



JUNIOR LEAGUE OF
DENVER

live the legacy
give • grow • get connected

Fall Issue

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JLD Maintains Robust Community Engagement & Advocacy Efforts

Grow:

to increase in size, number or degree.



Message from the President

We are having an absolutely incredible 107th League year! In August, we **welcomed 120 New Members**, and I have been overwhelmed by the excitement and enthusiasm they have brought to the League. It has been wonderful to see them all in attendance across events and even jumping in to sit on committees while completing the New Member year. We cannot wait to see what they accomplish in the League in the coming years! Overall, we continue to maintain a strong membership, a little more than 1,300 members this year. It is a joy seeing members of all statuses involved year after year to make the Junior League of Denver an amazing and inclusive community.

Our ninth annual **L.U.V.S. day of service** was a strong reminder of what makes this organization so special. Our theme this year of *Sowing and Growing a Stronger Denver* provided the foundation for us to complete projects at seven community sites. In all, 163 volunteers contributed 652 hours back to our community. Thank you to all who participated!

October, as always, was a very busy month for the League. We kicked things off with a fantastic **Wine & Ballots** session, available to members and non-members, and in the same week held **Libations for the League!** We hosted Libations in a new location and even included Holiday Mart vendors that offered exclusive discounts for event attendees. There is no limit to the creativity of our members to host a fun, engaging and successful event. Did I mention we raised more than \$22,000? Fundraising Council is doing a phenomenal job! We then kept the Public Policy theme rolling later in the month by inviting candidates running for Colorado State Offices to speak on a panel at the **October General Meeting**. It was a lively and informative evening for our members. We also announced the theme for this year's **Journey: A Night in Old Hollywood**. I hope you purchase your tickets soon and can't wait to dance the night away with everyone! To round out the 2025 calendar year, we hosted our much-anticipated **46th annual Mile High Holiday Mart** and will celebrate **Colorado Gives Day** in December.

Finally, I am deeply proud of how our members are responding to escalating community needs regarding **food insecurity**. Truly, the power and magic of the League is our ability to mobilize and respond swiftly and meaningfully where it's needed most. For November, we hosted a **food drive at Headquarters** to support families who participate in our signature literacy programs.

I'm proud to work alongside such passionate women who turn vision into action and live out our Mission and Values every day. Thank you so much for staying engaged with the Junior League of Denver! We would not be where we are without every single one of us. I cannot wait to see what the rest of this year brings!

A handwritten signature of Emily Thibault in dark ink.

Emily Thibault

2025–2026 JLD President
president@jld.org

Thank You to Our 2025–2026 Board of Directors & Advisory Board!

2025–2026 JLD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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A Storied Legacy & Lasting Connection: Mary Caroline “Carrie” McDonald

Mary Caroline “Carrie” McDonald, who served as JLD President in 1975-76, passed away on September 6, 2025, in Lawrence, Kansas, surrounded by her family.

Years ago, at the League office on Yale, her son, **Tom McDonald**, stopped by to share materials for the newly formed production company he and his wife, **Naomi Binkley**, had founded, Fireside Production. As he walked the hallway lined with photos of Past Presidents, he paused and proudly pointed out his mother. Today, he and Naomi, both gifted storytellers, help the League document community work and create compelling videos for our annual Journey fundraising events, beautifully linking past leadership with present-day impact.

Carrie cherished her time as President, crediting the experience with giving her the confidence to say “yes” to new possibilities, personally and philanthropically. During her tenure, the League welcomed its first Black member, an important milestone that helped pave the way for today’s DEIB initiatives and our culture of inclusiveness for all women. It is a powerful legacy.

We are deeply grateful for Carrie’s dedication to our League and honor her memory always.



Mary Caroline “Carrie” McDonald

Give:

to present voluntarily and without expecting compensation.



*Janet Manning &
Bev Morrato*

Fueling the League's Future Through Giving

Donors play a vital role in sustaining the Junior League of Denver's financial strength and advancing its Mission. Among them are Sustainers and longtime friends **Janet Manning** and **Bev Morrato**. Grateful for the impact the League has had on their lives, they choose to give back each year as annual donors and members of the **Helen Daly Peale Society**.

