

# THE LARIAT

*Junior League of Fort Worth*





Debra and Vernell Sturns at Western Hills Elementary

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# CONTENTS

## PLACEMENTS

- 10.....Casa Mañana: Theatre for All
- 11.....Compassionate Care with Community Healthcare of Texas
- 17.....Fort Worth Drowning Prevention Coalition: Knowledge Saves Lives
- 23.....Suds and Smiles: Laundry Love Makes a Difference
- 25.....Combating Food Insecurity with Tarrant Area Food Bank



## PROJECTS

- 16.....The Cliburn: A Fort Worth Tradition, Enriched by JLFW
- 21.....Building a Legacy with Rivertree Academy
- 27.....Hands and Hearts in Service: JLFW Partners with VOA



## FEATURES

- 12.....Christmas in Cowtown: Shopping for a Cause, Investing in Our Community
- 18.....Meet the 2025 - 2026 Board of Directors
- 20.....Building Skills for League Leadership with JLFW's Leadership Academy
- 22.....Leadership Elevated: The JLFW-Neeley Partnership
- 24.....Sustainer Evening Literary Society: 21 Years of Friendship and Great Reads
- 26.....Finding a Home in Fort Worth: The JLFW Transfer Experience



## DEPARTMENTS

- 5.....President's Perspective
- 15.....Gittings Spotlight
- 28.....Life in the League



Welcome to the first issue of *The Lariat* for the 2025–2026 year! I am thrilled to serve as the 96th President of the Junior League of Fort Worth. It is both an honor and a joy to lead such an extraordinary organization as we continue our journey of impact and service in this community we love. It's with even more enthusiasm that I get to serve alongside 11 other amazing women who make up our Board of Directors.

This year, our theme, **Noble Leadership Through Majestic Service**, guides everything we do. It is a call to lead with integrity, serve with compassion, and lift others through meaningful action. **Noble Leadership** encourages members to lead with honor and inspire others through their principled actions. It highlights the importance of women taking on leadership roles, influencing positive change, and setting a powerful example for others. **Majestic Service** emphasizes serving the community with kindness, understanding, and a deep sense of empathy. It shows Excellence in action, reflecting a commitment to high-quality service, ensuring that all our efforts are impactful and beneficial to the community. Every day, I see our members embody this theme in ways both big and small, and it fills me with pride and gratitude.

*The Lariat* is one of the most special ways we share our story. Each page is lovingly crafted by our talented contributors, who bring forward the heart and energy of our League. Their efforts highlight not only what we do, but also why we do it, and the incredible women who make it all possible. In this issue, you'll find features on some of the hallmark elements of our year, like **Christmas in Cowtown**, new projects like Volunteers of America Treatment Center Renewal Project, placements such as Fort Worth Drowning Prevention and most importantly, our members.

From long-standing traditions to exciting new initiatives, this issue celebrates the collective spirit that makes the Junior League of Fort Worth such a powerful force for good.

As we celebrate our **96th year**, I am struck by the enduring legacy of those who came before us and inspired by the path we are building for the next generation. Together, we are writing another chapter in the remarkable history of the Junior League of Fort Worth, one that reflects our unwavering mission and vision for a brighter future.

Thank you for your commitment, your energy, and your majestic service. I am truly honored to serve alongside each of you.

With gratitude and excitement,

*Shay Sipson*

2025–2026 PRESIDENT



## ABOUT THE

# Junior League of Fort Worth



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Libby Maness, Assistant Editor  
Julia Sebesta, Writer  
Caroline Cobert, Writer

Eva S. Williams, Contributor  
Shay Gipson, Contributor  
Barry Rodges, Graphic Designer

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communications.vp@juniorleaguefw.org

### Junior League of Fort Worth Staff

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Mary Lou Hilliard, Fund Development Administrator  
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## MISSION

The Junior League of Fort Worth, Inc. is an organization of women whose mission is to advance women's leadership for meaningful community impact through volunteer action, collaboration, and training. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable.

## VISION

The Junior League of Fort Worth, Inc. will strive to improve our community by directing our resources to positively impact the well-being of children and families by providing a legacy of trained volunteers.

## OUR COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The Junior League welcomes all women who value our Mission. We are committed to inclusive environments of diverse individuals, organizations and communities.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# Find the Good DAY



## September's GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING



Noble Moments • MAJESTIC SHOTS • Noble Moments • MAJESTIC SHOTS • Noble Moments



# CASA MAÑANA: THEATRE FOR ALL

by Caroline Cobert

**On Thursday nights at Casa Mañana, the stage lights shine a little brighter. Inside the All-Abilities Theatre class, students ages 14 to 40 sing, dance and laugh as they bring Broadway magic to life. The joy builds toward their winter showcase Dec. 15 and a special spring performance just for the All-Abilities class.**

For the past three years, Junior League of Fort Worth volunteers have joined the program each week, offering encouragement and support.

