

League Lines

2021-2023 Annual Report

90

90 Years of Community Impact

Celebrating a legacy of service and empowerment

PG 54





Letter from the President

Lauren Albaum President 2021-2022

When asked why they joined the junior league, I have continually heard a common thread – to meet other women with a heart of service. To build relationships and friendships, all while doing incredible good. Yet, when the beginning of the league year rolled around, physical meetings and opportunities to build relationships had become difficult and scarce. Following on the heels of a global pandemic, I listened to so many of you share that you were hungry for the opportunity to reconnect with your peers and engage in tangible opportunities to volunteer and serve.

And so, I started this year with a promise - that this would be the year of engagement! Alice O'Reilly, my incredible Sustaining Advisor, and I put our heads together, considering all the ways we could bring us back to the table – literally. The Board of Directors and Chairs dug in, each committing to the goal with dedication and resolve. It is through those efforts that we held a Welcome Back Bash, Holiday Cookie



Exchange, Volunteer Appreciation Pure Barre Pop-Up, a Diversity Equity Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Dinner, Leadership Development Nights, and a Women Entrepreneurship panel. The Sustainers brought back the Fall Luncheon and held a jam-packed 'Sustainer Outing' day trip, in addition to hosting a well-attended State of the League and Spring Gathering event. And this list doesn't even include our community events and fundraisers!

But it wasn't just engagement that we were after. We also committed to positively impacting the heads, hearts, and homes of the children of Polk County. And man, did our league make an impact.

From giving out over 12,000 books through WOR, RIF, R2R, a Polk County School Board Collaboration, and a mobile library, to name a few, to collecting and redistributing over 4,500 items of clothing and home goods, to ensuring over \$5,000 worth of toiletries made it into the hands of young girls, to hosting, what I have heard, was the biggest and most joyful Christmas Parade on record, to stuffing over 250 backpacks full of school supplies and uniforms, to providing an opportunity for almost 100 children to experience the game of tennis with free instruction and a free racket, bag, and ball, your impact was powerful and broad. We estimate over

20,000 local children benefited from one, or more, of the aforementioned initiatives.

None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the incredible efforts of so many dedicated league members and community partners.

My life has been forever changed by this experience. When I look back at the 2021-2022 league year, I remember a boy who walked off the tennis courts after his free lesson, clutching the racket screaming to his mom “this is the best day ever”. I remember the tangible excitement as the Junior League of Greater Lakeland was presented with the ATHENA International Organizational Leadership Award by the Chamber of Commerce. I remember the coordinator at T.A.S.S.E.L. sharing they had just given out their very last school supplies and backpacks and were completely unsure as to their next steps, fearing that they would have to turn away countless children and parents, when just in the nick of time we called saying we had another delivery. This is the Junior League of Greater Lakeland that I know and that 89 years of dedicated women leaders have worked to build. And this is a league that I am humbled and honored to have served.

Lauren Albaum

Your friend,
Lauren Albaum



2021-2022 Leadership



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- President**
Lauren Albaum
- President-Elect**
Maggie Briggs
- Community Vice President**
Lauren Jensen
- Finance Vice President**
Barbara Cadiz
- Treasurer**
Melissa Williams
- Funding Director**
Adrienne Thrall
- Membership Vice President**
Tracy DiCesare
- Communications Vice President**
Katherine Fitzwater
- Secretary**
Heide Evans
- Corresponding Secretary**
Ashley Madden
- Bylaws & Parliamentarian**
Courtenay Fulmer
- Strategic Planning**
Sadie Molinet

LEADERSHIP TEAM

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| Assistant Community VP Sheenna McKenzie | Sustainer Liaisons Linda Dowers | CRPD Amy Bermudez |
| Assistant Membership VP Veronica Jackson | Education & Training Jahlinda Jones & Maggie Merryday | SPAC Kate Wallace |
| Assistant Communications VP Nicole Bradham | Community Advisory Board Stacy Walsh & Erica Lupercio | ProAm Tennis Tournament Party, & Kid's Clinic, Carolyn Woodger & Alyss Ruster with Lauren Respress & Kim Lafferty |
| Assistant Funding Director Melaina Chromy | World of Reading Nichole Summers | Black Diamond Ball Callie Miller |
| Provisionals Gigi Walsh | Ready to Read Chimere Butler | Clothe Our Community Alyss Ruster & Barbara Cadiz |
| Placement Stephanie Brown | Reading Is Fundamental Vicki Russell | Light Up Lakeland Julia Huerta & Angel Davis |
| Special Events Sadie Molinet | Christmas Parade Hannah George & Nicole Minott | |
| Arrangements Lauren Nettles | | |

SUSTAINING COUNCIL

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| Sustaining Vice President Alice O'Reilly | Transfer Chair Lu Fitzwater | Secretary Amy Royal |
| Assistant Sustaining Vice President Peggy McKeel | Treasurer Darlene Eanett | Sustainer Project Chair Rachel Cashdollar |
| Historian Sheila Lotterhos | Funding Courtney Larson | Book Club Gloria Lunz |

Community Initiatives

The Junior League of Greater Lakeland implemented several impactful community initiatives during the 2021-2022 league year. With an emphasis on impacting the "heads, hearts, and homes of the children of Polk County", the League recognized the opportunity to provide resources and services to vulnerable populations who were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Alleviating food and clothing insecurity, addressing the widening literacy gap, and supporting wellness programs allowed the JLGL to make a positive and meaningful difference in the community for over 20,000 children during a uniquely challenging time.

In March, the League hosted a Community Stakeholder Roundtable attended by over 25 invited community leaders. Robust discussions ensued, and feedback was provided to the League to assist with strategic planning initiatives and to better understand the needs of our community.



ATHENA International Organizational Leadership Award, October 2021





Ready to Read

With literacy concerns on the rise and an increase in at-home learning post-pandemic, the need to properly educate parents and caregivers has grown.

The League hosted our first Ready to Read event on Saturday, November 6, at Florida Baptist Children's Home. During this interactive workshop, trained League volunteers conducted an educational training, hosted craft time, provided a nutritious meal, and each child was sent home with a bag of two books and associated activities. The two books provided for this workshop were 'Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?' and 'A Ball for Daisy.' One very special piece of this training is that 'A Ball for Daisy' is a book with no words but a fun storyline, thus allowing a child's imagination to be engaged regardless of the caregiver's comfort in reading. The second Ready to Read event took place on March 3, 2022, at Destined for Greatness Preschool.

With the aim of taking this program into the community where children and their families can attend easily, the Board voted to approve a partnership with the Lakeland Public Library. Partnering with the Library allows the League to easily host events at any of their sites, leverage Library resources, and invites a Library representative to each Ready to Read event to provide long-term access to free books by signing up for a library card.

The 40th Annual Christmas Parade

The Junior League of Greater Lakeland and the City of Lakeland were proud to present the 40th annual Lakeland Christmas Parade on December 2, 2021. The Lakeland Christmas Parade is a time-honored tradition, enjoyed by the community for generations and each float will incorporate the Season of Joy theme into their design. The inspiration behind the theme was due Covid and having to skip 2020. The Junior League of Greater Lakeland wanted to bring joy back into the community through one of their longest standing events.

The grand marshal this year is Tristin Hinman from McKeel Academy Central. Tristin won her place as the Grand Marshall by submitting an application and winning the Junior League of Greater Lakeland Grand Marshall Contest. This is a contest opened each year for elementary school age children to write an essay and draw an accompanying photo of what their Christmas Parade float would look like and how it would exemplify Joy.

Christmas Parade Float Winners:

Judges' Choice Award
MADE MENTORS INC / TAKEN
BY SURPRISE

Best Pro Float
POLK PRIDE

Most Outstanding Band
LAKE GIBSON HIGH SCHOOL

Most Original Float
FAMILY REPTILE

Best Youth/Educational Float
BRUCE WAGNER ELEMENTARY

Best Community Float
TOGETHER CHURCH

Best Business Float
PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

Best Themed Float
FLORIDA FOREST



World of Reading

The Junior League hosted its annual World of Reading Festival in Barnett Family Park on Saturday, April 09, 2022. This free event was open to all families and children of all ages and featured the theme, "Where Will Reading Take You." Our featured books were: Finding Kindness by Deborah Underwood; I Survived the Eruption of Mt. St. Helens, 1980 by Lauren Tarshis; Who Would Win? Killer Whales vs. Great White Shark by Jerry Pallotta. Each tent also featured a craft corresponding to the books that the children could create and take home with them. Once each child completed the tent activity and received a stamp on their passport, they were invited to select two books - one from the Spotlight Book Tent (where they could select one of the four featured books), and they could select an AR book! Children's musical guru, Jack Hartmann, performed at the event along with face painting and balloon artists for even more family fun.

In addition to the activities and spotlight tent book giveaways, two featured local authors autographed books and met guests at the event. The local featured authors were Randy Richburg and Shanita Allen.

Every child that attended World of Reading received a snack (750 total) & beverage which included OJ (816 total), water, mandarin oranges, bananas, popcorn, and goldfish. Our partnership with Citrus Connection allowed us to provide over 400 bags with books and crafts to distribute on their routes.

The total number of books distributed within our community is approximately 3,052.

- 750 2022 AR books
- 750 2022 Spotlight books
- 700 2022 author books
- 96 AR books from 2019 WOR festival
- 756 2021 Spotlight books, misc author books from prior WOR events



State Public Affairs Committee (SPAC)

The JLGL remained active and engaged in the Junior Leagues of Florida State Public Affairs (JLFLSPAC) statewide advocacy effort, including supporting legislation to 1) repeal sales taxes on diapers and incontinence products, 2) bolster the availability of human donor milk for milk banks, and 3) provide additional supports for homeless youth. All three initiatives were passed into law and signed by the governor. Additionally, over the summer, the Junior League of Greater Lakeland was formally recognized by the Polk County School Board as an outstanding community partner at its regular July board meeting. Board members invited the League to return to its August meeting to present more details on the history and present scope of the League's partnership with Polk County Public Schools at its August regular board meeting. The presentation led to a healthy dialogue between League representatives, board members, and staff on how best



Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB)

For a second year, the DEIB committee provided meaningful events to educate our members and celebrate the diversity of our League and community. Examples of specific events include the Diversity Equity Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Dinner, an educational moment during each GMM, a food drive to bring awareness to the impact of poverty and benefit the Lakeland Free Fridge, and a Women Entrepreneurship panel which featured 9 different entrepreneurs who shared their entrepreneurial journey, and some even brought samples of their wares to share!





Reading is Fundamental

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) continues to provide opportunities for children to experience the life-changing impact of reading. This year, ten Title 1 Elementary Schools were selected: Jesse Keen Elementary, Crystal Lake Elementary, Griffin Elementary, Oscar J Pope Elementary, Phillip O Brien Elementary, Socrum Elementary, Medulla Elementary, Dixieland Elementary, St. Anthony's Catholic School, and Southwest Elementary for a total distribution of over 5,000 books.

CRPD

The Community Research & Program Development (CRPD) committee partnered with the Community Council and Funding event committees to identify objectives and measurable goals for each event prior to it occurring. These metrics will support the League's desire to measure the meaningful impact we are making in our community and identify opportunities for change or enhancement.

CRPD, led by Amy Bermudez, SPAC, led by Kate Wallace, Community Advisory Board, led by Stacy Walsh, Placement, led by Stephanie Brown, Arrangements, led by Lauren Nettles, DEI, led by Jayde Coleman, Funding, led by Adrienne Collier, Marketing, led by Katherine Fitzwater, our Webmaster, Lisa Gifford, and your diligent board and executive committee members continue to work tirelessly to prepare for upcoming events, ensure organizational processes, and keep a pulse on the needs of our community.