Janet Manning joined the Junior League in the 1970s to explore the city and meet new people. During her 14 Active years in the League, she held diverse placements in Fundraising, Community, Membership, and Finance, and served as Executive Vice President of External Affairs in 1987-88. "This was my favorite year because of the impact the JLD made in the community," she said. "It was the League's 70th anniversary and with extraordinary

fundraising revenues, we made a \$70,000 gift to establish an endowment." After reaching the \$1,000,000 goal, JLD established the Foundation in 1992. Her rewarding experiences led Janet to include JLD in her estate plans. "The League was so important to me for many years," she said. "I looked to the League as a source of new information and opportunities."

Like Janet, Bev Morrato was also an Active member during the 1970s and 80s, when almost all placements were during the day, members transitioned to Sustainer at age 40 and League updates were shared through the monthly *League Life* publication. Bev chaired the third Holiday Mart, served on the Board, and worked as a Trained Facilitator who helped train the boards at local organizations.

"Whenever I go out to other organizations, I thank the Junior League for the training and opportunities I've had to work in the community," she said. "Being a donor is my contribution back for what the League has done for me. It has given me more in terms of training and friendships than I could ever repay."

Looking at the past and future, both women praised the League for adapting over the years, taking on challenges, and staying committed to the community—and they are confident it will continue to do so. "We still have the same purpose and goals of making an impact. The community focus varies but it's all along the same lines of helping women and children," Janet said.

Bev is also pleased to see more members supporting the League. She's encouraged by the growing culture of philanthropy and members' recognition that reaching goals requires not only time, but financial resources.

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The Annual Campaign Committee, led by **Jenni Ingold** and **Tori Divita**, shares Bev’s optimism about increasing donor support. One of their priorities is educating members about donor choice—whether to give directly to the League or to the Junior League of Denver Foundation—and the various ways members can contribute, including monthly, annual, or one-time gifts. They also work to ensure donors feel appreciated by hosting recognition events, such as the Major Donor Coffee held on October 17. Through these efforts, the committee hopes to inspire members to transform their positive League experiences into financial support.

The journeys of Janet and Bev reflect the heart of the Junior League of Denver: women who grow through service and give back to the Mission that shaped them. We are profoundly grateful to all of our donors, whose generosity keeps the League moving forward.



46th Annual Mile High Holiday Mart, Nov. 14–16

This year marked the League’s 46th Annual Mile High Holiday Mart. During the unseasonably warm November weekend, shoppers eagerly explored 126 vendor booths, including 50 first-time participants, 103 local and 105 women-owned businesses at Gates Field House on the DU campus.

A beloved Denver holiday tradition, this three-day event is a remarkable undertaking that highlights the dedication and resilience of the committee members who bring it to life. A volunteer-run holiday shopping experience is truly unique, and it’s something our League is incredibly proud of year after year!

“Holiday Mart is a cherished tradition that brings our community together to celebrate the season and support local businesses,” said Kristen Claxon, Holiday Mart Co-Chair.

A big thank you goes out to our merchants, volunteers, sponsors and shoppers! We’re especially grateful to our Holiday Mart Co-Chairs, **Kristen Claxon** and **Caryne Mesquita**, whose hard work helped make this year’s Holiday Mart a tremendous success.

Thank You to Our 2025 Holiday Mart Sponsors!

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PRINT SPONSOR

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Save the Dates for Upcoming JLD Happenings!

January 26

JLD Public Policy Foundations: Your Guide to Advocacy

February 9-March 2

Leadership Registration

February 11

General Meeting

February 20-21

Get on Board Session

March 6

JLD Day at the Capitol & March General Meeting

March 14

The Journey: A Night in Old Hollywood

March 20-April 19

Spring Lottery Registration

April 11

Saturday with Sustainers General Meeting

May 7

End of Year General Meeting



Members help out at The Urban Farm

L.U.V.S. Day of Service Celebrates Community

On September 20, JLD hosted its ninth annual Leaders United in Volunteer Service (L.U.V.S.) event, with a theme of *Sowing and Growing a Stronger Denver: Empowering the Denver Community by Planting Seeds of Change for Lasting Prosperity*.