“We support their students as they engage in musical theatre during trainings and performances so they feel empowered and have a sense of belonging,” said JLFW Team Lead **Claire Berthold**.

Casa Mañana has offered All-Abilities classes for more than 25 years, welcoming students with special needs, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and social or sensory differences. The program’s instructors, alongside JLFW volunteers, work to help each student reach their potential — whether that’s mastering a song, perfecting a dance step or simply feeling at home in the spotlight.

In 2023, Casa Mañana received a JLFW project grant that helped make the theatre school more inclusive by funding an ADA-compliant wheelchair ramp and restrooms. The improvements have opened the doors wider for students, families and caregivers alike.

Casa Mañana’s mission is to make the performing arts accessible to all. With the League’s ongoing support, students not only take the stage but also find confidence, connection and community — proving that everyone deserves their moment in the spotlight. 🎭

## COMPASSIONATE CARE

by Caroline Cobert

### *with Community Healthcare of Texas*

Last year, the Junior League of Fort Worth invested \$35,000 in Community Healthcare of Texas’ Dove Love Project, an initiative that provides emotional and spiritual support to hospice patients and their families. This year, the nonprofit remains a League placement.

Through shared meals and legacy activities, JLFW volunteers help patients and families navigate end-of-life care, offering empathy and comfort.

“Our role is to be a supportive presence, approaching patients and families as friends,” said Team Lead **Devontee Rayford**. “We create

activities that spark conversation and connection, focusing on companionship rather than their situation. It’s about being a buddy, bringing comfort, and making each visit meaningful.”

“I’m deeply honored to lead this placement,” Devontee said. “I believe this is a time to celebrate life, build friendships, and offer unwavering support. My hope is to create an environment where patients and families feel truly seen, heard and valued.”

JLFW volunteers not only lead activities and serve meals but also assist with Life Celebrations and

Last Wish events. These events allow patients and families to create lasting memories together. Community Healthcare says these programs “help patients live fully while spending valuable time with their loved ones and friends.”

“This placement can be emotional, but the impact is immeasurable,” Devontee said. “My goal this year is to make our placement feel even more like a circle of friendship, offering engaging activities, recording life stories and hosting supportive events.”

“Our presence is active, visible and impactful,” Devontee added. 🌱





# CHRISTMAS IN COWTOWN

## Sparkled as a Holiday Tradition

by Julia Sebasta

**E**ach October, the Junior League of Fort Worth ushers in the holiday season with its signature event, the *Christmas in Cowtown Holiday Gift Market*. In its 19th year, the Market cemented its place as a Fort Worth tradition, attracting thousands of shoppers eager to find the perfect gifts while supporting a greater cause.

Held at the Amon G. Carter Jr. Exhibit Halls at Will Rogers Memorial Center, the four-day *Market* featured more than 250 merchants from across the United States. From home décor and children’s toys to gourmet foods, jewelry and fashion, the *Market* offered something for everyone on a holiday list. Guests who wanted to start their shopping early could attend the Preview Party or Private Shopping event, both of

which provided exclusive access, festive bites and an extra touch of holiday sparkle.

*Christmas in Cowtown* is more than a shopping destination, though. It has stood as the Junior League’s largest annual fundraiser, raising nearly \$9 million since its inception. Every ticket purchased and every merchant booth visited directly supports JLFW’s mission

to train women leaders and fund community projects across Tarrant County. Proceeds fueled initiatives in arts and culture, education, health and nutrition, and life readiness, impacting thousands of local children and families.


The *Market* also provided an opportunity to spotlight JLFW’s nonprofit partners, such as ACH Child and Family Services and the

Tarrant Area Food Bank. Guests not only enjoyed the holiday spirit but also learned about organizations making a difference in the community.

Behind the scenes, League members devoted thousands of volunteer hours to ensure the *Market’s* success. From coordinating merchants to managing logistics, selling tickets and welcoming shoppers, their efforts created a seamless experience.

Co-Chairs **Alexis Craig** and **Leann Bender**, who described themselves as “CIC die-hards,” reflected on the meaning of their role. “Co-chairing this fundraiser has meant so much more than just organizing an event — it’s a reflection of our

commitment to a cause we deeply care about,” they said.

This year’s *Christmas in Cowtown* once again proved to be more than a market. It was a celebration of community, collaboration and the lasting impact of the Junior League of Fort Worth. 



