



JUNIOR LEAGUE  
CLEVELAND

# 2024 - 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



*Junior League of Cleveland*

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## **THE ASSOCIATION OF JUNIOR LEAGUES INTERNATIONAL**

The Junior League of Cleveland is one of 297 Leagues in The Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc. Founded in 1901 by New Yorker and social activism pioneer Mary Harriman, the Junior Leagues are charitable nonprofit organizations of women, developed as civic leaders, making a demonstrable impact on their communities. To this day, AJLI Leagues and members work at the forefront of social reform, tackling the toughest and most critical issues of the day for the purpose of enhancing the social, cultural, and political fabric of civil society.

For more information, please visit: [www.thejuniorleagueinternational.org](http://www.thejuniorleagueinternational.org).

# President's Message

Dear Members,

As we reflect on this remarkable year in the Junior League of Cleveland's journey, I am filled with pride, gratitude, and excitement for the road ahead. My term concluded with a swiftness I never imagined but I am ready to be a part of building upon the foundation we've established as a collective during the two years of my presidency. The past year has been one of strategic growth, renewed purpose, and bold action—rooted firmly in our mission to advance women's leadership for meaningful community impact through volunteer action, collaboration, and training.

One of our most significant milestones this year was the establishment of the Junior League of Cleveland Community Fund in partnership with the Cleveland Foundation. This transformational step ensures long-term sustainability and reaffirms our commitment to investing in the future of our community. The fund not only honors our legacy but also empowers us to continue making a measurable difference for generations to come.

We also undertook a comprehensive restructuring of our governance model, positioning the League for greater agility, transparency, and inclusivity. This thoughtful transformation enhances our leadership pipeline, clarifies roles and responsibilities, and ensures that our Board and leadership bodies are equipped to navigate a changing nonprofit landscape with confidence.

Equally important, we revised our bylaws and instituted new requirements that will strengthen our organizational integrity and operational effectiveness. These updates lay the foundation for a more accountable and mission-aligned League experience, while preserving the spirit of volunteerism and sisterhood that defines us.

We are taking the lead in reinvigorating the Junior Leagues of Ohio State Public Affairs Committee (OHSPAC) to study and take action on behalf of the Junior Leagues of Ohio on public issues at the local, state and federal level, with an emphasis on improving the lives of women and children throughout Ohio and to educate, and communicate on behalf of, the Junior Leagues of Ohio in areas of public affairs.

Lastly, we proudly revamped the process by which we select community partners, ensuring that our projects and collaborations are more strategic, equitable, and aligned with both community needs and League capacity. This refined approach allows us to engage in more impactful, sustainable initiatives—and to build deeper, more meaningful relationships with organizations doing critical work in Cleveland that aligns with our signature initiative, Public Health.

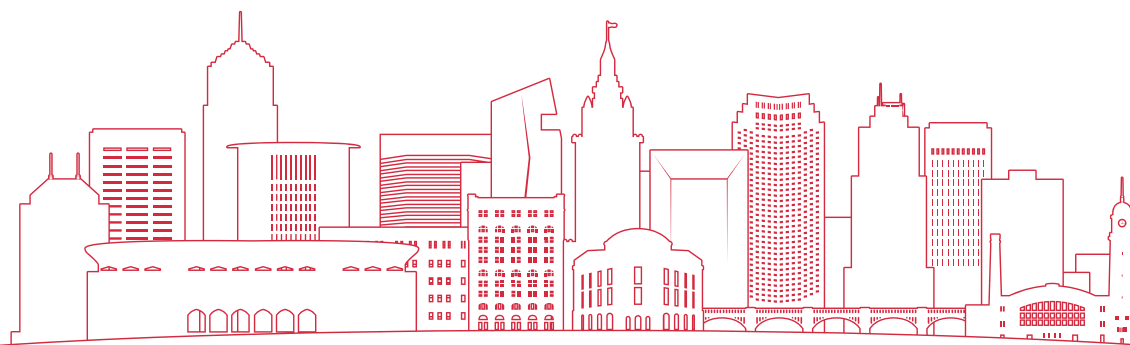
None of this progress would have been possible without you—our passionate, dedicated members. Your time, talent, and unwavering commitment to our mission are what breathe life into our work and fuel our vision for community impact. Whether you served on a committee, led a project, attended a training, or supported a peer, your contributions matter deeply.