Annual Meeting & Spring Banquet



The Junior League of Greater Lakeland held its annual Spring Banquet at the Lakeland Country Club on Tuesday, May 10, 2022.

More than 140 provisional, active and sustaining members were in attendance for the event celebrating the 89th year of the Junior League of Greater Lakeland's commitment to improving our community. President Lauren Albaum presided.



Funding Director Adrienne Thrall announced that through the League's signature fundraising events and partnerships with many organizations, the League raised over \$254,000 to positively impact our community.

Past Junior League of Greater Lakeland President Sarah Dukes McKay announced the recipient of the Sarah D. McKay Award established by the League in 2018 to honor her lifetime commitment to improving our community. The 2019 Sarah D. McKay Award recipient was Cecelia Wilhite.



After a year of leadership development and community service opportunities, 45 women graduated from Provisional to Active membership.

The 2022-2023 Board of Directors of the Junior League of Greater Lakeland was installed.



Several members were recognized for their service and commitment to the organization during the 2021-2022 year.

JESSICA BROWN

Heart of the League was awarded to an active member with amazing passion for the Junior League. Jessica received this award for her dedication and countless hours given to ensure the League Year was a success. Jessica is a dedicated member and encourages other members to do more.

KATE WALLACE

Spirit of the League was awarded to an active member who is enthusiastic and full of pride for the League. Kate received this award for her leadership on the Funding and SPAC committees as well as her ongoing support of all aspects of the League. Kate is always cheering on her fellow Leaguers..

JAYDE COLEMAN

Volunteer of the Year was awarded to an active member who gives 100% of herself to her individual committee, as well as helping out on other committees and projects of our League. Jayde gave countless hours to support the League's DEIB initiatives in addition to being a dedicated assistant VP for the Membership Council and always willing to assist the League in any capacity. Jayde is a hard working, passionate and kind volunteer.

CALLIE MILLER

Bridge to the Community was awarded to an active member who is not only an amazing asset to our League, but is involved in numerous other organizations throughout our community. Callie served as the 2018-2020 President, in addition to

her many roles within the League. In addition to her League involvement, Callie has served with the Florida Children's Museum, (formerly Explorations V Children's Museum), is an entrepreneur running her own business, Carilly, which also is a sponsor of the League's childcare for member events.

LU FITZWATER

Carol Jenkins Barnett Sustainer of the Year was awarded to a sustaining member who has given tremendous support to our League. In recognition of her remarkable accomplishments and lasting legacy, the Sustainer of the Year Award was renamed the Carol Jenkins Barnett Sustainer of the Year Award in honor of the late AJLI Notable Member for which the award is named. Lu received this award for stepping up in a major way to serve our organization as a sustaining council member, and also gave many hours of her time to help make the League year a success. The League could not have done all it has without her help, guidance and hard work.

SHOMA SHELLY

Provisional of the Year was awarded to a new member who goes above and beyond the expectations set for this level of membership. Shoma received this award for her genuine interest in getting to know the women in her Provisional class and her exceptional effort and assistance during volunteer projects, most notably driving all the way from Tampa to be a part of our organization. Shoma has a warm personality and always has a smile on her face.

2022 Sarah Dukes McKay Award Winner



Celie Moore Wilhite

**Recipient of the
Junior League of
Greater Lakeland's
2022 Sarah Dukes
McKay Award**

Celie Wilhite is certainly no stranger to Lakeland or our League. As the daughter, sister, sister-in-law, and mother-in-law of League members as well as being a League member herself, Celie is not only well trained, but well connected. She has served in numerous leadership capacities over the years including serving as our JLGL 1977-78 president.

Celie's drive to excel in all things did not stop with becoming a Sustainer. Her father, E. Snow Martin, Sr., along with Snow Jr. and Mike Martin, her brothers, have all been practicing lawyers in Lakeland. So after her tenure as president and in a day where women were starting to branch out into the law, Celie set out to fulfill her dream of joining her brothers in walking in their beloved father's footsteps. She commuted to law school and earned her law degree which enabled her to practice with her family. Celie's eye, though, was firmly fixed on a Circuit Court judgeship on the 10th Judicial Circuit which she successfully attained. The Honorable Judge Moore later rose to become an appellate judge and ended her legal career with retirement from that position. All of this occurred while being the wife of a prominent local physician, Dr. John Moore, Sr.

Upon retiring from the bench, it's no surprise that the energetic and high-achieving Celie made other plans, setting off in yet another important direction – that of

the ministry. Though a cradle Episcopalian, Celie attended Asbury Seminary in Orlando, earning a divinity degree that enabled her to become an associate pastor at Lakeland's First Presbyterian Church. She seamlessly injected liturgical elements familiar to Episcopalians into her ministry with fellow Presbyterians and was, as usual, well received — this time in the pulpit.

After her retirement from First Presbyterian, Celie was asked to fill in as an interim pastor at Bayshore Presbyterian in Tampa. Celie undertook this responsibility with her normal enthusiasm, and when the time was up to choose a new minister, neither Celie nor the Bayshore congregation were willing to end her time with them. It was a love match from the start, and her tenure continued. Also while serving in the ministry, Celie (who was widowed twice before) found another love match in Ted Wilhite who is now her husband and one of her biggest champions. It's truly an ecumenical marriage with Ted having grown up as a Methodist who married an "Episco-terian" who attended a Methodist seminary.

Celie has not only helped break the glass ceiling and pave the way for women through her law practice, judgeships, and ministry, she also showed the community what a well trained Jr. League volunteer can accomplish.

Always supportive of younger members and presidents who followed in her footsteps, our members have been able to count on Celie for her advice, encouragement, and support. Over the years, Celie has never been too busy to lend an



ear, offer advice, or open her heart to ours. She understands both hard work and team work and is as proud of her Jr. League membership as any any of her professional accomplishments.

As Celie once said, the League helped mold and make her into the person she is today. In response, the League awarded Celie its highest honor in naming her the 2022 Sarah Dukes McKay Award winner. Along with her judge's and ministerial robes, this is a mantle that Celie wears well. And for the record, Celie, we love you dearly and are so proud to call you our friend. Congratulations on a well-deserved award!

Funding Update

The League has made a significant impact in our community through our philanthropic outreach. From our successful community projects to our signature fundraising events, we have raised the funds necessary to positively impact and better our community. Thank you to the many organizations and community members who entrusted the League to be good stewards of their finances so that we can collectively make a positive impact in our community.

Donors listed as of May 31, 2021. If you believe your name has been omitted in error, please contact the Treasurer at treasurer@jgl.org.



To our active and sustaining members, thank you for your ongoing support of our Annual Appeal. Each year, you give generously to the League and we thank you for that support.

\$99 AND UNDER

Jennifer Alexander

Katie Blondell

Stephanie Brown

Robin Butz

Patricia Fore

Sheila Lotterhos

Erica Lupercio

Marsha Marshall

Nicole Minott

Peggy Newsome

Raymond & Elizabeth Phillips

Antonette & Christopher Stone

PHR Services

Heather Pharris

Emily Plank

Marsha Vass

\$100-\$199

Bena Bayless

Chanel Bellotto

Pat & Ralph Blalock

Kathleen Cashdollar

Lindsey Cope

Bonnie Edwards

The Elmhurst Family Fund within the GiveWell Community Foundation

Katherine Fitzwater

Mary A Hinson

Margaret Thumborg

Carolyn & Patrick Stoia

Imperial Florida Sales Company

Josephine L. Sawyer

Ashley Murphy

Mrs. Mason Mays

\$200-\$999

Antonette & Christopher Stone

Callie & Zach Miller

Lu Fitzwater

\$1,000+

Anonymous

Amy & Ed Laderer

SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Sheila Lotterhos

In Honor of Kami Lawson:

Lakeland Regional Health

Information Technology Department

JLGL Provisional Committee

Clothe Our Community and Closet Clean Out

Through a variety of fundraisers and initiatives, the League remained committed to combating clothing insecurity. Our Titan Apparel Clothes Closet at Teneroc High School remained fully stocked with new clothes, shoes, and accessories thanks to the continued generous support from donors like Ed and Amy Laderer, Southern Homes, and many others. An ongoing backpack campaign resulted in over 250 backpacks, filled with school supplies and uniforms, being donated to community partners. Additionally, fundraised dollars were used to fill back-to-school uniform wish lists at both T.A.S.S.E.L. (through Teamwork we can Achieve Student Success and Encourage Learning), Parker Street Ministries, and One More Child. Overall, more than 2,500 pieces of brand-new back-to-school clothing were donated.

A new initiative for 2023, the Closet Clean Out event allowed the Junior League of Greater Lakeland to collect over 4,500 items of clothing, home goods, and toiletries from members of the community over one extended weekend. These items were then sorted and redistributed to local nonprofits, including One More Child, the Salvation Army Halo House, Called to Serve Farmworkers, Combee Connection, and the Teneroc Clothes Closet, to ensure our community has greater access to clothing security.



ProAm Party, Kids Clinic, and Tournament

On Saturday, March 26, 2022, the Junior League hosted our annual Kids Clinic, which provides children with the opportunity to learn the sport of tennis, complete with a racquet, ball, and shirt, all for free! 100 local children received snacks, tennis lessons provided by the Florida Southern College men's and women's Tennis Teams, and crafts facilitated by members of Florida Southern College sororities.

The Raise A Racket Party was held on April 1, 2022, at our Junior League Building. We had close to 100 League members and community members in attendance to enjoy wonderful food prepared by our very own Polk County Culinary Academy students, a Silent Auction, and fun revenue enhancers which continued to fill backpacks with school supplies and raised close to \$17,000 to pour back into our community.

The ProAm Tennis Tournament, organized by Sustainers Kim Lafferty and Lauren Respass, was held at the Lakeland Country Club and featured 16 professional tennis players paired with 16 amateur players. The winners were: DJ Pate (Am) and Tony Munitz Hidalgo (Pro), and Semi-Finalists Jim Maskas (Am) and Daniel Mottos (Pro).





Light Up Lakeland

In December of 2021 the League hosted our final Light Up Lakeland for Literacy fundraiser. Light up Lakeland was chaired by Julia Whitehead and Angel Davis and raised funds to support our literacy initiatives and bring awareness to a critical need in our community. Over the years this project has raised more than \$13,000 and brought awareness to the League and the literacy needs of the children in our community. Luminary kits containing sand, candles, instructions, and a yard sign with Polk County literacy statistics were sold prior to the December 19 event. Participants also had the option of purchasing delivery and installation. On the evening of the event, homes and businesses lit their candles to shine a light and remind neighbors that we've still got work to do. The literacy needs of our community are great, but together we can make a difference.



Little Black Dress Initiative

The third annual 2021-22 Little Black Dress Initiative was held on May 2-6, 2022 and served as the last fundraiser for the League year. Chaired by active member Kate Wallace, a new addition to this year's weeklong social media campaign was a mid-week "LBDI Happy Hour" at Revival in downtown Lakeland, where participants and supporters alike gathered in their black dresses and buttons to raise a glass to a good cause and take commemorative photos in the process! Overall, LBDI raised \$15,466 for the League, and the three top fundraising members, including actives Barb Cadiz, Maggie Briggs, Nichole Summers, and sustainer Alice O'Reilly, were recognized with gift cards and applause at the banquet and annual meeting.