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**SHAY GIPSON, PRESIDENT**

With gratitude and excitement, Shay Gipson steps into her role as President of the Junior League of Fort Worth, seeing it as both a milestone and a calling.

A Fort Worth native and Texas Wesleyan University alumna, Shay has been a League member since 2017 and serves professionally as Vice President of Community Engagement at Goodwill North Central Texas. At home, she enjoys life with her husband, Gerald; son, Trey; two adult bonus children; three grandchildren; and their dog, Enoch.

Calling the presidency “a huge honor,” Shay hopes to expand JLFW’s visibility and guide a new strategic plan that reflects the community’s voice.

“Whether provisional or sustainer, I’ve been enriched by women who lead with empathy, grace, and joy,” she said. Her advice to future leaders: “Nominate yourself—don’t be afraid to put yourself out there.”

**CHELSEA JAMES, MEMBERSHIP VICE PRESIDENT**

Chelsea James has found countless ways to serve through the Junior League of Fort Worth, and now brings that experience to her role as Membership Vice President.

A member since 2015, Chelsea’s passion for investing in people inspired her to step into leadership. “I want our members to understand how the League works and know they have access to leadership for support and guidance,” she said.

She originally joined to connect with Fort Worth and support local causes but found a community of women who share her heart for service. One of her most memorable roles was serving as Provisional Co-Chair during the pandemic, helping new members find their place in challenging times.

Now, she leads the Membership Council, which supports new and sustaining members and helps volunteers connect with meaningful placements. Her advice to future leaders: “Be bold, authentic, and embrace servant leadership. Say yes—even if it wasn’t your first choice.”



**SAVANNAH PETRONIS, FINANCE VICE PRESIDENT**

For Savannah Petronis, the Junior League of Fort Worth has been more than volunteer service — it’s been a decade of growth, connection, and purpose. Now serving as Finance Vice President, she uses her professional expertise to strengthen the League’s financial health and mission.

A DFW native and UT Austin graduate with an MBA from SMU, Savannah works as a certified financial planner with Baird Private Wealth Management. At home, she and her husband, Richie, stay busy with their three children — Campbell, Keen, and Esther — and their chocolate lab, June Carter Cash.

Savannah saw the Finance VP role as the best way to add value: “I decided this was where I could contribute my strengths and took the plunge.” Beyond budgets and investments, she values the relationships built through League service.

“It’s opened my eyes to so many good things happening in this city and connected me with amazing, like-minded women,” she said.



# FORT WORTH COMES ALIVE

for the Van Cliburn Piano Competition

by Julia Sebasta

**Every four years, Fort Worth transforms into a global stage for the world's most talented emerging pianists during the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. The city's historic Bass Performance Hall and Van Cliburn Concert Hall at Texas Christian University host performances that draw audiences from around the world, both in person and online.**

The 2025 competition, held May 21–June 7, featured 28 pianists from more than 15 countries. After preliminary and semifinal rounds at TCU, six finalists performed two concertos each with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra at Bass Hall. Hong Kong's Aristo Sham captured the gold medal, while Russia's Vitaly Starikov and American Evren Ozel earned silver and bronze.

Fort Worth fully embraces the event, turning into “piano city” with public art installations, pop-up shops, themed merchandise and livestreams reaching over 20 million viewers in 145 countries. The city hums with excitement as music lovers gather to witness artistry at its finest.

The Junior League of Fort Worth has been a longtime partner of The Cliburn, contributing through fundraising, volunteer service and support of educational programming. Volunteers staff the Cliburn Shop, manage digital

orders, and provide critical behind-the-scenes assistance to ensure a seamless experience for audiences and participants alike. This year, the League of Fort Worth invested **\$25,000** to help underwrite essential concert production costs. These funds supported lighting, sound, piano technicians, artists, rental fees for venues, instruments, and other supporting concert equipment.

**Claire Jones**, JLFW's Project Development Chair for The Cliburn, said her favorite part of the competition is “catching all the Cliburn buzz around town, and enjoying performances alongside our volunteers and sustainers. JLFW members really do make The Cliburn happen!”

Through their continued dedication, the Junior League strengthens Fort Worth's cultural life, helping the city shine as a center for musical excellence and giving the community a shared moment of pride, passion and piano. 🎹

## Fort Worth Drowning Prevention Coalition: KNOWLEDGE SAVES LIVES

by Caroline Cobert

**Texas leads the nation in pool drowning deaths, and Tarrant County ranks third in the state for pediatric drownings. Drowning is the second-leading cause of accidental death for children under 14 and the fifth-leading cause for adults.**

The Fort Worth Drowning Prevention Coalition, established in 2012, works to prevent these tragedies. This year, the group introduced a new slogan: “2 seconds is 2 long.”