As we look ahead, let us continue to build on this momentum with courage, compassion, and purpose. Together, we are not only shaping the future of the Junior League of Cleveland—we are shaping the future of our city.

With gratitude and pride,



Barbara Kakiris  
President, 2023-2025  
Junior League of Cleveland



## Board of Directors

Barbara Kakiris, President

Jen Bensi, Senior Operations Director

Valerie Schenk, Secretary

Samantha Mishne, Sustainer Director

Josephine Hesse, Treasurer

Laura Bentley, Chair of the Nominating Committee

Jacqueline Taylor, Diversity Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Director

Katie Leimkeuhler, Membership Director

Lisa Mayhugh, Marketing and Communications Director

Rachael Paskvan, Events Director

Shanette Buford-Brazzelle, Community Director

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Junior League of Cleveland is an organization of women whose Mission is to advance women's leadership for meaningful community impact through volunteer action, collaboration, and training.

## MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

The League hosted a variety of opportunities for members to engage and build connections throughout the 2024-2025 League year. Social events included book clubs, dining clubs, workout classes, and local business events, all intentionally supporting women-owned businesses and highlighting them within our community and social media.

Signature events included Friendsgiving with 22 participants, a Holiday Party with 67 attendees, a sold-out Asia Town Karaoke night with 20 members, and a Galentine's Gift Swap and Party with 15 participants. In addition, the Membership Committee partnered with local connections to secure a Mayor Proclamation recognizing the Junior League's impact.

## THIS YEAR'S KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Rightsized organizational structure to a single governance board style
- Revamped community partner Request for Proposal (RFP) process
- Reinvigorated membership recruitment process
- Invested funds from the sale of League House
- Increased membership dues
- Combined Annual Meeting with Annual Fundraiser
- Voted to reinstate the Ohio State Policy and Advocacy Committee (OHSPAC)



# By the Numbers

## MEMBERSHIP

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New Members

**45**

Actives

**89**

Sustainers

**141**

## VOLUNTEER HOURS

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Community Service

**138**

Trainings

**94**

Meetings

**256**

**FUNDS RAISED**

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**\$30,839**

# Spring Together & Annual Meeting



The Junior League of Cleveland proudly hosted its 4th annual Spring Together fundraiser on Friday, April 25, 2025, at the Crowne Plaza Cleveland Playhouse Square. This year's theme, "Under the Marquee: An Evening with the JLC," brought an elevated and unforgettable experience that combined the energy of our largest fundraising event with the celebration of our Annual Meeting.

Guests enjoyed a night of music from dueling pianos, a lively wine pull, a silent auction featuring items from locally owned and women-owned businesses, and a dynamic celebration of our mission. We were honored to showcase our scholarship recipients and highlight our accomplishments from the year.

The event drew League members, community partners, and friends, all coming together to support the JLC's work in public health and its continued volunteer, training, and financial support efforts throughout Cleveland. Thanks to the generosity of attendees and sponsors, Spring Together raised over \$17,000 for the Annual Fund, helping fuel our impact in the year ahead.

We are grateful for the support of our Title Sponsor, Parker Hannifin; Gold Sponsors, Anthem BlueCross BlueShield, Frantz Ward, and Three D Metals; Silver Sponsors, Third Federal Savings & Loan, Dominic Zunis Memorial Foundation, Cleveland Wealth, Joy's Roller Rink, and FGMK; Bronze Sponsors, Overdrive and Oceanne; and Table Sponsors, Gateway Recycling, Femme Force, and Home Care by Callos. Their partnership made it possible to host an event that not only celebrated our members and mission but also strengthened our ability to invest in the community.