Black Diamond Ball

The Junior League of Greater Lakeland once again celebrated lavishly at our signature fundraiser, the "Black Diamond Ball," sponsored by Pink Swan.



This sold-out, black-tie event held at the Lakeland Country Club was attended by more than 200 guests who were eager to support our Clothe the Community Initiative.



Through an interactive mission-focused backpack-filling activity, guests were able to financially support 200 backpacks stuffed with school supplies and uniforms to later be distributed to TASSEL. Guests also enjoyed fireworks, aerialist entertainment, fine dining, whiskey tasting, casino games, and lively dancing. The dinner program featured messages from Ashley Gibson Barnett, active JLGL member and owner of Pink Swan, and Maude Graham, 2021 Polk County Teacher of the Year and

English Language and Social Studies Teacher at Rosabelle W. Blake Academy. A moving video tribute, featuring the Polk County School Board Superintendent and many educators, was unveiled to the audience and highlighted the impact of the Junior League's initiatives to support the children of Polk County. Additional revenue enhancers and a motion to compel during the program resulted in **net revenue of over \$75,000**, making this event the League's most profitable fundraiser in recent years.

Financials

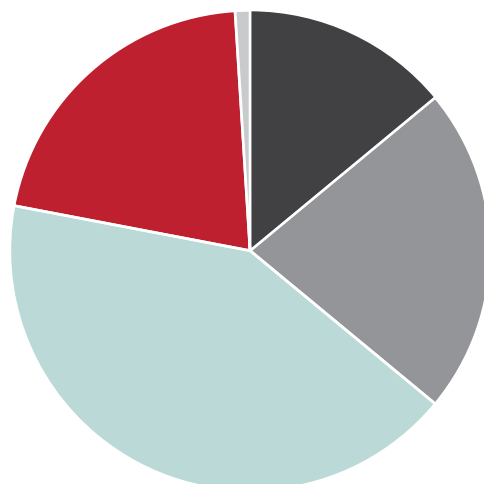
Total Expenses

- Leadership Development **10%**
- Building Operations & Major Repairs **16%**
- Fundraising & Event Expenses **26%**
- Meaningful Community Impact **14%**
- League Operations **25%**
- Employee **9%**



Total Revenue

- Building Rental **14%**
- Membership Dues & Fees **22%**
- Fundraising **42%**
- Partnerships **21%**
- Other **1%**



Honor Our Legacy

What better way to ensure the long-term security and stability of the League than by giving to our annual fund. Simply put, your gift is your ability to leave a legacy that will allow the League to sustain our service.

To learn more about the Annual Campaign and to give a gift, visit jlgl.org.
Questions? Contact funding@jlgl.org.

Community Partners

Pink Swan
 Publix Super Markets Charities
 Harrell Family Charities
 Mid-State Industrial Maintenance
 Carilly
 Southern Homes
 97.5 WPCV and Max 98.3
 GiveWell Community Foundation
 Florida's Natural Growers Foundation
 AgAmerica
 Amy & Ed Laderer
 Amerifirst Home Mortgage
 Andrew & Shannon Kelso
 Ansley & Greg Masters
 Bank of Central Florida
 Bernie Little Distributors
 Callie & Zach Miller
 Caroline & Grady Sharpe
 CenterState Bank
 Christine & Thomas Milthaler
 Clark Campbell Lancaster Workman & Airth
 CORE Wealth Advisors
 Corrosion Control
 Daydreams Day Spa

Eddie Maldonado
 Emily Plank Photography
 Federal Bar
 Florida Southern College
 Fred & Sheila Lotterhos
 Fred & Patti Heid
 Fulmer Law
 Gaines Jewelers & The Saunders Family
 Infinity Tire & Auto Repair
 Industrial Solutions Group
 Janice Martin
 Julia & Will Harrell
 Kate Wallace
 Kerrienne Hopkins
 Kimberly George
 Kristen Kellin
 Kristen Dehnert
 Lakeland Escape Room
 Lakeland Eye Clinic
 Lauren & Kevin Albaum
 Lauren & Kyle Jensen
 Lori Ross
 McMill Painting
 Miller Construction Management
 Missy Roberts
 Mosaic
 Nichole & Mike Summers



Nineteen61
 Qgiv
 Regal Lakeland
 Sale Insurance
 Sara Roberts McCarley
 Scarpa's Italian Restaurant
 Scott Orthodontics
 Scout & Tag
 Stationary Loft
 Strickland Construction
 Stuart's Plumbing Services
 Sunbelt Supply
 The Back Nine
 The Lunz Group
 The Joinery
 TrueMed Spa
 Wilson Diamond Broker
 Zelda Abram

Membership

PROVISIONALS

45

ACTIVES

118

SUSTAINERS AND
SUSTAINER EMERITUS

321

TOTAL

483

NEW ACTIVES

Kelly Baker
 Tayler Baldick
 Krista Brady
 Patricia Broussard
 Sarah Buford
 Jennifer Burnett
 Morgan Bush
 Sheena Butts
 Amber Coker
 Tareka Coney
 Marissa Constant
 Emily Crain
 Kelli Daniel-Richards
 Charmethia Dixon
 Maison Douberly
 Melissa Dozier
 Dione Facey-Poitier
 Monica Faubert
 Ashley Foss
 Gabriela Gibson
 Lauren Hatchell
 Tiffani Hayes

Rebecca Healey
 Jaimie Hicks
 Kimberly Holton
 Alexandra Hopkins
 Carla Johnson
 Stacy Keller
 Ashley Kilbourn
 Rachel Kopely
 Katelyn Krolczyk
 Pia Linder
 Shelby Mander
 Christine Milthaler
 Aviza Moore
 Kimberly Perrymond
 Makala Quinn
 Sheryl Rogers
 Heather Ryan
 Shoma Shelly
 Haley Stockton
 Kristen Tessmer
 Alexandra Wardell
 Emilea Wilson
 Brandi Wooten

NEW SUSTAINERS

Ashley Barnett
 Jessica Brown
 Courtenay Fulmer
 Julia Harrell
 Michelle Hinds
 Veronica Jackson
 Melinda Lesinski
 Callie Miller
 Kathleen Miller
 Chelsea Mullings
 Alyss Ruster

TRANSFER MEMBERS

Deanna Bunch
 Junior League of
 Northwest Arkansas

 Eva Branning
 Junior League of Greater Winter
 Haven

 Meghan McDonough
 Junior League of Tampa

 Lara Bryan
 Junior League of Tampa

Leadership Development Nights

In recognition of our mission to develop women leaders, every other General Membership Meeting (GMM) was transformed into a Leadership Development Night.

There were three nights in total, with the themes of Live, Lead, and Learn, led by our Education & Training committee & renowned guest speakers. Individuals who attended two of the three Leadership Development Nights were eligible for the JLGL Leadership Certificate, and we were pleased to have 99 individuals complete the inaugural program.

Provisional Year in Review



The Junior League of Greater Lakeland had another successful year as we welcomed 45 new members to our organization.

These women officially became Active members at the Spring Banquet held at the Lakeland Country Club on May 10th, 2022. Each one of our new members hold a passion for volunteering, leadership development, and improving the Lakeland community.

Sustainer Stephanie Madden graciously opened up her home to host the kick off for the Provisional course with the New Member Welcome Party on August 19th, 2021. That following Sunday, a New Member Retreat was held at the Junior League Building marking the official start of the year! Provisional Chair Gigi Walsh, Membership VP Tracy DiCesare and President Lauren Albaum reviewed new member requirements and gave an overview of our League. New members were introduced to

the Board of Directors and Provisional Committee, got to know each other through fun icebreakers and learned some history of the League from a panel that included Sustaining Members Alice O'Riley, Victoria Martin and Erin Montgomery. The retreat continues to prove to be a fundamental part of a great provisional course.

In keeping with tradition, the Provisional Class supported the Christmas Parade committee by serving as day-of volunteers for the annual Lakeland Christmas Parade. This event is always a highlight for our new members to be the help behind the scenes and gets everyone in the holiday spirit. To further celebrate the season, the committee hosted a Provisional social with a tacky holiday sweater contest and ornament making at Yard on Mass.

Provisional meetings were held on the second Tuesday of each month providing an opportunity for our new members to learn about the organizational structure, fundraisers, projects, community impact and the Junior League of Greater Lakeland history

from our Historian and Sustainer Sheila Lotterhos. Organizations and businesses throughout Lakeland welcomed the League into their spaces to host meetings. This year the provisional committee hosted meetings at Polk Museum of Arts, LVIM, and Explorations V. By holding meetings at various locations, new members are able to see first hand the impact the League continues to have on our community and learn more about the businesses that support the League.

The Provisional Committee thanks everyone involved in making the 2021-2022 new member course a success!



To help with the 2022-2023 Provisional Course, please contact Leah Barnes at provisionals@jlgf.org.



Sustainers

The sustainers approached the year with a newfound vision of engagement spearheaded by Alice O'Reilly, Sustaining Vice President.



Alongside Alice, the Sustaining Council included: Peggy McKeel, Asst. Sustaining VP; Sheila Lotterhos, Historian (permanent); Amy Royal, Secretary; Courtney Larson Funding; Darlene Eanett, Treasurer and Lu Fitzwater, Transfer Chair. Rachel Cashdollar served as the Sustainer Project Chair ("Bee the Difference"). Kim Lafferty and Lauren Respass served as the ProAm Tennis Tournament Chairs. Gloria Lunz hosted Book Club. Active Linda Dowers served as Sustainer Liaison Chair.

At the 2021 Spring Banquet, the Sustainers voted to change the Sustainer project from the Christmas Angels to "Bee the Difference."

Charmingly branded with an icon of a bumble bee, this campaign collected over \$5,000 worth of personal hygiene items that were distributed to organizations and schools throughout Polk County to eliminate barriers to access by women and young girls.

Additionally, the Sustaining Council brought back the Fall Luncheon, hosted at the Lakeland Country Club, and featured a charcuterie demonstration. Also held in the fall was the State of the League, hosted at the Junior League building. In Spring, the Sustaining Council hosted the Sustainer Gathering at the home of Kim Cleghorn. They also instituted a Sustainer Outing - a full-day excursion exploring the best of our local community, including the Polk Museum of Art, Catapult, and Bonnet Springs Park.



The League bid a sorrowful farewell to beloved members, including Virginia Tacker Askew (SE; JLGL's senior-most member), Carol Jenkins Barnett (S; AJLI Notable Member), Helen Cannon (SE), Melanie Ann Harden (S), Dial Boyle Jackson (SE; Past President), Virginia Jackson Leetun (SE), Barbara Smith Moore (SE), and Nell Thrift (SE).



Special Events

November GMM



Board Christmas Party



Sustainer Outing



Fall Luncheon





Sustainer Spring Gathering





Letter from the President

Maggie Briggs **President 2022-2023**

I am beyond humbled to have been able to serve the League this past year. We leaned into our mission as an organization - developing the potential of women - and hit the ground running with big, hairy, audacious goals. Reflecting on the past year, I am blown away; not only by the impact our organization had on this community, but also by The League's commitment to developing each other as women leaders: myself included.

We started this year with a goal - that this would be the year of Empowerment! We created a Leadership Development Program from the ground up, in partnership with Bank of Central Florida, Lakeland Regional Health and The Lunz Group, that provides tools and skills to women in our community that emphasize their natural born skill sets in leadership. We launched a mentorship program with women in the community as well as in the League.

