairs realm is a hot button issue, and really reinforces the relevance of the League and the work that we’re doing.” Given JLNO’s mission as an organization for women’s training and community service, Alice suggests training female leaders becomes even more important “coupled with the point in time where we’re at.” Alice hopes the committee eventually broadens its scope to include more than a legislative focus, and will serve to “make sure members are aware of opportunities that exist for them as advocates for government officials and potential candidates, or even as officials themselves. Training can help prepare for a role in both public and nonprofit service.”

Even though the Legislative Affairs/Advocacy Committee was only formed last year, much was accomplished and it has now taken a position we hope will continue into the future. The committee organized and hosted a historic Mayoral Forum between Desiree Charbonnet and LaToya Cantrell, the two run-off candidates for first female mayor of New Orleans. Candice noted that although the forum had to come together quickly, she was “really excited to work with both camps to have a forum at the League for membership, and to ask the candidates to speak to our mission and our issues.” Members were invited to email potential questions, which were then distilled into the areas that generated the most interest. Alice, who moderated the forum, emphasized that a “second filter was JLNO’s mission and how does this platform advance the well being of women, which included a broader discussion of education and crime, and then infrastructure like streets and the water board.” The forum was very well attended and served as a throwback to earlier days of JLNO history when we regularly hosted political forums.

Committee members also organized a standing-room only screening of Five Awake, a documentary that won Best Louisiana Feature at the 2016 New Orleans Film Festival. Five Awake chronicles the efforts of five Louisiana women who worked to pass historic bills against domestic violence. A forum followed, with State Representative Helena Moreno and State Senator JP Morrell attending, along with the advocates from the film. Candice believes there were broader lessons from the film, in that “laws are only able to be passed by people getting educated and traveling to Baton Rouge.” Alice credited those advocates’ success to doing their homework, and “not just that they were educated on the issues, but prepared information on domestic violence instances in every legislator’s district. Having real data and real information to provide that would be interesting and compelling to each individual legislator.”

The committee’s current goal is growth and development as they move forward working on member engagement and education. In addition to putting together a speaker series, JLNO will also sponsor a Capitol Day when the legislature is in session. This will be an opportunity for members to meet with legislators and monitor legislation as filed to determine if the League wants to follow particular bills. Alice also hopes to see more forums, as well as more engagement in local politics, including the city council and school board.

Both Alice and Candice stress the importance of advocacy at this pivotal point in history, for women in general and for The Junior League, and Alice is particularly “excited that members have an interest in dipping their toes into advocacy.” Candice emphasizes that with “2000-plus members, our collective voice is really powerful.” By “pulling together facts and resources, and bringing boots on the ground, it is an opportunity for us to learn and really put our voice behind an issue.” Ultimately, Candice views the Legislative Affairs/Advocacy committee as “a learning opportunity for community conversations within The [Junior] League. It is also an opportunity to engage the community outside The [Junior] League, and show that we are a volunteering army. This advocacy committee is another way to elevate that.”
Forty-three percent of kids in the United States are bullied online. Psychiatrist Morgan Feibelman and Brian Klebba, Assistant Attorney for the United States Department of Justice, discussed this astounding fact as well as tips for prevention and response at the forum hosted by the Junior League of New Orleans' Member Education Committee.

According to the United States Department of Justice, one in five children per year receive an unwanted sexual solicitation online. One in 33 children per year receives an aggressive sexual solicitation. Over 50,000 predators are currently on the Internet actively seeking out children.

“The United States Attorneys Office Eastern District of Louisiana is committed to aggressively implementing programs and targeting those who would harm children in order to provide a safer environment for all children in today’s ever expanding and complicated world,” said Brian.

Brian’s office believes that the goal of the educational components of the program is to raise the public’s awareness about the threat and prevalence of online sexual predators and to provide the tools and information to educators, parents, and children to help reduce the likelihood of harm to children and to assist law enforcement in their investigations through the reporting of incidents involving minors.

The Project Safe Childhood (PSC) consists of 5 components: 1) expansion of partnerships between federal, state, and local law enforcement in prosecuting child exploitation matters, identifying, rescuing and assisting child-victims; 2) continued participation in national initiatives; 3) expanding federal involvement in child exploitation investigations; 4) training of federal, state, and local law enforcement; 5) community outreach and education.