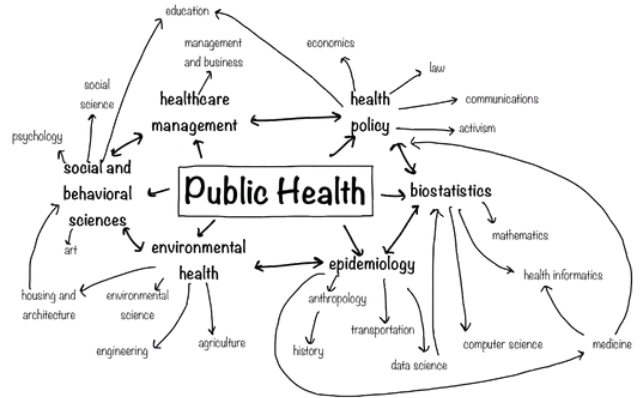
Spring Together 2025 proved that when passion meets purpose, the results are extraordinary, and we look forward to continuing to build on this momentum in the years to come.



# COMMUNITY IMPACT

## A New Direction for Lasting Impact

In May 2023, the Junior League of Cleveland Board of Directors approved a bold new five-year strategic plan, guiding our work through 2028. At the heart of this plan is our new signature impact area: Public Health. But what does public health mean? Public health is the science of protecting and improving the health of people and their communities. It covers everything from access to food and healthcare to education and community wellness. Our Community Committee identified five sub-impact areas to focus and foster partnerships, relationships, and volunteer opportunities for members:



- Children, Families & Women
- Food Insecurity
- Maternal Health
- Education (e.g., Literacy)
- Health & Wellness (e.g., Mental Health, Community Support)



## Signature Initiative: Seasonal Essential Kits

This year, the Junior League of Cleveland launched its signature initiative, Seasonal Essential Kits, designed to meet immediate needs in alignment with our public health focus.

Working alongside community partners, members assembled and distributed kits filled with seasonal necessities. Kits were placed at the TLC Giving Fence outside Trinity Lutheran Church in Ohio City and hygiene kits were delivered to the women at the Norma Herr Women's Shelter. This initiative reflects our mission of providing hands-on support and addressing critical needs in our community year-round.

## Inaugural Black Maternal Health Panel

On April 15, 2025, the Junior League of Cleveland, in partnership with First Year Cleveland, Village of Healing CLE, and the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Cleveland Chapter, hosted the Collective Action and Advocacy for Black Maternal Health in Cleveland panel.

Moderated by Sustainer Member Valissa Turner Howard, Esq., panelists Angela Newman-White, Dana Langford, and Dionne Jones led an insightful discussion focused on the power of advocacy, collaboration, and action in improving Black maternal health outcomes.

This inaugural event, held in honor of Black Maternal Health Week (April 11-17), marked an important step in our work toward equity and community health education.

# COMMUNITY IMPACT



## Hands-On Community Support

Throughout the year, Junior League of Cleveland members engaged in Done-in-a-Day (DIAD) service opportunities, giving their time and talent to organizations aligned with our public health focus:

- Greater Cleveland Food Bank Resource Hub – assisting community members as they shopped for groceries and household necessities
- Cleveland Kids’ Book Bank – sorting and distributing gently used books for classrooms and community centers
- Ronald McDonald House of Northeast Ohio – supporting families with hospitalized children
- Lutheran Metropolitan Ministries and YWCA of Greater Cleveland – assisting with essential needs and community programming
- Holiday Cards for Senior Citizens – spreading joy and personal connection to local assisted living residents



## Moving Forward

From launching our Seasonal Essential Kits initiative to hosting our first Black Maternal Health Panel, JLC members put action behind our mission. By investing in partnerships, amplifying voices, and giving our time and energy, we are laying a strong foundation for meaningful impact in public health—and building healthier, stronger communities for all.

## Community Partner Spotlight: Northeast Ohio Black Health Coalition

Our 2024-2025 Community Partner, the Northeast Ohio Black Health Coalition (NEOBHC), addresses the cumulative impact of racial, economic, environmental, and social justice inequities on African American health outcomes. Their mission to empower, educate, and advocate for health equity aligns perfectly with our public health focus.

This year, JLC volunteers supported NEOBHC at two major events:

- African American Women’s Wellness Walk – September 14, 2024
- Minority Health Awareness Resource Fair – April 2025

We are proud to stand alongside NEOBHC in promoting equitable health outcomes and advancing community wellness.