“It only takes seconds for someone to drown,” said Team Lead **Michelle Rivera**. “When we are at a pool or lake, always make sure someone is ‘on duty’ watching.”

Each summer, the coalition hosts events around Fort Worth, teaching water safety, CPR, and emergency response. In-water instruction helps even hesitant swimmers gain confidence.

“Over two weeks, we saw kids who were afraid to put their faces in the water become competent swimmers,” Michelle said. “The joy and sense of accomplishment on their faces was incredible.”

Junior League of Fort Worth volunteers now make up the majority of FWDPC instructors. This year, youth “water buddies” supported JLFW members, amplifying the reach of the program.

“We don't always get to see the direct impact of our efforts,” Michelle said. “Here, we do. We get to save lives.”

More than 500 students attended this summer's events, leaving families better prepared and children safer in and around the water. 🏊‍♀️



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# MAJESTIC LEADERSHIP:

## *Inside JLFW's 2025-2026 Board of Directors*

**The Junior League of Fort Worth has welcomed its 2025-2026 Board of Directors under the inspiring theme, “Noble Leadership through Majestic Service.” The motto reflects a vision of leadership rooted in dignity, compassion, and a steadfast commitment to community impact.**

“It aligns perfectly with the mission of the Junior League, which is to advance women’s leadership for

meaningful community impact,” said President Shay Gipson. “This motto reflects the heart of our work.”

The 12-member Board brings a wealth of experience and perspective, balancing careers, families, and volunteer commitments while guiding JLFW’s strategic direction. Many have chaired major League initiatives, including Christmas in Cowtown, Training, and Community Council projects. Most are graduates of the All aBoard program, which prepares members for service on external

nonprofit boards, and now bring that knowledge back to strengthen League governance.

### LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

**Leslie Ford**, Community Vice President, for example, has spent years managing complex volunteer projects and brings that organizational skill to oversee JLFW’s community initiatives. The Vice President of Membership, **Chelsea James**, leverages her previous experience on Membership Council to help members navigate their roles in the League. Finance VP **Savannah**

**Petronis** applies her professional expertise to maintain the League’s financial health, while Education VP **Holly Hinsey** helps design programs to ensure every member has the tools to succeed. As Communications VP, **Eva S. Williams** ensures that the League is consistently telling its story well and **Jordan Stimpson**, Admin VP, diligently works with staff, ensuring operations are successful. **Kendall Riddell** works with all our fundraising teams to bring revenue and **Kristi Brhlik** sets up the League for years to come as the Nominating Chair. **Alli D’Acosta**, President Elect, and **Jenna**

**Cox**, Assistant Finance VP are eagerly making plans for the next League year and **Elizabeth Kuckley** is providing guidance for the entire board as the Sustaining Advisor. Each Board member brings a unique perspective, ensuring decisions are thoughtful, inclusive, and reflective of JLFW’s mission.

### CONNECTION + COLLABORATION

The Board meets monthly to oversee operations, followed by “Royal Reports,” Board Briefs inspired by Bridgerton’s Lady Whistledown, keeping members informed with updates, decisions,

and insights. Earlier this year, the Board bonded during a retreat that combined strategic planning, governance and communication trainings, and even a tea party and a friendly game of mahjong.

Together, the 2025-2026 Board exemplifies the best of JLFW: women motivated by service, guided by integrity, and committed to empowering others. They set a standard for leadership that inspires members across the League and strengthens Fort Worth’s community, proving that a little majesty goes a long way. 

# LEVELING UP:

*The JLFW Leadership Academy Prepares Members to Lead*

by Caroline Cobert

**For Junior League of Fort Worth members eager to grow as leaders, the Leadership Academy offers a pathway to develop skills, build confidence and take an active role in shaping the League's future.**

"All aBoard focuses on board service outside the League," said Training Co-Chair **Kari Teigen**. "The JLFW Leadership Academy is for members who want to step into leadership within JLFW." After the success of All aBoard, a program tailored specifically to League leadership was long overdue.

With nearly 2,000 members, the Leadership Academy provides a structured way for participants to demonstrate their interest in leadership, Kari said. Members begin with three foundational classes covering the League's strategic plan, technical training in Microsoft 365 and other communication tools. From there, they can choose from

four focus tracks to dive deeper into areas such as finance, membership or other functional specialties.