JLNO Membership Council Director Lesley Davis thought the event was very informative.

“I really enjoyed the different aspects of cyber-bullying that were presented. We were provided with information regarding general safety tips; including how to identify potential sex offenders, how to recognize signs that your child may be a cyber-bullying victim and how to properly handle the situation if they are and also what to do if your child is the cyber-bully,” said Lesley.

Dr. Feibelman is board certified in psychiatry and child and adolescent psychiatry, and he gave the audience tips on recognizing bullied behavior in their children.

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS text and apps, or online via social media, forums or gaming where people can view, participate in or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting or sharing negative, harmful, false or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else that causes embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior.

“Some of the warning signs that a child may be involved in cyberbullying are: noticeable, rapid increases or decreases in device use, including texting, a child exhibits emotional responses (laughter, anger, upset) to what is happening on their device, hiding their screen or device when others are near, and avoids discussion about what they are doing on their device, social media accounts are shut down or new ones appear, starts avoiding social situations, even those that were enjoyed in the past, becoming withdrawn or depressed, or loses interest in people and activities,” noted Dr. Feibelman.

The most common places where cyberbullying occurs are:

- Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter
- SMS (Short Message Service) also known as text messages
- Instant Message (via devices, email provider services, apps or social media messaging features)
- Email

Protect your child from harmful digital behavior:

- Monitor their social media profiles, apps, and browsing history if you have concerns that cyberbullying may be occurring.
- Review or re-set your child’s phone location and privacy settings.
- Follow or friend your teen on social media sites or have another trusted adult do so.
- Stay up-to-date on the latest apps, social media platforms, and digital slang.
- Establish rules about appropriate digital behavior and content.
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Electric Girls

Founded in 2015, Received CAF Grant in 2017

**Mission:** To increase girls’ confidence and proficiency in science, technology, engineering and math. Electric Girls develops female students into confident leaders and role models in technology by creating a community where girls can learn with and from each other.

Electric Girls Founder Flor Serna was inspired to start this program after her experience as one of the few female audio engineers in New Orleans. She wanted to provide girls with the guidance, skills and confidence to pursue engineering academically and professionally. Flor learned the hard way how often girls are dissuaded from pursuing careers involving science and math. “I remember when a group of middle school students visiting my recording studio for a career day assumed I was the back-up singer rather than the engineer for the recording session,” Flor says. “I think girls are unintentionally socialized away from pursuing STEM, through the toys marketed to them, teachers’ praise in the classroom, when moms say, ‘Oh, I just don’t do math’ in front of their girls.” The Electric Girls program includes learning how to operate saws, soldering irons and drills, as well as building electronic devices and computer programming. JLNO’s CAF grant allowed Electric Girls to grow from two after-school programs to twelve. Flor hopes to expand Electric Girls into more after-school programs in New Orleans and eventually statewide.

Family Justice Center

Founded in 2007, Received JLNO CAF Grant in 2015

**Mission:** A partnership of agencies dedicated to ending family violence, child abuse, sexual assault, and stalking through prevention and coordinated response by providing comprehensive client-centered, empowerment services in a single location.

The New Orleans Family Justice Center used the CAF Grant awarded by JLNO in 2015 to build a Child Play Therapy Center, featuring one of the state’s few Registered Child Play Therapists on staff. Although the word “play” may suggest a light-hearted and fun task, this therapist helps some of Louisiana’s most endangered and abused children begin to sort through emotional, serious issues in a non-threatening way. “The JLNO Play Therapy Center serves some of the most vulnerable children in our community,” says Candice Caccioppi, the center’s Director of Fundraising. “NOFJC’s ability to mitigate the trauma that our child clients have experienced is life-changing and the ripple effects of the therapy we provide are far-reaching in our community. Early trauma intervention changes the trajectory of a child’s life and our ability to deliver those services is furthered by the JLNO Play Therapy Center.” The statistics are sobering: children who live in a home with domestic violence are 74 percent more likely to commit a violent act as an adult, according to the New Orleans Family Justice Center. There is certainly no shortage of demand for the services NOFJC provides. Approximately 2,000 clients come through the center’s doors needing help every year, and that number is growing. The NOFJC now has people on a wait list for both child and adult trauma therapy services, as counselors try to accommodate an increase in the amount of people looking for help. “NOFJC’s immediate goal is to expand services and programs for survivors, particularly children,” Candice says. “We have partnered with CrescentCare and in the coming months...
will open a Federally Qualified Health Center on the first floor of our building. This is an exciting addition to our center, as we will be able to provide forensic exams for our clients, in addition to general healthcare services for the community. Those services include a pediatrician to tend to children in need of health care. With the proper love and attention, NOFJC and JLNO are hoping to give children who are the victims of violence a way to cope and the necessary skills to enjoy a promising future.