But it wasn't just empowering each other that we were after. At the heart of our organization is our dedication to service, and we also committed to building confidence in our community by continuing



to positively impact the heads, hearts, and homes of the children of Polk County. From giving out more than 12,000 books through WOR, RIF, R2R, a Polk County School Board Collaboration, and a mobile library, to name a few; to collecting and redistributing more than 5,000 items of clothing and home goods. Ensuring more than \$3,000 worth of toiletries made it into the hands of young girls; and hosting, what I have heard, was one of the biggest and most joyful Christmas Parade on record. We filled more than 1,800 backpacks full with school supplies and uniforms through donations raised, while providing an opportunity for 100 children to experience the game of tennis with free instruction and a free racket, bag, and ball.

Our impact was powerful and broad. We estimate more than 20,000 local children benefited from one, or more, of the initiatives I just mentioned.

And while I am still not sure I have really had time to let this grandeur of this year sink in, I know that none of it would have been possible without the incredible efforts of so many of our dedicated league members

Additionally we took the time to celebrate a very monumental year for our League. In 1933, a group of women gathered in the basement of the Terrace Hotel with the sole purpose of giving back to a community in great need. 90 years later, we celebrated their courage and efforts with more than 120 of our League friends and community partners. We celebrated our 90th Year through a variety of ways: a League Luncheon, presented by Gina Saunders, owner of Gaines Jewelers; hosting scrapbook and memorabilia meet ups; social media campaigns; being presented with a 90th proclamation reading during the City of Lakeland Commission meeting by no other than one of our most prominent members, Sara Roberts McCarley. I look forward to future celebrations that will follow throughout our 90th Year.

My life has been forever changed by this experience. I will always remember the joy and excitement of the experiences we shared.

Just like the morning we delivered a vehicle stuffed to the brim with supplies for the clothes closet at TENOROC and the pure excitement on the kids faces as they restocked the closet for their classmates. Or the smile on each child's face at World of Reading as they got to take home books to build their at-home libraries. And I will always remember how it felt to watch our members take on new challenges, to learn and grow in this League year, and ultimately fulfill our mission.

This is the legacy we've continued to fulfill in our 90th year. And this is a league that I am humbled and honored to have served. Thank you!

Maggie Briggs

Your friend,
Maggie Briggs



2022-2023 Leadership



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- President**
Maggie Briggs
- President Elect**
Barbara Cadiz
- Community Vice President**
Sheenna McKenzie
- Finance Vice President**
Heather Jones
- Treasurer**
Vicki Russell
- Funding Director**
Melaina Chromy
- Membership Vice President**
Tracy DiCesare
- Communications Vice President**
Nicole Bradham
- Secretary**
Julia Huerta
- Corresponding Secretary**
Lauren Nettles
- Bylaws**
Lacee Meyer
- Parliamentarian**
Carley Bracewell
- Strategic Planning**
Carolyn Woodger

LEADERSHIP TEAM & COMMITTEE CHAIRS

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| Assistant Community VP Amy Bermudez | Christmas Parade Nicole Minott & Hannah George | Sustainer Liaison Missy deZayas |
| Assistant Membership VP Jayde Coleman | CRPD Amy Bermudez | Kid's Clinic Carolyn Woodger |
| Assistant Communications VP Ashley Madden | SPAC Kate Wallace | ProAm Tennis Tournament Lauren Respass & Kim Lafferty |
| Assistant Funding Director Kate Wallace | Education & Training Maggie Briggs & Maggie Merrydasy | Black Diamond Ball Callie Miller |
| Community Outreach Katherine Fitzwater | Placement Stephanie Brown | Little Black Dress Initiative Kate Wallace |
| Ready to Read Tresa Green | Provisionals Gigi Walsh | 90th Anniversary Celebration Katherine Fitzwater |
| World of Reading Nichole Summers | Arrangements Lauren Nettles | Office Manager Missy deZayas |
| Reading is Fundamental Vicki Russell | Special Events Sadie Molinet | |

SUSTAINING COUNCIL

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Sustaining Vice President Peggy McKeel | Transfer Chair Lu Fitzwater | Secretary Amy Royal |
| Assistant Sustaining Vice President Tiffany Hawks | Funding Courtney Larson | Sustainer Project Chair Rachel Cashdollar |
| Historian Sheila Lotterhos | Treasurer Laura Taft | Book Club Gloria Lunz |

Community Initiatives

The Junior League of Greater Lakeland continued forward and implemented several impactful community initiatives during the 2022-2023 league year.

Providing resources and services to vulnerable populations, alleviating food and clothing insecurity, addressing the widening literacy gap, and supporting wellness programs allowed the JLGL to make a positive and meaningful difference in the community for more than 20,000 children in our community.

In March of 2023, the League hosted a Community Stakeholder Roundtable attended by more than 25 community leaders spanning 12 different markets. Robust discussions ensued, and feedback was provided to the League to assist with strategic planning initiatives and to better understand the needs of our community.

OUR IMPACT

4,500

items of clothing & home goods

\$3,000+

worth of toiletries (Bee the Difference)

10,000+

books received through Small Words Grant Program

250+

backpacks of supplies

50,000

Christmas Parade attendance

1

ATHENA Award Finalist Recognition - Young Leader



12,000+

books (WOR, RIF, R2R, SnowFest, PCPS)

75

participants in Women in Excellence Leadership Development Program

25

Community Stakeholder Roundtable Participants

Christmas Parade

The Junior League of Greater Lakeland and the City of Lakeland were proud to present the 41st annual Lakeland Christmas Parade on December 1, 2022.

More than 50,000 people were in attendance to ring in the holiday season with us. The theme of this year's parade was "Past, Present and Future". This year's Grand Marshal was Aiden Box. The contest for Grand Marshall is open to all local elementary school-aged children that wish to share their idea for a parade float. Aiden's essay and accompanying drawing of his joyful float secured his spot for this honor. In a very special presentation and first of its kind, we even had wedding bells joining the sleigh bells at this year's Parade, as Lakeland residents Eric Daniel and Joy Richter tied the knot during a wedding ceremony on a float as it made its way through downtown!



The 2022 Christmas Parade Float Winners were:

Judges Choice
POLK COUNTY WEDDING AND
EVENT PROS

Best Professional Float
SOUTH MCKEEL ACADEMY

Most Outstanding Band
DREADNAUGHT MARCHING BAND –
LAKELAND HIGH SCHOOL

Most Original Float
FAMILY REPTILES

Best Youth or Educational Float
CLEVELAND COURT ELEMENTARY

Best Community Float
MADE MENTORS INC. & TAKEN BY
SURPRISE STEP TEAM

Best Business Float
PUBLIX

Best Themed Float
MEDULLA BAPTIST CHURCH



Ready to Read

Ready-to-Read is designed to turn every child into a reading star with five levels that help develop young readers. The Junior League of Greater Lakeland hosts one of the longest running program's in the State of Florida. This year, through the assistance of our partnership with Polk County School Board, we brought the R2R program back into schools and partnered with Title I Parent Night programs to help support these educators, the program and their specific goals. The League hosted our first Ready to Read event on Tuesday, October 6, at Sikes Elementary. During this interactive workshop, trained League volunteers assisted with educational training, hosted craft time, provided a nutritious meal, and each child was sent home with a bag with books and associated activities. Children were able to choose one book that was on grade level to take home with them. Additional Ready to Read events took place throughout the year at other partner schools, including North Lakeland Elementary, Southwest Elementary, N E Roberts Elementary, Dixieland Elementary and Padgett Elementary.

DEIB

For a third year, the DEIB committee provided meaningful events to educate our members and celebrate the diversity of our League and community. Examples of specific events include the Mental Health and Wellness event during Mental Health awareness month, participating in the Martin Luther King Jr Parade for the second year in a row with the City of Lakeland, and hosting the annual Women Entrepreneurship panel which featured 9 different entrepreneurs who shared their entrepreneurial journey. This second annual event has become one of the most highly attended community events hosted at our building.

World of Reading

The Junior League hosted its annual World of Reading Festival in Barnett Family Park on Saturday, April 15, 2023. This free event was open to all families and children of all ages and continued with our theme, "Where Will Reading Take You." Our featured books were: Amigo by Carlos Zamora; Frog and Toad TOgether by Arnold Lobel; The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Each tent also featured a craft corresponding to the books that the children could create and take home with them. Once each child completed the tent activity and received a stamp on their passport, they were invited to select two books - one from the Spotlight Book Tent (where they could select one of the four featured books), and they could select an AR book! Children's musical guru, Jack Hartmann, performed at the event along with face painting and balloon artists for even more family fun.

In addition to the activities and spotlight tent book giveaways, two featured local authors autographed books and met guests at the event. The local featured authors were Amanda Green and David Ousley. Past-president Stephanie Madden also joined us as one of our spotlight authors and for a special book distribution of her children's story "Amelia Margaret Merriweather: Let Me Introduce Myself".



SPAC

The JLGL remained active and engaged in the Junior Leagues of Florida State Public Affairs (JLFLSPAC) statewide advocacy effort, including supporting legislation to 1) repeal sales taxes on diapers and incontinence products, 2) work to eliminate food insecurity and hunger for at-risk youth, and 3) advocate for additional support, awareness and security for victims of human trafficking. Additionally, over the summer, the Junior League of Greater Lakeland was formally recognized by the Polk County School Board as an outstanding community partner at its regular July board meeting. Board members invited the League to return to its August meeting to present more details on the history and present scope of the League's partnership with Polk County Public Schools at its August regular board meeting. The presentation led to a healthy dialogue between League representatives, board members, and staff on how best to strengthen the League's programming and its in-kind support of Lakeland-area Title I elementary schools as well as the Tenoroc High School Clothing Closet. Additionally, SPAC Chair Kate Wallace had the opportunity to present on public affairs matters at our Annual Conference hosted by AJLI in Indianapolis in May of 2023.

Reading is Fundamental

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) continues to provide opportunities for children to experience the life-changing impact of reading. This year, five Title 1 Elementary Schools were selected: Socrum Elementary, Oscar J Pope Elementary, Crystal Lake Elementary, Jesse Keen Elementary, and Phillip O Brien Elementary for a total distribution of more than 2,500 books.

Additionally, the RIF committee saw additional opportunities to provide books through partnerships with community organizations. We worked with Lakeland Regional Health to offer books, snacks and school supplies to students who attended their Back to School program in July. Additionally, we worked with Bonnet Springs Park, where Maggie Briggs, President, served as a Nature Narrator for the day. During this event, the League distributed copies of the book "Green, Green". Lastly, we continued our ongoing book distribution with Snowfest, the City of Lakeland's holiday festival on Lake Morton, which alongside World of Reading is one of our largest book distributions annually.

Through these additional book distributions, we put nearly 2,000 books in the hands of children.

Annual Meeting & Spring Banquet

On Tuesday, May 2, we celebrated our annual Spring Banquet at the Lakeland Country Club. President Maggie Briggs presided over the celebratory event attended by more than 150 provisional, active, and sustaining members and welcomed Barb Cadiz, incoming President, and the 2022-2023 Board.

Funding Director Melania Chromy announced that through the League's signature fundraising events and partnerships with many organizations, the League raised over \$272,000 to positively impact our community.

Past Junior League of Greater Lakeland President Sarah Dukes McKay announced the recipient of the Sarah D. McKay Award established by the League in 2018 to honor her lifetime commitment to improving our community. The 2019 Sarah D. McKay Award recipient was Lu Fitzwater.

After a year of leadership development and community service opportunities, 32 women graduated from Provisional to Active membership.