Co-Chairs Kari and **Lizzy Sutton** emphasize that the program is flexible. "The Leadership Academy is not designed to be completed in a year," they said. "Some members choose to move quickly, but we offer all courses annually and repeat them." Completion of a focus track earns a certificate and equips members with skills that extend beyond League service, including professional growth and career development.



Upcoming sessions this fall include **Financial Planning and Investing 101**, led by Finance VP **Savannah Petronis** on Nov. 13, and **New Member Recruitment & Sponsorship**, taught by Assistant Provisional Co-Chairs on Dec. 4.

By providing members with the tools, knowledge and confidence to lead, the Leadership Academy helps ensure that JLFW remains strong, vibrant and ready to continue its impact in the Fort Worth community for years to come. 📖

# NURTURING LEADERS:

*JLFW Partners with Rivertree Academy*

by Julia Sebasta

**Nestled in Fort Worth's Lake Como neighborhood, Rivertree Academy has spent the past decade growing into more than a school—it's a community dedicated to shaping young leaders. Serving students from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, Rivertree opened its doors in 2015 with just 46 students. By 2025, enrollment had nearly doubled to about 90, with a 13-to-1 student-teacher ratio and a faith-based curriculum focused on character, leadership, and whole-child education. In January, the school unified its campus into a single facility, bringing all students under one roof for the first time.**



Rivertree's mission—to "Learn Well, Love Well, Work Well, and Lead Well"—guides every classroom and program, with scholarship support ensuring low-income families can access the school's offerings.

The Junior League of Fort Worth has been a longtime partner, supporting Rivertree financially and through hands-on volunteerism. Recently, the League awarded \$50,000 toward the school's Capital Campaign Project and continues to provide volunteers for year-round enrichment and nutrition programs. JLFW members help plan Service Saturdays, mentor students at lunch or after school, and

operate a garden that gives children hands-on learning opportunities.

"Rivertree's mission speaks directly to the impact I want to have on those around me," said Project Development Chair **Haley Wagner**. "The staff is incredibly dedicated, and our volunteers are excited to support their work."

Through this partnership, JLFW not only helps strengthen Rivertree's programs but also advances its own mission: empowering women to lead while making a meaningful impact in the Fort Worth community. Together, they are cultivating confident, young leaders ready to make a difference. 📖

Leadership Elevated:  
**THE JLFW-NEELEY PARTNERSHIP**

by Julia Sebasta



**The Junior League of Fort Worth has always focused on developing women as leaders and creating meaningful community impact. Through its partnership with Texas Christian University’s Neeley School of Business, League members now have a unique opportunity to grow personally and professionally through the TCU Neely MBA JLFW Scholarship Partnership.**

The Partnership equips selected members with advanced business knowledge, leadership skills, and strategic thinking abilities while providing scholarship support for their Master of Business Administration. Full-time scholars can receive up to \$120,000 in tuition and fees, while part-time participants may receive up to \$20,000. Participants navigate TCU’s rigorous curriculum, engage with business leaders, and benefit from mentorship from expert faculty.

“The MBA Scholars Program allows members to bring new skills and perspectives back to the League and their communities,” said **Eva S. Williams**, JLFW Communications Vice President and TCU Neeley Program Graduate. “It strengthens both individual leaders and the work we do as a League.” Applications are competitive, and candidates are selected after an admissions process and an interview with the League President and President Elect. **Sarra Kadri**

was the League’s first scholarship recipient, setting a precedent for excellence and leadership. By combining the League’s community focus with TCU’s academic excellence, the partnership fosters a culture of learning, mentorship, and impact. Through this program, JLFW invests not only in the growth of individual women but also in the future of civic leadership, ensuring that strong, capable leaders continue to advance the Fort Worth community for years to come. 📖

*Suds & Smiles:*  
**JLFW VOLUNTEERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE AT LAUNDRY LOVE**

by Caroline Cobert

**For most people, laundry is a chore. For Junior League of Fort Worth volunteers at Laundry Love, it’s an opportunity for fellowship and community connection. Events are held the first and third Saturdays of each month.**

“Anyone is welcome to join our committee and volunteer their time,” said Team Lead **Sydney Hanes**.

Laundry Love is a national organization, but the Fort Worth chapter is relatively new.

“The Fort Worth chapter began after two women had a conversation about a young student who was bullied because



she did not have clean clothes to wear to school,” Sydney said. “Through JLFW, Laundry Love Fort Worth has received funds and volunteers, which has allowed them to grow their impact.”

The organization aims to make its events inclusive and uplifting. Volunteers do more than help with laundry—they build a network of care and support.

“At each event, our clients’ worth and dignity are acknowledged and celebrated in a stress-free environment,” a Laundry Love representative said.