Teaching Responsible Earth Education (T.R.E.E.)
Founded in 1995, Received JLNO CAF Grants in 2012 and 2013

Mission: To educate children and adults about the life science processes that govern our planet, to inspire them to appreciate the natural world, and to motivate them to protect it.

Many people would describe T.R.E.E. as a fun way to teach earth science to third, fourth, fifth and seventh graders by allowing them to experience nature through daily and overnight programs. In T.R.E.E.’s 22-year existence, thousands of students throughout the New Orleans metropolitan area have learned more about our world thanks to a comprehensive curriculum and hands-on experiences in outdoor classrooms. Heather Szapary was a T.R.E.E. teacher shortly after Sue Brown founded the group in 1995 and is now the group’s executive director. Heather says the Junior League’s impact on T.R.E.E. has been vital, through grant money and much more. “T.R.E.E. has benefited greatly by having had a relationship with the Junior League since 2002,” Heather explains. “A combination of volunteer and financial support helped T.R.E.E.’s 4th grade program, Earth Keepers, get established. They have always kept us abreast of the many ways they help nonprofit organizations in New Orleans. T.R.E.E. has had several board members from the Get on Board program, who provide great leadership and representation of our mission in the community.” T.R.E.E. plans to keep growing, much in the same way its founders hope the program will breed a greater understanding of nature and therefore a commitment to preserving it. Soon, Heather says the program wants to extend itself into more schools, especially low-income institutions, and increase its annual capacity above the average 1,500 student limit it works under now.
Melanee Usdin
Sustainer of the Year

By Kristin W. Durand

Photo by: Jessica Bachmann
Brisbee, a 14-week-old Australian Shepherd puppy, serves as the unofficial greeter at the Usdin residence these days. Melanee Usdin and her family welcomed this newcomer into their hearts just before the holidays. It’s evident from their interaction that Brisbee is destined to bring out the best Melanee has to offer—and that is saying a lot.

Melanee Usdin has been a member of the Junior League of New Orleans almost as long as she’s been a New Orleanian. Born and raised in the Crescent City and a graduate of both Metairie Park Country Day School and Tulane University School of Law, Melanee has a deep connection to the city that compels her to play an active role in its future.

Voluntarism was a family affair and something that came naturally to Melanee from the start. From the time she was a young girl, her mother and father instilled a responsibility of service to others in her heart. It was a forgone conclusion that when the time came she would join Junior League.

"I was always aware of the importance of the Junior League," Melanee said. "It was considered an honor to be in the Junior League, and that's how I felt about it."

Melanee knew the League would be a labor of love. She fondly recalls her first year but with no misgivings about the dedication it entailed then and still demands of Provisionals today. "I was practicing law, I was pregnant and I was married, so there were lots of demands on my time—just like there is for every Provisional—but I made Junior League a priority. It was that important to me."

As she began to delve deeper into her commitment within the organization, Melanee found her experience enriched by both the people she met and the skills she began to learn.

In the years to follow, she would go on to serve JLNO as legal counsel, revise the bylaws as Chairman of the Strategic Planning Committee and serve as President from 1999-2000. As the world came into the new millennium, Melanee seized the chance to introduce some new and modern ideas within the League. One highlight of her presidency was the launch of the first JLNO website and her tenure saw the impact of JLNO's volunteer workforce reverberating throughout the community at large. She cited the response from the Diaper Bank after to the recent floods and hurricanes across Louisiana and the southern United States respectively. She added, "I really do consider what I learned at Junior League to be as formative as going to law school was."