# SCHOLARSHIP

In 2025, the Junior League of Cleveland awarded \$13,500 in scholarships to five extraordinary women pursuing higher education and career advancement across Northeast Ohio. This year's recipients reflect the mission of the League: empowered women driving lasting community change. The 2025 scholarship cycle expanded more than accessibility, it strengthened infrastructure for equity, connection, and impact.

## 2025 JLC Scholarship Recipients

*Chandra Bastola*

Baldwin Wallace University

\$5,000 Scholarship

*LaMyja Jernigan*

The University of Akron

\$3,000 Scholarship

*La Donna Harris*

Cleveland State University

\$2,000 Scholarship

*Paula Portis*

Tiffin University

\$2,000 Scholarship

*Chanel Williams*

Cleveland State University

\$1,500 Scholarship



# ANNUAL FUND DONORS

## Founding Year

\$19.12

Mary Ellen Huesken

Aparna Pillay

Jennifer Outland

Lakisha Wingard

## Supporter

\$10-\$99

Lin Bartel

Cynthia Clemenshaw

Kimberly Liddell

Cynthia Bassett

Sally Conley

Alicia Love

Katherine Beder

Jennifer Dieringer

Marjorie Moore

Jeanie Belhobek

Jean Gilbert

Heather Nielson

Sheila Markley Black

Jean Heller

## Friend

\$100-\$249

Christine Arvay

Patricia Corna

Joyce Litzler

Mary Seay

Maddie Berry

Josephine Hesse

Susan Majka

Therese Steffens Rivers

Nancy Carpenter

Gretchen Hickock

Majorie Moyar

Jackie Tomsic

Margot Copeland

Judith Kamm

Leslie O'Malley

# MAGNOLIA SOCIETY DONORS

## Silver Level

\$250-\$499

Joan Ainsworth  
Jen Bensi  
Lucinda Farina  
Barbara Kakiris

Jill Mahar  
Lisa Mayhugh  
Petra Moran

## Gold Level

\$500-\$999

Ann Bowdish  
Jeannie Citerman Kraeger  
Susan Larson  
Jocelyn Ruf  
Sally Schulze, PhD

## Platinum Level

\$1000+

Paul Fritzsche & Mary Hancock Fritzsche  
Carolyn Oakes

Gregory & Denise Reiser, in honor of their daughter, Laura Bentley  
Karen Strang & Donald Strang Charitable Gift Fund

# Awards & Recognitions

## AJLI 40 OVER 40



The Junior League of Cleveland proudly honors Barbara Kakiris as one of the Association of Junior Leagues International's inaugural 40 Over 40 Award winners—an honor given to just 40 leaders from 297 Leagues across six countries.

She was honored with fellow 40 Over 40 recipients at the AJLI Annual Conference in Orlando on May 29, 2025

# JLC ANNUAL AWARDS RECIPIENTS



*Marjorie Moyar*  
**Sustainer Service Award**

For over 40 years, Marjorie Moyar has dedicated her life to improving our community through tireless service and innovative leadership. As a licensed psychologist, she played a pivotal role in establishing the Hitchcock Center for Women, the first center in Ohio allowing women recovering from substance abuse to receive treatment while keeping their children with them, and served as its first board chair. She also founded the Susan Larson Scholarship, co-founded the Junior League Investment Club, and received the prestigious Ruth T. Lucas Award in 1979 for her exceptional volunteerism. Beyond the League, she created Women Who Care About Breast Cancer to support groundbreaking breast cancer vaccine research, now in human trials, driven by her personal experience with the disease and her hope for future generations. Marjorie's enduring impact and commitment to service embody the very best of the Junior League of Cleveland.



*Maddie Berry*  
**Rising Star Award**

This year's Rising Star Award honoree, Maddie Berry, has made an extraordinary impact, most notably as the Spring Together Event Chair, where she reimagined and elevated the event into the League's most elaborate, meaningful, and profitable fundraiser to date. Maddie brought unmatched creativity, strategic vision, and a deep sense of purpose to her role—introducing new vendors and community partners, expanding our reach, and incorporating dynamic entertainment that transformed the guest experience. Her thoughtful approach, innovation, and collaborative spirit exemplify the spirit of this award and highlight her tremendous potential as a future leader in the League.