Volunteers also provide childcare, serve light meals, and organize arts and crafts for children. Meals, snacks, and drinks are offered so participants can relax in an environment that might otherwise feel intimidating. Volunteers are encouraged to engage with attendees.

“What I love most about working with Laundry Love is having the chance to get to know the clients,” Sydney said. “Interacting with them gives us a chance to connect, listen, and make them feel valued and loved. Their inspiring personalities and courageous stories motivate us to do more.” 📖



# SUSTAINER EVENING LITERARY SOCIETY:

## *21 Years of Friendship and Great Reads*

by Caroline Cobert

For 21 years, the Sustainer Evening Literary Society has brought together Junior League of Fort Worth members who share a love of reading—and a passion for connecting with one another. As the League’s longest-running special interest group, the society continues to thrive, proving that books and fellowship are a timeless combination.

“There are actually two Sustainer book clubs,” said **Mary Kaye Juran**. “One meets during the day and the other in the evening.” The flexible schedule allows members to participate regardless of their busy lives.

This year, the group is adding new dimensions to its gatherings. Members have suggested local author talks, tours of Fort Worth’s cultural landmarks, and visits to bookstores. A recent guided tour of the Amon Carter Museum of American Art drew record

attendance and glowing reviews, highlighting the group’s love of learning beyond the pages of a book.

Recent selections have included *The Reading List* by Sarah Nisha Adams, *Heaven and Earth* Grocery Store by James McBride, and *The Teacher* by Frida McFadden. September’s pick, *Stories from the Tenants Downstairs*, promises another lively discussion. Monthly selections are shared in League Lines, keeping members connected and engaged.

Meetings are warm and inviting. Wine is provided by the hostess, while members share appetizers or salads, creating a relaxed environment for conversation and connection.

After more than two decades, the Sustainer Evening Literary Society continues to demonstrate that great books paired with great company make for an enriching and enduring experience—one that members eagerly look forward to month after month. 📖



## *with Tarrant Area Food Bank*

by Caroline Cobert

**Texas leads the nation in food insecurity, with the Dallas-Fort Worth area ranking third for residents experiencing hunger. The Tarrant Area Food Bank, established in 1982, has been at the forefront of addressing this critical need, serving 13 counties through more than 500 community partnerships and becoming one of the state’s largest providers of food assistance.**

Recent headlines highlight the growing challenge of food insecurity. Rising food costs and reduced or canceled federal aid programs have affected families across the country. In response,

TAFB has emphasized that while federal support may fluctuate, local needs remain constant. One-third of the people served by the food bank are children, underscoring the importance of consistent access to nutritious meals.

Junior League of Fort Worth volunteers play a vital role in supporting TAFB’s mission. Members staff mobile food bank events and other community programs, distributing food and providing direct assistance. In early August, a Mobile Pantry event served 750 families. Past events have reached 100 to 200 people directly, with four to five times that number benefiting from the food distributed.

For JLFW, partnering with TAFB is about more than handing out groceries. “This placement allows members to see firsthand how their service addresses one of the community’s greatest challenges,” said **Lauren Matthews**, TAFB Team Lead. Volunteers help families access essential nutrition, support children’s growth and learning, and strengthen families across Fort Worth.

Through this ongoing partnership, JLFW continues its mission to empower women leaders while creating meaningful community impact—ensuring that families facing hunger receive immediate relief and that children have the resources to thrive. 🍎

# FINDING HOME IN FORT WORTH:

## *The JLFW Transfer Experience*

by Julia Sebesta



**Life often brings changes—whether for a new job, to be closer to family, or to explore new experiences. For members of the Junior League of Fort Worth, joining a new community is made easier through the League’s Transfer Program. With nearly 300 local chapters across the United States, the program allows members to transfer between leagues and quickly become involved in their new communities.**

The Transfer Program introduces new members to JLFW’s community projects, in-League fundraisers, and service activities. Each year, Transfer Co-Chairs organize events so newcomers can meet fellow transfers and active members. Successfully completing the program fulfills a member’s

placement requirements for the year.

Transfer requirements include attending four transfer events—such as socials or activities like candle-making classes—two general membership meetings, two trainings, shifts at Christmas in Cowtown and the Fort Worth Rodeo, participation in a Day of Giving, and completion of two Done-in-a-Day service projects.

These activities provide transfers with a well-rounded experience, helping

them identify where they would like to serve as active members in the following League year.

I myself completed my transfer year last year after I moved to Fort Worth from Houston. Having also completed a transfer year in another league, I can say that JLFW does

an amazing job! Our transfer chair at the time, Alli D’Acosta, made sure we all felt plugged in with JLFW as a whole and supported us throughout the year to meet our requirements. It made for a seamless transition into a regular active year!