The 2023-2024 Board of Directors of the Junior League of Greater Lakeland was installed.





Several members were recognized for their service and commitment to the organization during the 2022-2023 year.

ANGEL DAVIS

Heart of the League was awarded to an active member with amazing passion for the Junior League. The recipient of this award was Angel Davis, who received this award for her dedication and countless hours given to ensure the League Year was a success.

SHERYL ROGERS

Spirit of the League was awarded to an active member who is enthusiastic and full of pride for the League. The recipient of the award was Sheryl Rogers, who received this award for her service on the Black Diamond Ball, Communications and other committees as well as her ongoing support of all aspects of the League.

JAYDE COLEMAN

Volunteer of the Year was awarded to an active member who gives 100% of herself to her individual committee, as well as helping out on other committees and projects of our League. This year's recipient was Jayde Coleman. Jayde gave countless hours to support the League's DEIB events as well as served as Assistant Membership VP.

NICHOLE SUMMERS

Bridge to the Community was awarded to an active member who is not only an amazing asset

to our League, but is involved in numerous other organizations throughout our community. This year we recognized Nichole Summers. Nichole gave countless hours to support the League's World of Reading event and is always willing to assist the League in any capacity.

RACHEL CASHDOLLAR

Carol Jenkins Barnett Sustainer of the Year was awarded to a sustaining member who has given tremendous support to our League. The recipient of this award was Rachel Cashdollar, who received this award for stepping up in a major way to serve our organization as a sustaining council member, and also gave hundreds of hours of her time to help make the League year a success. The League could not have done all it has without her help, guidance and hard work.

VANESSA VALENCIA

Provisional of the Year was awarded to a new member who goes above and beyond the expectations set for this level of membership. The recipient of this award was Vanessa Valencia, who received this award for her genuine interest in getting to know the women in her Provisional class and her exceptional effort and assistance during volunteer projects.

2023 Sarah Dukes McKay Award Winner

and 2022 (Inaugural) Carol Jenkins Barnett Sustainer of the
Year Award Winner



From the arts to social services, there is almost no good cause in this community that doesn't have Lu Fitzwater's name attached.

Hence it's not one bit surprising that Lu has deservedly won the League's highest honors, named for two of our League's brightest stars who are also listed among AJLI's Remarkable Women: The Sarah Dukes McKay Award and The (first) Carol Jenkins Barnett Sustainer of the Year Award.

An MSUW graduate and an Ole Miss Masters recipient, Lu served as an Active in the Gainesville League and transferred to Lakeland as a Sustainer. Gainesville's loss was certainly our gain as Lu's sustaining membership includes serving numerous terms on the Sustainer Council as Transfer Chair and as Sustaining Advisor to the Sustainer Liaison, Membership VP, and Funding Director.

Lu has further helped with the Admissions/Provisional and Nominating Committees and has twice garnered Sustainer of the Year honors. Additionally Lu served on both the Pro-Am Advisory Committee and the PigFest Board when the League ran that fundraiser.

Outside of the League, Lu is committed to our community's seniors and serves on the VISTE Board where she was a past president and was the first

Question:

**What do Tupelo,
Mississippi natives
Lu Fitzwater and Elvis
Presley have in common?**

Answer:

**Elvis was to rock and
roll what Lu has been to
Lakeland voluntarism – a
veritable rock star!**

woman to chair their annual drive, outperforming everyone before her in terms of funds raised. Lu's commitment to the arts is exemplified through her past membership on the Polk Theatre Board and her current membership on the Lakeland Symphony Orchestra Board which she previously served as president. With her commitment to the well being of girls, Lu is both a current board member of the PACE Center for Girls and a past board member of Girls Inc. Lu and her family also support many other good causes including the United Way, the GiveWell Community Foundation, Hospice, and the SPCA from which they adopted a family pet. And in terms of well deserved community honors, Lu was selected by the National Association of Women Business Owners as a Woman of Distinction Honoree.

Lu is married to John, formerly publisher of The Ledger, and they have a daughter Katherine, who is United Way's VP of Marketing & Communications and a very active Active who happens to be the current President Elect of our League. The family attends First Presbyterian Church and enjoys the fellowship there.

Outside of voluntarism, Lu is a wonderful cook as many of our members can attest, a skilled pianist, and an even better friend.

So to that beloved friend (and also in my case, neighbor), we add our congratulations to those of a long list of admirers for all Lu has done and continues to do to make life better for all of us in Lakeland. ("Well done, good and faithful servant." Matthew 25:23)



2023 Carol Jenkins Barnett Sustainer of the Year



Rachel Cashdollar, one of the Junior League's most enthusiastic members and a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, now proudly calls Lakeland home, and we are certainly proud to claim her! Rachel is a joy to work with, and her smile precedes every interaction with her.

A graduate of Florida Southern College, Rachel was a business major and a member of Zeta Tau Alpha Sorority whose sisterhood she currently mentors. Rachel's placements primarily involved the financial arena or funding track just as her professional life has.

As a member of the Sustaining Council, Rachel chaired our new Bee The Difference Campaign in 2021-22 and again in 2022-23. She was successful in helping raise funding for supplies for our Tenoroc Clothes Closet which is a worthy endeavor that enables children without the resources to have new, clean clothing and hygiene supplies to access those items privately and free of charge at school.

Professionally, Rachel has worked for the Mims, the Ruthvens, and is now working for the Philpots and Miller families with AgAmerica where she helps clients and investors in land investments. On a volunteer level, and

**Rachel
Cashdollar**

**Recipient of the
2023 Carol Jenkins
Barnett Sustainer of
the Year Award**

in addition to her work with the League and Florida Southern, Rachel has rendered invaluable service on the VISTE Board's Nominating and Finance Committees and describes her relationship with VISTE as "thanking God every day". Rachel is also part of The United Way Young Leaders Society, a stepping stone to deeper involvement in the United Way.

One of the things people admire most about Rachel is her willingness to challenge herself to try new volunteer ventures, truly things she has never done before.

This ability to boldly try new things speaks both to the history of the League and to our present as well. It speaks to a productive and community-bettering volunteer involvement.

Rachel infuses energy and passion into everything she does, and she always adds a bright smile to the mix! So we are happy to congratulate Rachel, on garnering this very special award.



Funding Update

Through its philanthropic endeavors, the League has profoundly touched our community's life. With an array of impactful community initiatives and hallmark fundraising activities, we've garnered the essential resources to foster positive changes to enhance our community's well-being. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the numerous entities and individuals who have placed their trust in the League to manage their contributions, enabling us to work together towards creating meaningful improvements within our community.

Donors listed as of May 31, 2023. If you believe your name has been omitted in error, please contact the Treasurer at treasurer@jlgf.org.



To our active and sustaining members, thank you for your ongoing support of our Annual Appeal. Each year, you give generously to the League and we thank you for that support.

\$99 AND UNDER

Anonymous
Ansley Master
Hilda Franco
Melissa Gravitt
Louise Watkins
Sheena Butts
Julia Huerta
Barb Cadiz
Robin Butz
Don & Sue Coleman
Tiffany Osler Kilpatrick
Susan Wuitschick
Amanda Middleton
Heather Jones
Jenny Lee
Lisa Gifford
Lacey Meyer
Carolyn Woodger
Jayde Coleman
Bonnie Edwards
Shoma Shelly

\$100-\$199

Anonymous
Patricia Stokes

Maryann Troiano
Shannon Abitbol
Pat Blalock
Elizabeth Chappell
Terri Goleno

\$200-\$999

Anonymous
Thomas Bayless
Brandie Philpot
Janice Martin
Melody Rider
Nancy Simmons
Paula Mims

\$1,000+

Anonymous

IN MEMORY OF PAT BLALOCK

Anonymous
Brittany Sale
John C & Debbie Watkins
Mark & Ellen Salm
Judy Fortin
Margaret de Zayas

Little Black Dress Initiative

The fourth annual 2022-23 Little Black Dress Initiative (LBDI) was held on November 7-11, 2022, and served as our first fundraiser for the League year. Members wore the same little black dress for a week in order to illustrate the restrictions poverty places on choices, opportunities, and access to resources. A loved tradition of this week long social media campaign is a mid-week “LBDI Happy Hour” at Revival in downtown Lakeland, where participants and supporters alike gathered to raise a glass for a good cause, continued this year as well! Overall, LBDI raised more than \$30,000 for the League over its 2022 campaign cycle!

ProAm

The Pro-Am Tennis Tournament, organized by Sustainer Kim Lafferty, was held on April 1-2, 2023, at The Lakeland Country Club. On the evening of March 31, we hosted the Calcutta event with light appetizers, drinks, and fun revenue enhancers which continued to fill backpacks with school supplies. The event and the whole weekend raised close to \$15,000 to pour back into our community. The Tournament featured 16 professional tennis players paired with 16 amateur players. The winners were: Dave Saltman (AM) and Kevin Estroff (PRO); and our 1st runner ups: DJ Pate (AM) and Steve Huber (PRO).



Black Diamond Ball



Guests enjoyed an evening of glitz and glamour while attending the Black Diamond Ball. The evening included performers, casino games, silent auctions and more.



The Junior League of Greater Lakeland once again celebrated lavishly at our signature fundraiser, the “Black Diamond Ball,” sponsored by Ashley Barnett. This sold-out, black-tie event held at Bonnet Springs Park was attended by more than 300 guests who were eager to support our Clothe the Community Initiative.

Through an interactive mission-focused backpack-filling activity, guests were able to financially support 1,800 backpacks stuffed with school supplies and uniforms to later be distributed to TASSEL. Guests also enjoyed fine dining, whiskey tasting, casino games, and lively dancing. The dinner program featured messages from Ashley Gibson Barnett, active JLGL Sustainer and presenting sponsor, and Jason Looney, Principal of Tenoroc High School. A moving video tribute, featuring the Polk County School Board Superintendent and many educators, was reimaged for this year and premiered to the audience, highlighting the impact of the Junior League’s initiatives to support the children of Polk County.

Additional revenue enhancers and a motion to compel during the program resulted in net revenue of \$85,000, continuing to establish this event as the League’s most profitable fundraiser.



Women's Leadership Development Program

In June of 2022, the League received a \$1,500 grant from Givewell to establish a Leadership Development program. The vision for this program was to not only grow leadership skills within our members, but also reach out into the community and grow female leaders outside of our organization as well.





The interest and support was so outstanding for this program that we sold out our first cohort!

The goal included two components: one being a formal, nine-week course that would offer a personalized, transformative experience that taps into each participant's style, talents and skill sets and helps emphasize what makes them great leader; the second, a mentorship program that brought together rising leaders and established community leaders, fostering shared resources for adopting mindset, strategy, and accountability habits of successful individuals.

Our first initiative, the Women in Excellence Leadership Development Program, was developed through the generous contributions of Givewell, whose sponsorship provided funding for the certification of the Leadership Development course; ATHENA International, providing the training certification, program materials and online tools and resources; Lakeland Regional Health, The Lunz Group and Bank of Central Florida, who together donated more than \$60,000 through financial and in-kind donations over two years to help establish the foundation of a successful program.

Beginning in the Fall 2023, this nine-week, in person program will host more than 30 women within and outside of the League and provide them with skills and resources to develop their potential as a female leader in our community. The program saw such success we even opened registration for a Spring 2024 cohort, which also sold out! The success of this inaugural program is a testament to the League, our mission and vision.