*Denise Coats*  
**Ruth T. Lucas Award**

With a legacy of transformative leadership and a passion for service, Denise Coats is the recipient of this year's Ruth T. Lucas Award. As Chair of the Community Research and Development Committee, she revamped the RFP process to align with strategic priorities and community partner feedback, setting a new benchmark for accountability and innovation. In her professional role as Director of Human Resources at the YWCA, Denise fosters inclusive workplace cultures and builds impactful community partnerships, bringing that same expertise and dedication to her League service. Her creativity, compassion, and commitment to excellence embody the spirit of Ruth T. Lucas, inspiring all who have the privilege to work alongside her.

# JLC ANNUAL AWARDS RECIPIENTS



*Rachael Paskvan*  
**Frances Payne Bolton Award**

This year's Frances Payne Bolton Award honoree, Rachael Paskvan, is a distinguished leader and advocate for women's empowerment whose impact spans local and global stages. With over 15 years of experience driving enterprise growth, building high-performing international teams, and advancing global sustainability initiatives—including collaborations with the United Nations and World Economic Forum—she exemplifies excellence, service, and leadership. A recognized expert in security, logistics, and operational risk management, Rachael has consistently delivered results while fostering inclusive, people-centered workplaces. Beyond her corporate achievements, she founded Femme Force, a platform and podcast dedicated to amplifying women's voices and building authentic leadership. Her visionary leadership and dedication to uplifting others embody the spirit and legacy of Frances Payne Bolton.



*Jackie Taylor*  
**Carolyn K. Oakes Award**

The 2025 Carolyn K. Oakes Award honors Jackie Taylor, a leader who embodies the spirit of thoughtful, inclusive leadership that defines this award. As Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, Jackie has strengthened the League's DEIB efforts, established the President's Access Fund to eliminate financial barriers for members, and fostered a culture where every member feels seen, heard, and valued. Her empathy, integrity, and strategic vision have been transformative for both the League and the broader Cleveland community, making her a truly deserving recipient of this year's award.



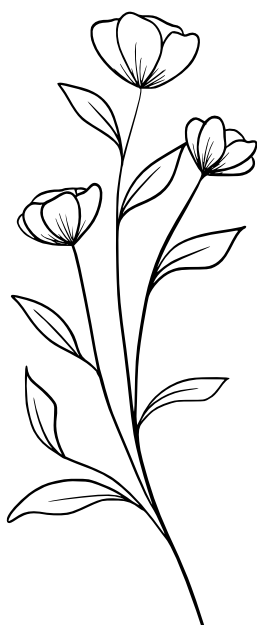
**President's Award**

The President's Award, presented for the first time since 2017, recognizes The Cleveland Foundation for its instrumental role in advancing the projects and programs of the Junior League of Cleveland. Founded in 1914 as the world's first community foundation, The Cleveland Foundation has long shared our mission to enhance the lives of Greater Cleveland residents through philanthropy, community leadership, and long-term investment in our region. This year, the Junior League of Cleveland partnered with The Cleveland Foundation to establish the Junior League of Cleveland Community Fund, ensuring stable investments, access to planned giving expertise, and a philanthropic advisor to guide our future growth. This partnership strengthens our financial foundation and expands our capacity to serve, making The Cleveland Foundation a deserving recipient.

# IN MEMORIAM:

Carolyn K. Oakes

03/07/1938 - 01/31/2025



This year, we honor the memory of Carolyn Oakes, an emeriti member whose leadership and service to the Junior League of Cleveland left a lasting legacy. Carolyn embodied the power of women working together to create meaningful change, serving the League with dedication, wisdom, and a spirit of collaboration that inspired generations of members. Her name lives on through the Carolyn K. Oakes Award, which recognizes those who demonstrate exceptional leadership and commitment to advancing our mission—values Carolyn modeled throughout her lifetime. While we will deeply miss her warm presence at meetings and events, her impact will continue to shape our League and community for years to come.



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