The tenacity comes as no surprise to her friend and fellow JLNO Sustainer, Katie Crosby. "Melanee does not put things aside to be dealt with at a later time and is not afraid to tackle issues that may present challenges." Katie continued, "She is a consensus builder and actively seeks the opinion of others that she works with."

The impression JLNO has made on Melanee's life is evident. "I'm friends now with my JLNO friends in much the same way I've remained friends for life with my high school friends," Melanee said. They continue to serve on Boards together, recruit one another, and request candidates who have completed the JLNO Get on Board training "because you know a Junior League trained volunteer is the best volunteer."

Often in times of crisis, volunteer-based organizations are among the first with the ability to set meaningful actions into motion. New Orleans has a proud history of having a fertile volunteer base to pull from, and Melanee feels the impact of JLNO's volunteer workforce reverberates throughout the community at large. She cited the response from the Diaper Bank after to the recent floods and hurricanes across Louisiana and the southern United States respectively. She also lauds the continued creation of Community Projects like Touch a Truck and Safe Sitter.

"In New Orleans, especially, where city funding is limited, volunteer programs often offer help and services that wouldn't be available otherwise," Melanee said. In situations like this, non-profits like the Junior League have the manpower to step in and positively influence people's day-to-day lives. She also touched on the unique point of view the JLNO brings to the conversation, stating, "It's great to see the power of all these women coming together with an objective. A lot of the business world is still dominated by men, so it's great to see women united and making a difference."

After putting in such dedication during her active years,
Melanee has enjoyed the life of a Sustainer, saying in no uncertain terms, “It’s fun! You can join a Sustainer Club and have a totally social experience after you’ve worked so hard as an active.” She is currently involved in the Junior League Interior Decorating Club and the Garden Club, but she is not one to let grass grow beneath her feet. She will also serve as Sustaining Advisor in the 2018–2019 league year. She’s looking forward to the opportunity to share her experiences with the newest iteration of the JLNO Board to continue advancing the League’s mission. “I think Actives can benefit from what Sustainers know and hopefully Actives will tap into some of that,” Melanee said.

Melanee’s personal passions gravitate towards arts and leisure. To that end, she supports causes where art is used as a medium to teach others. While serving as Chairman of the Board of KID smART, she promoted their mission to teach public school children their core curriculum through visual arts. Through a partnership with Poydras Home and the New Orleans Museum of Art—two organizations where Melanee currently serves as a board member—she is especially proud of their joint program that brings residents struggling with Alzheimer’s and dementia to the museum. After being stimulated by the artwork, they have found people become much more responsive and at times it can even bring back memories.

An avid reader, Melanee is a member of three different book clubs and a literary club where they write and present research papers. Visiting her sons, Matthew and William, easily satisfies her wanderlust as their lives and careers criss-cross the globe everywhere from New York City and Abu Dabi to Oxford and Taiwan. Melanee and her husband Steven revel in every opportunity to explore the world and see their sons at the same time. After a life filled with selflessly giving her time and her talents to her community, one can hardly fault her the occasional escapade, surround with those most dear to her. “My favorite thing is to be on vacation, wake up and know that I’m going to have breakfast with both my boys. I know those years are limited, but for now it’s pretty sweet.” •
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Touro cardiologist Than Nguyen, M.D. is pictured above with patient Tim Darby. Read Tim's story online at touro.com/timshears.
Every year, on the third Monday in January, our nation celebrates the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In 2018, this day of recognition fell on January 15 — the day which would have been his 89th birthday. King once famously said, “Everybody can be great because anybody can serve.” Citizens throughout the country have taken to service in his honor. Recently, JLNO has opened up numerous Diaper Bank shifts on MLK Day to provide opportunities to “be great” and serve our community. We have encouraged members to share their stories of service as a way of remembering King’s nonviolent leadership with the Civil Rights Movement in America. Be inspired by these philanthropic members in our organization:

Active Mae Emma Hill is an inaugural member of the Streetcar Strutters, a women’s marching krewe working on various community service projects. Since 2017, the Strutters have partnered with the Animal Rescue of New Orleans and LASPCA, Walk to Defeat ALS, New Orleans Family Justice Center and more, “to celebrate, promote, and aid in the welfare of our community through various community service projects as well as raise awareness of the challenges and issues facing our beloved furry friends in the animal community.”