Our second program within Women in Excellence included The Mentorship Program, which kicked off on March 27, 2023. Our very first cohort included 16 women both within the League as well as community partners. Mentors include (but not limited to): Danielle Drummond, Lakeland Regional Health; Michelle Netwal, Bank of Central Florida; Lacey Meyer, The Lunz Group; Courtney Eelman, AgAmerica; Kerry Falwell, Florida Children's Museum; Rachel Cashdollar, AgAmerica/The Junior League; and Christina Criser Jackson, United Way. The formal program spanned nine months with the option to continue informally following. The program was met with great success and interest in continuing for future years.

Financials

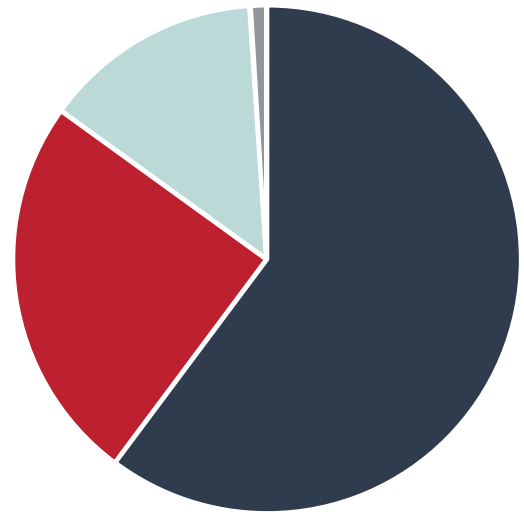
Total Expenses

- Fundraiser & Event Expense **35%**
- Building & Payroll **28%**
- League Operations & Dues **19%**
- Community Programs **14%**
- Membership Education & Training **4%**



Total Revenue

- Event and Fundraising **56%**
- Rental: **23%**
- Dues and Fees **13%**
- Other **1%**



Honor Our Legacy

What better way to ensure the long-term security and stability of the League than by giving to our annual fund. Simply put, your gift is your ability to leave a legacy that will allow the League to sustain our service.

To learn more about the Annual Campaign and to give a gift, visit jlg.org. Questions? Contact funding@jlg.org.

Community Partners

| | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Ashley Barnett | CPS Investment Advisors | Kimberly George |
| Publix Super Market Charities | The Lunz Group | Janice Martin |
| The George Jenkins Foundation | Bank of Central Florida | The Briggs Family |
| Advanced Overhead Systems | Lakeland Regional Health | Paula Mims and the Mims Family |
| Better Homes and Gardens | The Guzzetta Family | The Fitzwater Family |
| Good Intent's | Bernie's Body Shop | Lynda Buck & Family |
| Millenia Catering | Miller Construction | Caroline Schichtel & Family |
| Polk State College | Strickland Construction | Peggy McKeel |
| SouthState Bank | Kim Cleghorn & Family | The Ross Family |
| Stuart's Plumbing | E. V. McClurg | Glenda McCallister |
| Tiffany Osler Kilpatrick and Ashley Link | Lakeland Leads | Heather Jones & Family |
| The Crenshaw Family | Callie & Zach Miller | The Cadiz Family |
| Allen & Company | Corrosion Control | Veronica Jackson & Family |
| The Bunch Family | Florida Southern College | Nichole Summers & Family |
| Tiffany Hawks & Family | Fred & Sheila Lotterhos | QGIV |
| The Blalock Family | Gaines Jewelers & The Saunders Family | Regal Lakeland |
| Carilly | Infinity Tire & Auto Repair | Sale Insurance |
| All Saints Academy | Industrial Solutions Group | International Diamond Center |
| 97.5 WPCV and Max 98.3 | Steve & Carol Boyington | |
| GiveWell Community Foundation | Tom & Keaton Griffin | |
| | The Sims Family | |
| | Kate Wallace | |
| | Kerrienne Hopkins | |

Celebrating our 90th!

In March 2023, League members gathered to celebrate our organization's 90th anniversary. Lone Palm was the perfect venue for a very enjoyable, well-attended event. Members visited with friends, old and new, while reviewing displays of our League's past and present.



In addition to a delicious lunch that began with a welcome by President Maggie Briggs and a blessing by our Sustaining Vice President Peggy McKeel, the event featured beautiful floral arrangements by Emily Plank and recipes from Palm Country Cuisine. Guests then took a trip down Memory Lane. We heard and viewed a program of tributes and highlights from our history featuring speakers Anne Furr, Alice O'Reilly, and Stephanie Madden as well as a video of a number of League members saluting our many accomplishments.

The finale, a throwback to the fun we always had with Follies, was an Addams Family skit with Gomez (Barney Barnett) two dueling Morticias (Kim

Elmhorst and Ashley Link), Lurch (the Reverend Riley Short), Grandmama (Libby Chappell), Uncle Fester (Blake Scarbrough), Fester's gold-digger girlfriend Debbie Jellinsky (Sheila Lotterhos), Wednesday (Doris Lyons), Pugsley (Waite Willis) Pugsley's Girl Choir (Lauren Albaum, Angel Davis and Connie Durrence), and our long-time and incomparable Follies accompanist (Susan Willis). As several of our members remarked, "I don't remember when I have laughed so hard!"

Our 90th Chairwoman Katherine Fitzwater led the team that made our 90th Celebration the success it was. Special thanks to everyone who participated in making this event so memorable. In addition to those members



listed above, thank you to those who also helped with ideas, displays, and setups. These members include: Nikki Casha, Caroline Davis, Paula Mims, Tiffany Kilpatrick, Brittany Sale, Stephanie McClean, Laurie Melton, Stacy Walsh, Emily Plank, and Gina Saunders.

**And most important of all,
our thanks to everyone
who attended. Your
participation made our
celebration a happy one,
indeed!**

You are the reason the League has been such a strong catalyst for good over the past ninety years, and we look forward to serving with you throughout the decades to come. Here's to all of us together!

Special thank you to Gaines Jewelers for sponsoring the luncheon.



Membership

PROVISIONALS

32

ACTIVES

143

SUSTAINERS AND
SUSTAINER EMERITUS

318

TOTAL

493



Membership Recruitment

NEW ACTIVES

Amy Thompson
Beth Kirby
Brittany Prevatt
Caitlin Reese
Catherine Kirkland
Cheyenne Carroll
Deidra Whatley
Emily Smith
Jennifer Humphries
Jihan Wilkerson
Jill Myers Breazeale
Jordan Montero
Kaleigh Albarracin Avian
Karen Maultsby
Katelyn Bruce
Kelly Freeman
Micah Interdonato

Rosebud Leslie
Samon Arnold
Stephanie Sposaro
Vanessa Valencia
Vianey Butterfield
Victoria Beck

NEW SUSTAINERS

Adriana Hendrix
Brittany Ellis
Holly Daniels-Kidwell
Jessica Dobson-Dimarco
Kate Wallace
Linda Dowers
Malonie Ayers
Stephanie Brown
Traci Allen

Provisionals and Sustainers

The Junior League of Greater Lakeland had another successful year as we welcomed 45 new members to our organization.

We hosted the New Member Welcome Party on August 18, 2022 at the Junior League Building. That following Sunday, a New Member Retreat was held at the Junior League Building marking the official start of the year! In keeping with tradition, the Provisional Class supported the Christmas Parade committee by serving as day-of volunteers for the annual Lakeland Christmas Parade. To further celebrate the season, the committee hosted a Provisional social with a tacky holiday sweater contest and ornament-making. Provisional meetings were held



on the second Tuesday of each month, providing an opportunity for our new members to learn about the organizational structure, fundraisers, projects, community impact, and the Junior League of Greater Lakeland history from our Historian and Sustainer Sheila Lotterhos. Organizations and businesses throughout Lakeland welcomed the League into their spaces to host meetings. This year the provisional committee hosted meetings at the Polk Museum of Arts, Lakeland Volunteers in Medicine, and Hall Communications.



The sustainers approached the year with a newfound vision of engagement spearheaded by Peggy McKeel, Sustaining Vice President.

Alongside Peggy, the Sustaining Council included: Tiffany Hawks, Asst. Sustaining VP; Sheila Lotterhos, Historian (permanent); Amy Royal, Secretary; Courtney Larson, Funding; Laura Taft, Treasurer and Lu Fitzwater, Transfer Chair. Rachel Cashdollar served as the Sustainer Project Chair ("Bee the Difference"). Kim Lafferty served as the ProAm Tennis Tournament Chairs. Gloria Lunz hosted Book Club. Missy DeZayas served as Sustainer Liaison Chair.

At the 2022 Spring Banquet, the Sustainers voted to continue the Sustainer project "Bee the Difference."

Charmingly branded with an icon of a bumble bee, this campaign collected more than \$3,000 worth of personal hygiene items that were

distributed to organizations and schools throughout Polk County to eliminate barriers to access by women and young girls.

Additionally, the Sustaining Council hosted the Fall Luncheon, hosted at the Junior League Building, and featured social time and celebrating our 90th year. In Spring, the Sustaining Council hosted the Sustainer Gathering at the home of Stacey Clyne.

The League bid a sorrowful farewell to beloved members, including Cornelia "Nitzzy" McCreary Waters (S; Past President), Pat Blalock (S; Past President); Alice "Gayle" Vaughn Smith (SE) and Susanne Sanders Coffman (SE).



Special Events





In Memoriam

2021-2023



Melanie Ann Harden **Sustainer**

On July 13, 2021, the Junior League regrettably lost a true friend in Sustainer Melanie Ann Harden (56) after her courageous battle with cancer. Born September 9, 1964, Melanie was a native Lakelander whose family has been in Florida since the state was a territory. A graduate of Carlton Palmore, Southwest Junior High, and Santa Fe High School, Melanie also graduated from Florida Southern College where she was a member of Alpha Chi Omega Sorority and received her degree in education. Melanie then devoted her life to teaching, and for over over twenty years, she taught government and history at Traviss Vo Tech. Another love of hers was the Jr. League, and under Past President Ruth E Gardener, Melanie served along with her close friend Lizbeth Engle as co-chairs of "Ready, Set, Go!" Friends for years, Ruth E's mother even attended Melanie's mother's baby shower when the former was a toddler. Speaking of friends, one of Melanie's many friends left this poem of condolence for her, and it speaks volumes: "Melanie You Were The...." You were the lovely Sunshine that lights up a room, The delicate Flower that in a garden did bloom, You were the Rain Drops that nature needed to live, Everyone loved the sweet smile you would easily give, You were the luminous Fragrance after the rain, Your friendship lifted everyone to a higher plane, You were as a Vine that about a tree

would wind, Just as your love the heart did so sweetly bind, You were the Nutrient that made a friendship grow, All these and more; just thought I'd let you know. (By Ruth Scott Hodges) We extend our deepest sympathy and our gratitude for her years of League service to Melanie's survivors. These include her mother, Nancy Sawyer; significant other, Doy Scott; brothers, Trey Harden (Terri), Pete Sawyer (Sustainer Carol Sawyer), John Sawyer (Stephanie), and Gary Sawyer (Beth); her Aunt Catherine; and countless nieces, nephews, and cousins, including Sustainer Martha Richards (Harley). Please know we grieve with you and will miss Melanie's gentle spirit and bright smile.