Through the Transfer Program, JLFW ensures that women relocating to Fort Worth can immediately contribute to the community while building meaningful connections with fellow members. 🙌

# Projects: VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA

by Julia Sebesta

**In the Fort Worth area, Volunteers of America operates the Riverside Treatment Center, which provides essential support to individuals facing addiction, homelessness and crisis. As part of its current Community Projects, the Junior League of Fort Worth selected the center for a major partnership, granting \$100,000 and providing six volunteers to support the Treatment Center Renewal Project.**

The partnership reflects the League’s mission to harness volunteerism and collaborative action to address pressing social needs in Tarrant County. The Riverside Treatment Center serves vulnerable populations through therapeutic, residential and recovery programs. The Renewal Project aims to enhance client outcomes through facility upgrades, program improvements and supportive infrastructure.

JLFW members contribute in multiple ways, including funding,

volunteering, and providing hands-on services that support client care, facility operations and community outreach. Volunteers bring professional experience, leadership skills and a commitment to civic responsibility that aligns with the League’s values.

Volunteers of America is a national nonprofit rooted in community service and relies on partnerships like JLFW’s to expand its impact.

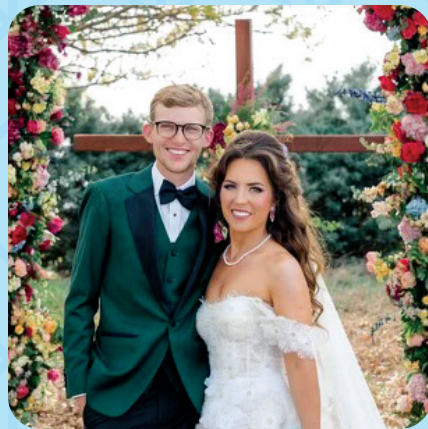
The League’s combination of financial support and volunteer

expertise helps VOA Fort Worth grow and improve its services, increasing its reach in the community.

The partnership demonstrates how JLFW’s Community Projects focus not only on funding but also on strategic support, volunteer engagement and nonprofit collaboration to create meaningful and sustainable change. Through initiatives like this, the League continues to advance women’s leadership while addressing critical community needs. 🙌



# LIFE LEAGUE IN THE TRENCHES



**LIFE AS A PROVISIONAL:**  
*Brooke Novacek*

Brooke has cherished every moment of her provisional year with the Junior League of Fort Worth, calling it one of the most meaningful experiences of her life. The year opened her eyes to community needs and deepened her desire to serve. One touching moment came while volunteering with Junior MINTS, when a mother shared how much it meant to see smiling faces in the halls—a reminder that small gestures make a big impact.

Another highlight was delivering diapers from the League’s drive to a local food bank alongside her husband, Blake. Beyond service, Brooke treasures the friendships she’s built with inspiring women in the League.

Outside the League, Brooke and Blake recently celebrated six months of marriage. They run Blooms by Brookie and 84 Farm and Gardens, their family flower farm in Joshua. She’s excited to join Christmas in Cowtown as both a vendor and volunteer, continuing her journey of service, growth, and connection with JLFW.



**LIFE AS A SUSTAINER:**  
*Shanelle Reyes*

Since joining the Junior League of Fort Worth in 2010, Shanelle has been an active and enthusiastic member. Now in her fifth year as a Sustainer, she feels more connected than ever, finding unexpected joy, new friendships, and meaningful ways to give back.

She has held several impactful roles, including Sustainer Lite Co-Chair with her close friend Victoria Johnson, planning monthly events that welcomed long-time Sustainers back into the fold. She also served as Sustainer Co-Advisor for the Provisionals with Rachel Hopper, supporting the leadership of Provisional Chairs Laura Kirspel and Danielle Hoefeld.

Her favorite traditions include the “Birthday Club” Happy Hour at Colonial Country Club and the Sustainer Fall Social, which this year drew over 100 women. Shanelle also loves Friday Morning Mahjong, a weekly gathering that has grown into a cross-generational League favorite. Her Sustainer years have been full of purpose and friendship—and she’s just getting started!



**LIFE AS AN ACTIVE:**  
*Nicole Masole-Rose*

Nicole began her Junior League journey in 2021 and is now in her fourth active year. She’s embraced leadership through roles like Fort Worth Leading Edge graduate, Project Development Coordinator for the Fort Worth Youth Orchestra, Done in a Day Co-Chair, and now Placement Assistant Co-Chair.