Sustainer Jessie Schott Haynes volunteers with the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, serving as a trustee, chair of the Nominating and Governance Committee; she is also the managing director of the Helis Foundation, which funds a significant number of educational programs and exhibits for the Ogden. Jessie very much enjoys working to expand the Ogden’s diverse audience by supporting appreciation of the visual arts and culture of the American South. She attributes “so much of the board and governance experience to my time as a Junior League member.”

TOP: School children admire an exhibition at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art. Photo provided by: Jessie Haynes
BOTTOM: Holly Paczak, Heather Doyle and Anna Kornick lend a hand sorting diapers for MLK Day of Service. Photo provided by: Anna Kornick
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More Than Diapers

JLNO Expands Efforts with Giggles Child Development Center

By Ellen Carmichael Gugenberger

In the previous issue of Lagniappe, the cover feature, “Bottoms Up: JLNO’s Diaper Bank Expands Reach Across the Nation,” aquainted readers with the Junior League of New Orleans’ collaboration with Giggles Child Development Center. The Jackson Barracks–based organization assists families as they “prepare for, return from or currently serve in active duty military deployment overseas.” Since deployment often effectively creates a single-parent environment at home, JLNO’s significant donation of diapers through the league’s Diaper Bank can ease the financial burden it may impose on families.

“Some of us may have donated diapers at some point during our membership. Others may have participated in a diaper sort,” says active Anna Dearmon Kornick, Communications Council Director. “What many members don’t see are the actual families who benefit from our service. The fact that we’re able to provide all of the diapers that these kids need is a huge weight lifted from these soldiers.”

CW4 Melonie Pinchon, director of Giggles, says that JLNO has made a tremendous impact in the delivery of desperately needed diapers for armed services families. The JLNO donation, she says, lightens the load of those already burdened with the sacrifices serving in the military requires.

“Many of these parents are serving in a combat zone, thus leaving family members to care for their children,” Melonie says. “At least now, they don’t have to worry about ensuring the child’s basic needs are met. Thank you JLNO!”

Junior League of New Orleans’s commitment to Giggles didn’t end with a one-time diaper bank donation. Now, JLNO has expanded its efforts to equip the child development center with a supply of quality sleepwear they can issue to their students and their families.

It began when Business Council Director Heather Doyle contacted clothing brand Kickee Pants in hopes of the league participating in its “Kickee Gives Back Program,” a charitable campaign for the company that gives its popular bamboo pajamas and blankets to those in need. By working with the vendor directly, she secured a significant contribution of infant and adult pajamas—items whose retail value ranges from $28.50 to $80 each.

“I was expecting a small box of a few items. But, Kickee Pants sent us three large boxes, tightly packed with numerous items,” Heather explains. “We sent several infant items to the New Orleans Family Justice Center, and the adult pajamas went to Covenant House for their holiday gifts. Then, the majority of infant clothing and bibs went to Giggles, because they care for so many infants.”

As soon as Doyle delivered two bags filled with Kickee Pants clothing for their annual holiday gathering, she was convinced that the decision to allocate some of the donation to Giggles was the right one.

“After touring the facility and seeing the baby room, it was clear...”
that this was the right place for the rest of the donation,” she explained. “There are babies of every age, loved and cared for by the fabulous staff. And these are children of soldiers who are serving our country. We need to make sure that this facility has everything they need.”

Every day, Giggles provides wrap-around services that offer these parents and guardians much-needed support and relief. According to Melonie, Giggles is home to “quality child care for children ages six weeks through twelve years old” that delivers a “stimulating, creative, positive and secure learning environment to develop children’s overall skills and self-concept.”