Barbara Smith Moore **Sustainer Emeritus**

Members of the League were deeply saddened to hear the news that Sustainer Emeritus Barbara Smith Moore (84) died on August 12, 2021, just shy of her 85th birthday which would have occurred on August 23. Though born in New Jersey, Barbara grew up in Florida and was devoted not only to the Florida Gators but to Florida history and living. Sewing was a passion for Barbara along with her gardens, and Barbara was very quick and generous in sharing her flowers and particularly her asparagus fern which grew in plenteous supply with many of our arrangements chairmen over the years for League events

from Spring Banquet to Fall Luncheon, and she hospitably opened her beautiful home for Charity Ball and other League functions from Spring Tea to group meetings. One of Barbara's favorite League placements was Children's Theatre, which introduced school children in Lakeland to fun and educational theatre productions, and she also served League placements at the Central Florida Speech & Hearing Clinic and the Cerebral Palsy Clinic, now known as Achievement Academy. In addition to theatre, Barbara's love of art was celebrated through her long time devotion to and involvement with the Polk Museum of Art, and she was a loyal member of her antique club and PEO group. Historic Lakeland's "A Look At Lakeland" house tours that supported and raised awareness of the need to save the historic promenade on Lake Mirror also benefited from Barbara's skills. An encourager, Barbara's ready smile and welcome advice combined with her devotion to seeing the League prosper in every way were appreciated by her fellow League members. More than anything she did, though, Barbara loved her family and was a devoted mother and grandmother, and we want to extend our deepest sympathy and appreciation to her family for her long time service to our League. Barbara's family includes her daughter, Diane Moore Muldoon (Tim); her son, Steven Moore; and her grandchildren, Jenna Gard, Eric Gard, Kinsey Moore, and Garret Moore. We are so sorry for your loss which is ours as well

Virginia Jackson Leetun
Sustainer Emeritus

It's always a sad day when we lose one of our Emeritus members, and the loss of Sustainer Emeritus Virginia Jackson Leetun (93) on August 25, 2021, was just such a day. Born in Chicago on April 28, 1928, Virginia went on to become a home economics major at Iowa State University where she was a member of Alpha Gamma Delta Sorority. After moving to Florida with her husband, Maynard, Virginia went on to help establish a chapter of her sorority at Florida Southern College. In addition

to her love of Alpha Gam, Virginia's interests were as varied as the beautiful clothes she made. Those interests included everything from growing citrus to being an expert seamstress to enjoying the beach and time spent with her loved ones at Longboat Key where her family had a vacation home.

Virginia's volunteer work was also varied. In addition to being a vital, long time member of the Junior League, Virginia enjoyed Needlework Guild, PEO, being a Pink Lady at the hospital, playing bridge with her bridge club, and participating with her church circle at First Presbyterian Church where she was a member.

But above all else, Virginia loved her friends and family, and her friends and family loved her. It is to these loved ones, that we extend both our deepest sympathy and gratitude for the years Virginia devoted to our League, helping to make it the great organization it is today.

Preceded in death by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Jackson and her brother, William Jackson, those left to cherish Virginia's memory are her children, Jeffrey, Patricia (John), and Douglas; her grandchildren, Robert Leetun (Lauren), Eric Templeton (Fallon), Andy Templeton (Heather), and Brian Templeton (Fiancée Carolina); her great-grandchildren, Charles, Elisabeth, Kallen, Brecken, and Blaine; and her nieces Linda Carr (Steve) and Barbara Leetun Wilson (Robert). Surely our loss is Heaven's gain with the presence of this dear lady.

Virginia Tacker Askew
Our Senior Most Sustainer Emeritus

On September 20, 2021, one of the most delightful members of our League, Lakeland native Virginia Tacker Askew, passed from among us. One hundred and one years young on July 14th of 2021, Virginia was a devoted League member for over seven decades.

While she was invaluable as the Sustaining Advisor to "League Lines" years ago, other members can further tout

her many contributions to the League as chairman of the Bargain Box and initiator of the Bargain Box Coffee.

Follies was always a high point of Virginia's life as an active member of the League, especially when she and her beloved husband Harry got to perform together. "Oh, we had such great fun performing, Harry and I!" For that matter, Virginia rarely ever missed a League function, and she always brought her smile and her A-game with her to everything she did.

It can be truthfully said that Virginia never met a stranger who didn't immediately become a friend, and that includes people she met in her world travels over the years. Her enthusiasm for life bubbled over, and this positive outlook is one of the reasons Virginia lived such a long and happy life.

An avid bridge player (who outlived her original group), a devoted worker during her children's school years, a church volunteer at First Methodist Church where she was the Sunshine Lady since 1965 of her Sunday School class, a Church Circle Member, a church bridge player (she once said she was going to win First Methodist's "Bridge Olympics" and likely did!), and a daily assurance phone volunteer for the church during the Covid pandemic, Virginia was also a PEO member, Florida State graduate, Sigma Kappa Sorority member, and a member of the Lakeland Sorosis Club.

While Virginia taught elementary school before she married, she also helped Harry with the family citrus business over the years. As a wonderful raconteur, Virginia had sweet, fun stories about the people who worked for them. One of the waiters at the Yacht Club once referred to Virginia as "the class of the club", and she was that and so much more.

Virginia was the sunshine of many lives, especially to those who loved her most. To that end, Virginia is survived by her daughter Sustainer Mary Virginia Hinson (Wiley); her son Lee Askew; her grandchildren Jenny Martin (Dennis), Josh Askew (Katie), and Jake Askew;

her great grandson Nick Martin; and great nephews Todd Brown (Sustainer Gina Brown), Scott Brown (Amy), and their children; plus an extended family of relatives and friends. To these loved ones, please know our gratitude for Virginia's years of love and service knows no bounds. And while we will always miss her, she lives on in our memories as well as hearts.

Carol Jenkins Barnett **Sustainer and AJLI Notable Member**

On December 7, 2021, Sustainer Carol Jenkins Barnett (65) lost her battle with early onset Alzheimer's but left a legacy of public service in her wake. A long-time member of our League, Carol, whose altruism was legend, received AJLI's highest honor by being listed in 2017 among First Ladies and other shining stars as one of AJLI's Notable Members. Our League also named the Sustainer of the Year award in Carol's honor.

Born in Lakeland to the late Ann and George Jenkins, the founder of Publix, Carol followed in her parents' footsteps with an unparalleled devotion to this community and beyond. Carol had a deep and abiding love for children, and as the former head of Publix Charities, she made sure that the children of Florida and in the other states served by Publix received a hand up in areas from education to all areas affecting their quality of life. Giving was as natural to Carol as breathing.

A graduate of Santa Fe High School and Florida Southern College, Carol joined the Junior League of Greater Lakeland while attending college and remained actively involved in her community throughout her life, serving on numerous boards and committees of a wide variety of organizations. In the League, Carol was both our Community Vice President and Treasurer as well as chairing Admissions/Provisional, Nominating, Special Projects Task Force, and Follies Backers Committee.

In 1972, Carol began her Publix career as a cashier at Grove Park. In 1983, she was elected to the Publix Board

of Directors where she served for 33 years. Following her father's stroke in 1989, the Publix Charities Board appointed Carol as Chair and subsequently named her Chair and President in 1991. From there her influence was felt far and wide.

Carol loved Lakeland as much as she loved Publix. Her fingerprints are everywhere you look from the Lake Morton Parlor of our headquarters building to FSC's Barney Barnett School of Business and Free Enterprise and The Carol Jenkins Barnett Center for Early Childhood Learning at FSC. FSC's Nicholas and Wesley Halls were also donated to honor the Barnetts' sons. Her love for nature and animals resulted in her supporting the Florida Aquarium, the Mote Marine Laboratory, the Georgia Aquarium, and the Lowry Park Zoo while she adopted pets from the SPCA.

Along with her husband Barney, Carol was an admired philanthropist known for generously giving back to nonprofit organizations such as the Junior League of Greater Lakeland, United Way, YMCA, Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Family Fundamentals, Children's Movement, VISTE, Habitat for Humanity, and countless others. Over the years, Carol and Barney have funded numerous community projects, such as Barnett Family Park and the hospital's Carol Jenkins Barnett Pavilion for Women and Children. Her final philanthropic gift was toward the founding of Bonnet Springs Park.

In addition to the Association of Junior Leagues International Notable Member Award, some of the many awards Carol has received for her selfless service include the Barbara Bush Foundation's Champion of Literacy Award, United Way of America's National Alexis de Tocqueville Award, the FSC Doctor of Public Service honoris causa, and an induction into the Florida Women's Hall of Fame.

A shining star, Carol is survived by her husband, Barney Barnett; two sons, Wesley Barnett (Ashley Bell Barnett) and Nicholas Barnett (Ashley Gibson Barnett); three grandchildren: Raleigh, Birdie, and Zoey; four siblings:

Julie Fancelli, Howard Jenkins, Nancy Jenkins, and David Jenkins; and many other loving family members. To these loved ones we tender, along with our condolences, our profound gratitude for Carol's many years of devoted service and friendship. We will always carry her with us in our service and especially in our hearts.

Dial Boyle Jackson **Past President and Sustainer Emeritus**

On February 9, 2022, the League lost a long time member and friend with the death of Past President and Florida native Dial Boyle Jackson (88).

Born in Sanford to Rosa and Lloyd Boyle, Dial graduated high school there and then attended Duke University where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa, was president of the student body, and was a proud member of Delta Delta Delta Sorority.

Dial moved to Lakeland well over half a century ago. It was here that she raised her family and brought that same sense of energy with her while becoming an active member of the local community. In addition to the League, Dial was a PEO member, an active participant at First Presbyterian Church, the Chair of the Lakeland Bicentennial Committee in 1976, and a volunteer at Talbot House Ministries. Bridge and tennis were favorite hobbies, but above all, she loved her family.

As League president, Dial's enthusiastic approach was reflected in the many first-time projects undertaken. In addition to what were our ongoing commitments to children's theatre, the Polk Museum (including a commitment to helping fund the director's salary), and children's concerts, the League published a placement brochure for the first time as well as publishing 500 copies of a 1972 First Edition Guide to Community Services with an additional 30,000 tabloid copies distributed. The League further underwrote the cost of booklets for a Red Cross course in Disaster Preparedness Training and gave \$2000 for a YMCA pilot program

for campers called "Project Friends" which focused on fatherless boys. Additionally the League started a Senior Citizens Program that included a monthly outing for seniors, while the League's application for membership in AJL was accepted for consideration.

It is to Dial's family that we express both our sympathy and thanks for her years of service. Those family members include her four children — Jimmy, Gray, Dial, and Lloyd — and her seven grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. Our hearts join yours in celebrating Dial's legacy of service to the Lakeland community.

Helen Dwelle Cannon **Sustainer Emeritus**

On March 6, 2022, the League lost a devoted friend with the death of Sustainer Emeritus Helen Dwelle Cannon (83). Born April 16, 1938, Helen was a Jacksonville native and grew up there, graduating from Lee High School before attending Florida State University where she was a member of Delta Gamma Sorority.

Upon marrying fellow Jacksonvillian John Cannon, Helen joined the Junior League of Jacksonville and transferred to the Junior League of Greater Lakeland as a Sustainer when the couple moved to Lakeland around forty years ago. In addition to the League, Helen enjoyed PEO, Antique Circle, Needlework Guild, and First United Methodist Church where she served the church on the Altar Guild and as a member of United Methodist Women.

Preceded in death by her parents and husband of 60 years, Helen is survived by her daughters: fellow JLGL Sustainer Susan Dreyer (Dale) of Lakeland, Kimberly Smitherman (Dale) of Greensboro, NC, Allison White of Naples, FL; six grandchildren: Chris Smitherman (Mary Kate), Susan Smitherman Fields (John), Joshua White, John White, Coryell Dreyer, and Whitney Dreyer; and two great-grandchildren: Charles and Peter Smitherman.

