



JUNIOR LEAGUE OF
DENVER

live the legacy
give • grow • get connected

Spring Issue
Volume 2526 – Issue 2

A publication of the Junior League of Denver. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.



Thank you for making a meaningful difference in our community!

Grow:

to increase in size, number or degree.



Message from the President

What an incredible year we had yet again at the Junior League of Denver! This community of women remains resilient and invested in responding to Denver's greatest needs, and I could not be prouder to be a member.

In the second half of the League year alone, we selected our 2026–27 League year grant recipients, continued to host many trainings for our members, including the spring session of Get on Board, marking the first time we've opened this training to women outside the organization, and engaged League-wide support for multiple Level 1 bills. The Journey was yet again a huge success, including ***A Night in Old Hollywood*** theme making for a stunning night with a high-energy

Emily Thibault

live auction and a not-to-be-missed after party featuring Wash Park Band. Our members know how to put on an amazing gala! I would also like to acknowledge our April General Meeting, where we hosted a panel of Sustainer participants to share their experiences in leadership within the Junior League and how it has positively impacted their careers professionally and philanthropically outside of the League. It was an inspiring morning hearing from a group of accomplished women who have left a mark not only within the League, but also in the greater community, and it served as a reminder of how much the League can provide to all of us willing to take advantage of League offerings.

As an organization, collaboration remains a cornerstone of our approach. We recognize that diversity of thought and experiences serves to strengthen all areas of the League. This April, we hosted the inaugural Board Leadership Transition Training. This half-day training provides our incoming and outgoing Board members an opportunity to collaborate, share strengths and plan for the year ahead, with the intention of providing a meaningful member experience as they lead their councils and committees through the year. We look forward to more leaders and members benefiting from this programming!

While the accomplishments noted above are due to groups of women working to achieve the same goal, I would be remiss to not acknowledge the individual passion and commitment each member brings to our organization. As we look to transition into the next year of leaders, what I will hold most dear from this year is without a doubt the moments of connection I shared with many of you. What an absolute privilege to experience such kindness, empathy, tenacity, and creativity poured into the shared belief that we can make our community stronger and better.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature of Emily Thibault in dark ink.

Emily Thibault

2025–2026 JLD President

president@jld.org



Sustainers attend Past President Linda Sandoval’s service on Thursday, April 9. From left to right, front row: Karen Valdez, Molly Ross, Katherine Fulford (holding a photo of Linda Sandoval), Barb Kamlet and Cathy Darnell. Back row: Karen Lozow, Jill Pedicord Peterson, Diane Newcom and Joanne Davidson. Not pictured: Arlene Hirschfeld

Honoring the Life of Ermalinda (Linda) A. Sandoval

Past President **Linda A. Sandoval** passed away on March 16, 2026, with her husband, Joseph G. Sandoval, by her side.

Linda served as the League’s 62nd JLD President from 1997–98 and was the first Hispanic woman to hold this role. She joined the League in 1981, also becoming its first Hispanic member. During her presidency, she served on the National Philanthropy Day Awards Selection Committee, assisted with the Fall AJLI Leadership Meeting in Denver, and represented the League at events with community partners, including Bright Beginnings, Arapahoe Advocates for Children (CASA), and the Community Association of Foundations.

Linda came from a strong family of women. Her mother was the family’s sole provider and among the first women in Denver to qualify for homeownership based solely on her own income. Linda carried great pride in the accomplishments of the women in both her and her husband’s families and passed their strong work ethic on to her two daughters.

On Thursday, April 9, a group of her JLD friends, including several Past Presidents, gathered at Guardian Angel Church for her service. Afterwards, they shared many cherished memories of their lifelong, trailblazing friend.

Linda is deeply loved and will be forever missed.

2025–26 Community Impact

- \$44,500
Grants/Cash Donations
(breakdown below)
- \$20,000
Community Granting
Recipients
- \$18,000
The Gathering Place
- \$6,500
L.U.V.S. Day of Service

-
- 820
Volunteers
-
- 2,407
Volunteer Hours
-
- 2,865
Meals Served
-
- 1,023
Books Distributed
-

- 6,480
Children Served
-
- 12,548
Adults Served

Give:

*to present voluntarily and
without expecting compensation.*

*The Journey 2026
Committee*



*Attendees enjoy getting
into character at The
Journey*

The Journey 2026: A Night in Old Hollywood

The Journey marked its 14th year this spring with *A Night in Old Hollywood* on Saturday, March 14. This annual fundraising event is critical in uplifting the goals of JLD, and this year's event was a resounding success!

Members and guests were invited to dress inspired by Old Hollywood glamour for the event held at Mile High Station. The silent auction featured date night baskets, wellness kits, and a signed hockey stick from the Colorado Avalanche. Guests were invited to share in the signature cocktails, a French 75 and an Old Fashioned, and spent the evening bidding with auctioneer Haile Behr. The afterparty continued across the street at Ironworks Denver, featuring Wash Park Band.

Jenny Simpson, The Journey 2026 Co-Chair, captured the spirit of the evening, sharing: "This year's Journey truly felt like A Night in Old Hollywood: elegant, vibrant, and full of heart. From the incredible support through ticket sales, donations, and our auctions, to the powerful words shared by our partner at Joe Shoemaker School, the evening was a beautiful reminder of what this community can accomplish together. Thanks to that generosity, we not only created a memorable night, but also raised more than \$65,000 in net proceeds to support our Mission!"