For a child of deployed parents, basic childhood skills—counting, alphabet recognition, social interaction and growth development, for example—might develop more slowly since primary caregivers are not able to work with the child at home. Giggles’ programs are a stop-gap ensuring that no child is left behind due to her parent’s service to the country.

In addition to the previous Diaper Bank and Kickee Pants donations, the League delivered two large boxes of clothing, so infants up to 12 months will be set for winter and summer gear in the months ahead. JLNO is also sponsoring the construction of wide rocking chairs to provide comfortable seating while babies are rocked at Giggles.

As Junior League of New Orleans continues building its relationship with Giggles Child Development Center, Melonie encourages any JLNO member interested in volunteering with her organization to call 504-682-2266. For those willing to make a financial contribution, Giggles’ most immediate need is iPads to offer interactive learning tools to the children they serve.

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP: Kamille George shows off her book from Santa at the Giggles Christmas lunch. Photo by: Anna Kornick
TOP: Ethan Ramos and Staff Sergeant Ramos take a photo with Santa (Staff Sergeant Christopher Casler). Photo by: Anna Kornick
BOTTOM: Business Council Director Heather Millican Doyle, Santa (Staff Sergeant Christopher Casler), Communications Council Director Anna Kornick and President Kristen Koppel celebrate the holidays at the Giggles Christmas lunch. Photo provided by: Anna Kornick
This year, The Junior League of New Orleans is excited to announce that our neighborhood run has moved to the spring. Freret 5K promotes family fitness and wellness in our community with a fun, physical activity for adults and children of all ages while raising funds to support JLNO's community projects. Lead by Co-chairs Shannon Brice and Susan Kliebert, the goals for this year’s event are to raise over $25,000 and register more than 500 runners.

“There are opportunities for sponsorship and to provide prizes,” said Skye Sturlese, Ways and Means Council Director. This year’s race is at a much warmer time than in the past, but not only the weather is changing: “The route is going to change just a little this year as it won’t pass through Tulane’s campus,” added Susan. Freret 5K is a true economic development and health initiative currently for JLNO. It promotes health, fitness and community while supporting an organization striving to Advance the Wellbeing of Women.

Beginning and ending at JLNO’s Bloomin’ Deals Thrift Shop, the 5th Annual Freret 5K and half-mile fun run will showcase the vibrant and growing Freret Street economic corridor, encourages family fitness and raises funds for JLNO’s community projects and volunteer efforts. JLNO has been a member of the Freret community for 57 years with its Bloomin Deals Thrift Store, and believes this exciting event will further encourage the health and wellness of the City’s citizens and businesses. Proceeds benefit JLNO’s mission and community projects.

Registration is open and participants will receive a race t-shirt, post-race refreshments, entry into prize drawing, children’s activities and participate in the awards presentation.

“We are looking for sponsorships, and encourage you to have your business become a sponsor,” said Shannon Brice.

Sponsoring or donating food or prizes, will demonstrate your business cares about our community by assisting JLNO in funding many worthwhile programs and volunteer efforts. Last year, JLNO gave $60,000 in Community Assistance Fund Grants to twelve local organizations, volunteered over 40,000 hours, distributed 584,000 diapers to Louisiana residents through its Diaper Bank and served 1,700 children with education programs. Our work in Metropolitan New Orleans could not be possible without your generous support.

As a sponsor your logo or name may appear on a variety of collateral, including race-day t-shirts, print advertising and social media using #RunFreret. JLNO will also be accepting in-kind donations toward sponsorships.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email freret5k@jlno.org, or contact Kathleen Ramsey at 504-891-5845.

2017 Freret 5K Fun Facts:

Over 500 participants hit Freret Street for the morning’s festivities.

Tulane University’s Jazz Band provided entertainment.