Kim Vo, L.U.V.S. Step-Up Co-Chair, said: “To me, L.U.V.S. day captures the very essence of JLD — camaraderie, humor, teamwork and leadership all shining through in one incredible day. What most people don’t see are the lessons, persistence and patience behind the scenes to make it happen each year.”

L.U.V.S nonprofit partners included: Brent’s Place, The Empowerment Program, Florence Crittenton Services, Girls Inc. of Metro Denver, Grow Local Colorado, Justice Necessary and The Urban Farm. More than 160 JLD volunteers spent the day packing college care packages, gleaning apples, mucking a feed area for cows, building centerpieces, supporting a Family Fun day and much more. In all, our members **donated 652 hours** to the community.

“This event represents everything that is wonderful and unique about our organization. It’s the event that I have looked forward to the most during my time as Community VP and VP-E,” said **Tiffany Walker**, Community Council VP.

Thank you to all who gave their time to support L.U.V.S., and a special thank you to L.U.V.S. Chair **Jessica Trotter**, Step-Up Co-Chairs **Sabina Grusnick** and **Kim Vo**, and their committee for organizing this impactful event!

Get connected:

join together to provide access and exchange.

JLD Drives Change Through Advocacy & Education

The Junior League of Denver's Public Policy Council builds a legacy of advocacy and education through its 30+ year partnership with government affairs specialist Aponte & Busam and signature events that empower members to participate in electoral and legislative processes.

Advocacy is a cornerstone of JLD's community work, and the League relies on its ongoing partnership with Aponte & Busam to strengthen these initiatives. The firm advises the League on which bills to support and helps identify legislation that aligns most closely with the JLD Mission and community focus. They also keep the council informed on current issues; during the recent government shutdown resulting in SNAP benefit delays, Aponte & Busam provided real-time updates from the Governor and state officials.

"We couldn't do any of this work without them," said Public Policy Council VP **Ellie Venafro**. "Because their focus is nonprofit as well, they are passionate about our Mission and really understand what our needs are."

The council, led by Ellie and VP-E **Stephanie Zepelin**, is working with Aponte & Busam to develop a training series and educate members on what lobbyists do and how to testify on bills.

Education and engagement were at the forefront of council-hosted events this October. The General Meeting featured a panel with candidates for Colorado State Office in the 2026 elections, including Governor, Attorney General and Treasurer. Moderated by **Edie Busam**, Founder and Principal at Aponte & Busam, the forum gave candidates the opportunity to share their platforms directly with voters. The meeting also recognized the 2025 Legislator of the Year, **Representative Lorena Garcia**, who has co-sponsored many bills supported by the JLD. Earlier in the month, the annual Wine & Ballots virtual event provided a nonpartisan review of local and state ballot measures, helping voters head to the polls with confidence.

A priority of the council is to increase visibility of the JLD among legislators. By branding the League and clearly communicating its Mission, they aim for lawmakers to approach JLD when legislation aligns with the League's community focus. A future goal of the council is for the League to sponsor its own bill.

For members interested in advocacy, Ellie encourages them to attend a Public Policy council meeting. "I'm so proud of our council. Everyone is engaged, we have great conversations, and we challenge one another but it's always respectful," she said. "Once people see our approach, hopefully they will see it as the right fit for them." She also recommends participating in the upcoming trainings and the Day at the Capitol to expand legislative knowledge.



*October GM hosted
by the Public Policy
Council*



Ink Committee

Dayna McLaughlin, *Communications VP*
Elizabeth Imbler, *Ink Assistant Editor*

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Mission

The Junior League of Denver, Inc., founded in 1918, is an organization of women whose Mission is to advance women's leadership for meaningful community impact through volunteer action, collaboration, and training.

Community Focus: The Junior League of Denver is working to disrupt the cycle of systemic poverty for women and families in Denver.

Vision: The Junior League: Women Around the World as Catalysts for Lasting Community Change.

Values: Diversity, Collaboration, Community, Empowerment, Leadership, Respect, Service



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