It is to these family members that we offer both our

sincere condolences and our unending gratitude for sharing Helen with us throughout the years. She is not only missed by all of her League friends but dwells forever in our hearts.

Nell Thrift **Sustainer Emeritus**

On March 10, 2022, members of the Junior League lost fellow member and Sustainer Emeritus Nell Thrift (82). Born in Texas on June 30, 1939, Nell moved to Lakeland as an infant when her father took a professorship in Florida Southern College's Department of Religion, later becoming its chair and then president of the college.

An honors graduate of Lakeland High School, Nell went on to receive her undergraduate degree from Duke and masters from Emory before returning to Lakeland to teach English at her alma mater for 36 years, chairing the English department for ten of those years. Nell also advised the literary magazine and senior class, assisted in developing an honors curriculum, authored a student guide on writing term papers, was the 1968 Jaycee's Outstanding Young Educator of the Year and the 1979 Polk County Teacher of the Year for Lakeland High, and received awards from both the Columbia and Florida Scholastic Press Associations.

A devoted member of College Heights Methodist Church, Nell served as church historian, writing the church's history, and she served on its Church Council, Scholarship Committee, and as a member of the Methodist Church Women. For 23 years, Nell was the archivist for the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, and as such, she was a member and past president of the Southeastern Jurisdiction and Historical Society of the UMC and a member and past chair of the Commission on Archives and History for the UMC's Southeastern Jurisdiction.

With her deep love of history, it follows that Nell would love antiques which included her membership in Founders

Antique Circle. Her other memberships included PEO, for which she served her chapter as president, the Contemporary Club, and the Lambda Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma, teachers' honorary society.

Preceded in death by her parents and her sister, Helen Sue Thrift, Nell is survived by her sister, Mary Thrift Chambers, and her brother in law, Carlile Chambers, to whom we extend our deepest sympathy for the loss of their beloved sister and our esteemed member and friend.

Celia "Cissy" Downing Plemons **Sustainer**

It is with sadness that the Jr. League mourns the loss of Sustainer Celia "Cissy" Downing Plemons who died on June 11, 2023.

A Lakeland native, Cissy (70) was born to Hazel and Paul Downing on March 14, 1953, and she was a lifelong Lakeland resident. Cissy graduated from Santa Fe High School and went on to attend USF and Polk Community College (now Polk State), receiving her RN degree. Afterwards she became a nurse at LGH (now Lakeland Regional) and later retired from Lakeland Surgical and Diagnostic Center after a devoted career as an RN.

Cissy loved the Jr. League and was a long time member as well as being a member of Resurrection Catholic Church and Lone Palm. Cissy's hobbies reflected her outgoing personality and included spending time with family and friends. As long as her health permitted, Cissy enjoyed Bunco, card games, dancing, going to the beach, and attending Gator games as well as her grandchildren's sports activities.

Married to the love of her life for 47 years, Cissy and her husband Chris held the distinction of having two sets of twin boys. Her children and grandchildren were the apple of her eye. It is to all these family members that we extend both our deepest sympathy and prayers. They include her husband Chris; her sister Barbara; her sons

Chad (Ansley), Dustin (Laura Kelly), Adam (Liz), and Trent (Jenna); five grandchildren; two godchildren; and many nieces and nephews. We offer not only our condolences but our sincere gratitude to Cissy's family for her service to the League and our community. She will be dearly missed.

Cornelia "Nitzy" McCreary Waters **Past President and Sustainer Emeritus**

On August 9, 2022, members of the Junior League of Greater Lakeland were saddened to learn of the death of Past President and Sustainer Emeritus Nitzy Waters (93). Nitzy, who was always an outgoing, supportive, and dynamic League member, is greatly missed by all. Her drive and abilities to inspire and lead others resulted in lasting changes for good on the Lakeland cultural landscape.

Born in North Carolina on January 1, 1929, Nitzy later moved with her parents to Jacksonville where she graduated from high school. She then attended Florida State University when it was still a girls school and was a member of Alpa Gamma Delta Sorority and Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society. After college, Nitzy married Robert Waters, and the two moved to Lakeland where she taught school until their family came along. The couple settled into an historic Victorian home on Lake Hollingsworth where they raised their daughters, Debbie and Susie, and their son, Griner. For many years the Waters family owned and operated the Mercedes and Volvo dealership in Lakeland which was known far and wide for quality service and philanthropic support of the community and the League.

Nitzy was very involved in Lakeland's volunteer sector. She was a member of First Presbyterian Church where she served on the board of Women of the Church. She also co-chaired a women's Bible study group, was a church circle member, and taught Sunday School.

While Nitzy served the Junior League in a number of

capacities including being president when the group was still known as the Junior Welfare League, it is largely to her credit that the League began a children's museum which was the forerunner of the Polk Museum of Art. Nitzy tirelessly served the Museum for many years as a docent and also served as a docent at the Dali Museum in St. Pete. Nitzy loved being a part of the League's Children's Theatre and was also proud of being on the League's Arts Committee that helped bring the symphony to Lakeland area children by getting the Orlando Symphony Orchestra to perform in Lakeland prior to the city having its own orchestra.

Nitzy further served on the boards of the Lakeland Symphony Orchestra, the United Way, and Girls Club (Girls, Inc.). She was a member of Finer Things Antique Circle, Friends of the Lakeland Library, PEO, and was a member of the Ringling Fine Arts Committee. Her love for art led her to open the original Frame Factory and Art Gallery in Lakeland with her daughter Debbie.

Of the many things Nitzy loved, the NC mountains, Little Gasparilla Island, Anna Maria Island, and the Seminoles ranked high on her list. But Nitzy loved her family first and foremost. It is to those family members including her daughters Sustainer Debbie Hooks (Hollis) and Sustainer Susie Tart (Doug), her son Griner, her grandchildren Sustainer Emily Hooks, Hamilton (Neda) Hooks, Douglas (Laura) Tart, Bobbi (Dani) Tart, and great grandchildren Kate Svilvasy, Stella Hooks, Hamilton Hooks, and Weston Tart that we offer both our sincere condolences and heartfelt thanks for sharing this special lady with us throughout the years. Please know that the light that shined so brightly in her life will always shine brightly in our memories.

Alice "Gayle" Vaughn Smith **Sustainer Emeritus**

On September 8, 2022, the League lost a good friend with the death of Sustainer Emeritus Gayle Smith (82). An

Alabama native, Gayle was born in Montgomery on May 9, 1940, and while there, she was a graduate of Sidney Lanier High School. Gayle then went on to attend Auburn University where she was a proud member of Alpha Gamma Delta Sorority. A true blue Auburn fan, Gayle remained so throughout her life, always happily pulling for the Tigers in football.

Sports were a big part of Gayle's life. She was an avid tennis player and golfer as well as taking daily walks around Lake Hollingsworth. Trips to the beach were also a highlight of her life, and as such, Gayle loved trips to her beach home on Anna Maria Island.

In the community, Gayle volunteered her time with the Junior League as well as First Methodist Church and the SPCA among other activities. She was a true friend to many, adored her family, and never knew a stranger. And Gayle was a cherished League member.

Always gracious, Gayle is not only missed by her daughter Abby Smith Hail and husband Brian, daughter Paige Smith Anderson, and grandchildren Wyatt, Abigail, and Will Anderson, and Cecilia and Virginia Hail, but she is missed by members of the League. Gayle was preceded in death earlier by her beloved husband Fred, making this a particularly hard blow for the family. While it's with a heavy heart that we extend to Gayle's family our condolences, it is with a grateful heart that we tender our thanks for sharing Gayle with us throughout the years. Her genuine warmth will always be fondly remembered.

Susanne Sanders Coffman **Sustainer Emeritus**

On January 7, 2023, Sustainer Emeritus Susanne Sanders Coffman (85) died peacefully surrounded by family. A North Carolina native born October 13, 1937, Susanne moved to Lakeland at a young age where she spent the majority of her life, graduating from Lakeland High before attending Brenau where she was an ADPi. Susanne then graduated with a degree in Medical Research Technology

from Atlanta's Grady Hospital.

In 1980, Susanne along with fellow creative and League member Susie Carr Wadsworth opened the popular store, A Special Touch, which they successfully operated for ten years before selling it. Susanne then enjoyed traveling with her husband Jim. In addition to travel, Susanne loved gardening, tennis, golf, college football, Hallmark movies, book club, antique club, PEO, visits to Anna Maria and to Lake Martin in Alabama, and especially feeding the swans on Lake Morton with her grandchildren.

Susanne's faith was very important to her, and she was an active member of First Presbyterian Church where she served as a Stephen Minister and an elder. Also of upmost importance to Susanne was her devotion to family, and it is to them we offer our sincere condolences: Jody (Susan) Peddy, Paul Peddy, David Peddy, Ashley (Joey) Fiore, David (Susan) Coffman, Dan (Maureen) Coffman, Doug (Janine) Coffman, and thirteen grandchildren including Christie, Becky, Brantley, Michael, Peter, Patrick, Pete, David, Grace, Pierce, Jay, Paul, and Albry Ann. Susanne was predeceased by her husband Jim as well as her parents. Susanne's mom, Daisy Brantley Sanders Hansen, was a beloved Sustainer Emeritus in our League and lived to the age of 95.

We are grateful for Susanne's service to the community and the League and will hold her family close at heart as we all mourn her passing and celebrate her well-lived and joyous life

Patricia Cosby Blalock
Past President and Sustainer Emeritus.

On September 16, 2022, members of the Junior League heard the sad news of the death of Past President and Sustainer Emeritus Patricia Cosby Blalock (83). Born in Kentucky on May 10, 1939, Pat grew up in Danville, graduating from high school there where she cheered on her high school football team and served as their homecoming queen. College had something even more

special for Pat when, during her first week at Western Kentucky University, she met her future husband – Ralph Blalock. After Pat and Ralph were married, they moved to Lakeland where they raised their children and became an integral part of the community.

A loyal and devoted League member, Pat continued to faithfully attend League events even when illness and mobility issues surfaced. Her positive, can-do attitude was always present as evidenced during her year as president when the League's Thrift Sale made a strategic move to the civic center and significantly increased our net gains. Under Pat's leadership, the League also helped launch a successful project that became The Learning Resource Center on whose board Pat would serve. During her active years, Pat served on numerous League committees including the Lakeland Day Nursery and the Cerebral Palsy Clinic as well as serving as League treasurer, vice president, and president.

The community further benefited from Pat serving on the Boys Club Board, Citizens Police Academy, and the Florida Bar Grievance Committee. And she thoroughly enjoyed memberships in Dresden Antique Circle, PEO, and All Saints Episcopal Church.

Bearing all of this in mind, there is little wonder that Pat would transfer her valuable skill set along with her winning personality (she never knew a stranger) to become one of Lakeland's most successful realtors. Nor is it a surprise that Pat would thoroughly enjoy her stellar career for several decades.

Pat's greatest success, however, was as a wife, mother, and grandmother, and it is to her family that we offer our heartfelt condolences. Those left to cherish her memory are Pat's husband of 64 years and the love of her life, Ralph Blalock, along with daughter and fellow Sustainer Jil Blalock Bevis and Jil's husband Rob, son Paul and his wife Sustainer Randy Blalock, and her beloved grandchildren. We are so grateful for Pat's many years of selfless service, and we will always remember her fondly and with great respect.



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LET US HOST YOUR NEXT EVENT

To rent the historic Junior League of Greater Lakeland's Sorosis Building for your next event, visit jlg.org/jlgl-building, or email us at rentals@jlg.org.