Donations from JLNO members and the public sponsored nearly 100 youth runners.
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League Faces

Paula Jo Lascvak and Mae Emma Hill catching up at Cafe Adelaide. Photo provided by: PJ Lascvak

Junior League provisional, active and sustaining members came out to support the New Orleans Opera at the 2018 Big Wig Ball. Photo provided by: Josh Brasted

A fun night was had by all at Esprit’s wine and cheese night at St. James. (L-R, Emily Taylor, Kim LeBaron, Barbie Mokashi, Robin Burck, Kimberly Allen and Leigh Smith-Vaniz. Photo provided by: Kimberly Allen

Kendra Reade helps a Bloomin’ Deals customer, Michelle Timberlake, find a Mardi Gras dress for an upcoming ball. Photo provided by: Michelle Sens

League members Sarah Douglas and Kristen Alvey, along with a friend, Lauren Moore, gear up for Nyx. Photo provided by: Sarah Douglas
Chelsey Richter, Hunter Charnock and Katie Andrews celebrate the holidays with an ornament exchange during the provisional holiday party. *Photo provided by: Chelsey Richter*

Leslie Philips and Melissa Eversmeyer staying warm and celebrating the end of a week during Front Porch Friday. *Photo provided by: PJ Lascsak*

Book club is always a lot of fun with Nadia Madary, Kim LeBaron, Kimberly Allen and Jennifer Banquer. *Photo provided by: Kimberly Allen*

(L-R) Carrie Wright, PJ Lascsak, Kimberly Allen, Kelly Touart, Melissa Eversmeyer, Kimberly LeBaron and Heather Trahan spent their evening at the Columns Hotel on Front Porch Friday. *Photo provided by: PJ Lascsak*
Kelly Touart and P J Lascsak enjoy catching up during Front Porch Friday at The Columns Hotel. Photo provided by: P J Lascsak


Esprit committee members Kelly Touart and P J Lascsak at the January Front Porch Friday. Photo by: Taylor S. Pospisil

Photo provided by: P J Lascsak
Happy New Year! (L-R) Monet Bates Sasser, Emily Woolley Taylor, Kim LeBaron, Melissa Eversmeyer, Kimberly Allen, Kelly Touart, Paula Jo Lascak and Sarah-Elizabeth Lambousy

Active member Emma Pegues enjoys Mardi Gras by riding in the Mystic Krewe of Nyx with friend Kristen Green. 
Photo provided by: Emma Pegues.

A fun Front Porch Friday at Ralph’s on the Park. Photo provided by: Kimberly Allen

Active Members Megan Mitchell, Sarah-Elizabeth Lambousy and Beth Applewhite sip & socialize at Ralph’s On The Park. 
Photo by: Taylor S. Pospisil.

Active Members Allison Norris, Sarah-Elizabeth Lambousy, Esprit Chair Kimberly Allen, Paula Jo “PJ” Lascak, Jessica Krinke Bean and Beth Applewhite at the Ralph’s On The Park Front Porch Friday. Photo by: Taylor S. Pospisil
In 1935, the Junior League of New Orleans premiered its Mardi Gras ball. The masquerade ball was the very first of its kind in New Orleans. On February 28, 1935, The Times-Picayune read, “The glamorous pageantry... of Carnival time will be open this year to visitors for the first time through the Mardi Gras masquerade ball to be sponsored... by the Junior League of New Orleans.”

Many newspapers in the area highlighted and applauded JLNO’s efforts to open Carnival to the public, allowing a glimpse of what was behind the closed curtained celebration of mystical krewes. In addition to the ball’s inclusivity, publications also lauded the League on its patronage. Proceeds from ticket sales benefited JLNO’s Nutrition Center, which opened its doors in the 1920s. The center educated children and families on proper diet and health topics. It also expanded into other educational opportunities and activities for children, including the Nursery School, in 1931, which “provided mother’s groups, craft classes, art lessons and child care.”

Visitors from all over Louisiana and other areas of the United States attended the masquerade ball-benefit, supporting the League’s efforts to give a piece of Carnival to the masses and also grow its philanthropy. Even stars turned out at the event. “Crooner [Bing] Crosby will be in town with the theatre men, and has made a reservation,” reported Sue Bryan on February 24, 1935, in The Sunday Item-Tribune, “And that, ladies and gentlemen, ought to be an inducement.”

The evening was a great success according to The Morning Tribune on March 2, 1935, in an article recapping the event. “The brochure of the ball said that the Junior League would attempt with this ball to bring to New Orleans visitors a touch of ‘the spirit of Carnival and some of its highlights.’ The League did.”
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