Her passion for placement stems from her eight years at Breakthrough Fort Worth, a JLFW-supported agency where she saw League members lead with heart and purpose. That experience inspired her to join and give back in the same way.

Nicole loves how the League helps women grow beyond their daily roles while making an impact in the community. At home, she enjoys life with her husband and young son, hoping to model leadership and service. “If there’s a woman rocking it in Fort Worth,” she says, “she’s probably a League member.”



## CONGRATULATIONS!

**Maria Schoppa**  
married  
**Mathew Stringer**  
*June 21, 2025*

## LITTLEST LEAGUERS

**Ashely Shea**  
and **Josh Stella**  
welcomed son, **Link,**  
*August 23, 2024*



## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

### TRANSFER IN

- Carla Chaisson, JL Arlington
- Enez Dipert, JL Arlington
- Erin Gregg, JL Lubbock
- Cyndi Bishop, JL San Antonio
- Rasheedah Khayyam-Suarez, JL Palm Beaches, FL
- Wanda Minshew, JL Arlington
- Lauris Gibson, JL Midland

### REINSTATE

- Traci Ellinwood
- Jennifer Martin
- Karley Powel

### CHANGE OF STATUS

- Caitlin Pipkin A to S
- Andrea DeLeon A to A: LOA
- Corrie Donovan A to A: LOA
- Stephanie Swift A to A: LOA

### CONDOLENCES

- Ann Abshire, Loss of Sister
- Rashida Fisher, Loss of Mother
- Gail Landreth, Loss of Sister in Law
- Lynda Shropshire, Loss of Sister
- Jennifer Williamson, Loss of Father
- Sarah Ayala, Loss of Father

## IN MEMORY

**Jean Gambill, Sustainer Emeritus**  
*January 24, 2025*



JUNIOR LEAGUE OF FORT WORTH  
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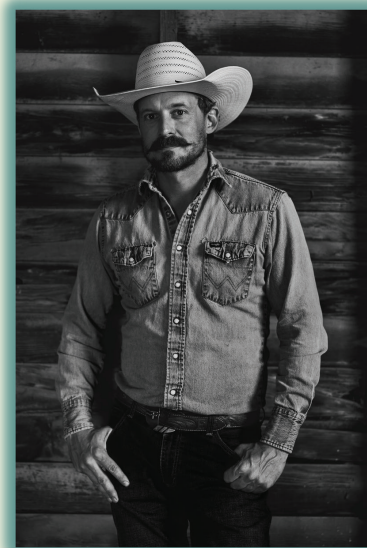


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# LEAGUE Queens

Noble Moments • MAJESTIC SHOTS • Noble Moments • MAJESTIC SHOTS • Noble Moments

# THE JLFW TRIVIA CHALLENGE

How well do you know your League? You've attended meetings, volunteered in Placements, and shopped 'til you dropped at Christmas in Cowtown, but how much do you really know about the Junior League of Fort Worth? Test your JLFW knowledge with this quick quiz and see if you're a Rookie, Rising Star, or League Legend! (Answers at the bottom of the page — no peeking!)

**1. What year was the Junior League of Fort Worth founded?**

A. 1919 B. 1929 C. 1939 D. 1949

**2. Since its founding, Christmas in Cowtown has reinvested**

**approximately how much into the Fort Worth community?**

A. \$1 million C. \$15 million  
B. \$9 million D. \$20 million

**3. Which of these Fort Worth favorites began as a JLFW community project?**

A. Mayfest  
B. Main Street Arts Festival  
C. Cowtown Marathon  
D. Fort Worth Zoo Run

**4. About how many volunteer hours do JLFW members contribute each year?**

A. 10,000 C. 50,000  
B. 25,000 D. 75,000

**5. Which JLFW event brings past presidents together to celebrate legacy and leadership?**

A. Past Presidents' Brunch  
B. Legacy Luncheon  
C. Leadership Roundtable  
D. Founders' Tea

**6. Christmas in Cowtown was first held in which year?**

A. 1990 C. 1998  
B. 1993 D. 2007

**7. JLFW's mission focuses on advancing what?**

A. Women's Leadership for Meaningful Community Impact  
B. Volunteerism through Philanthropy  
C. Service and Sisterhood  
D. Community Partnerships through Collaboration

**8. Which of the following words has been used to describe the League year theme?**

A. Grace B. Growth  
C. Grit D. All of the above

**Bonus: What's your favorite League memory?**

Share it with us on Instagram using #JLFWTriviaChallenge for a chance to be featured in our next issue!

Answers: 1-C, 2-D, 3-A, 4-C, 5-A, 6-C, 7-A, 8-D

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