Awards & Grants: May General Meeting

Our final GM of the year was held on Thursday, May 7, at the Museum for Black Girls. During the evening, we celebrated our 2026–27 Community Granting recipients, recognized our 10-year Actives, presented annual awards, officially passed the gavel to **Brenda Garcia**, and reflected on an incredible year together. Thank you to everyone who made this year so meaningful!

- May Shining Star Awards: **Alexa Hunter & Jenny Simpson**
- Outstanding New Member: **Rupal Patel**
- Outstanding Transfer: **Shea Tardiff**
- Outstanding Sustainer: **Melly Kinnard**
- Outstanding Volunteer: **Josie McCauley**
- Outstanding Committee: **Done in a Day/Renee Oehlerking & Kailey Di Mario**
- Spirit of Service Award: **Caryne Mesquita**
- President’s Cup: **Melinda Fisher & Alicia Wagner**

2026–27 COMMUNITY GRANTING RECIPIENTS

- Girls Inc. of Metro Denver: \$10,000
- The Urban Farm: \$10,000



Caryne Mesquita receives the Spirit of Service Award

Get on Board Training Shapes Future Leaders

Each year, JLD hosts its Get on Board training event, designed for individuals interested in serving on nonprofit boards. The program plays an integral role in advancing the Junior League’s legacy of developing women as civic leaders in the community.

This year’s event, held February 20–21, was well attended, with 25 JLD members and three non-members participating. Attendees heard from community leaders including Kathleen Phillios, Executive Director of Clothes To Kids of Denver, and Denver District Court Judge Jon J. Olafson.

Get on Board took on a new format this year and held one single event rather than two separate sessions. This was well received, and attendees particularly appreciated the broad range of topics and deep discussion.

Immediately following the training, graduates were able to connect directly with local nonprofits at the Organizational Fair, featuring representation from LifeSpark Cancer Resources, Project Animal Aid, Athena Project, Rose Andom Center, and We Don’t Waste.

“Get On Board is truly a unique and comprehensive program,” said **Shannon LaBay**, Get on Board Chair. “The depth of knowledge shared, and the quality of discussion are simply invaluable. There’s always something new to learn from each session.”



Get on Board training

Get connected:

join together to provide access and exchange.



Left to right: Jana Cuneo, Andrea McCormack, Arlene Hirschfeld, Katherine Fulford, Barb Kamlet, Lynn Deutchman, Emily Thibault

Sustainers Shine at Annual General Meeting

The League's annual Saturday with Sustainers General Meeting on April 11 brought together members across all stages of League involvement for a morning of insight and connection.

Hosted in partnership by the Sustainer Council and General Meeting Committee, the event featured a panel of six Sustaining members moderated by President **Emily Thibault**. Panelists reflected on how their League experiences shaped their leadership journeys and their continued work throughout the community.

A consistent theme throughout the discussion was the lasting impact of skills developed through the League. Panelists highlighted active listening, confidence, and the ability to fundraise and make meaningful asks as foundational to their success.

Jana Cuneo, a Junior League of Sacramento Past President, described how her League involvement influenced her professional path. After years of fundraising for the Junior League, she was approached to assist with fundraising efforts for a local hospital. Jana soon realized the request was more than a short-term favor, it was actually a job offer. She accepted the opportunity, which was made possible by the training and skills she gained through the Junior League.

Panelists also offered practical advice for navigating leadership and life. **Arlene Hirschfeld**, JLD Past President (1986-87), reflected, "Life is in chapters. You can have it all, but not all at the same time." **Andrea McCormack**, a Junior League of Riverside Past President, echoed a reminder that resonated across the room: "It's okay to say 'no.'"

Sustainers continue to be an essential part of JLD, representing more than 800 of our 1,300 members. Their continued engagement through mentorship, philanthropy, and volunteerism strengthens both the League and the broader community. From supporting our partners like The Gathering Place to giving their time at Ronald McDonald House, Sustainers exemplify the enduring impact of League service. We are so grateful for their ongoing leadership, generosity, and commitment.

Snowfall at the Statehouse: 2026 Day at the Capitol

The Public Policy Council organizes the annual Day at the Capitol for members to engage with the legislative process, rain or shine, and this year was no exception! On the snowy morning of March 6, members gathered at the Colorado State Capitol for a Legislative Breakfast and advocacy outside the House and Senate chamber floors. The day continued with the March General Meeting at the First Baptist Church of Denver, followed by a group tour of the Capitol.

Ellie Venafro, Public Policy Council VP, offered her perspective on the day: “Each year, Day at the Capitol stands out as a highlight for me. Despite an unexpected snowfall, we were thrilled to see so many enthusiastic volunteers join us. Now in my third year attending this event, I’ve witnessed remarkable progress in how many legislators recognize the Junior League of Denver and appreciate the impact of our work. It’s genuinely inspiring to see legislators actively engage with our team and show such interest in our Mission.”

Ellie also recognized the dedication of JLD’s lobbyist team, Aponté & Busam, for their invaluable commitment to sharing our story and aligning us with legislation that supports our community.



JLD members attend 2026 Day at the Capitol

Celebrating 125 Years of AJLI

This year marks the 125th anniversary of the Association of Junior Leagues International. Founded in 1901, AJLI began with a simple yet powerful idea: trained, committed volunteers can create lasting change. What started with one League in New York has grown into a global network of more than 290 Leagues representing over 113,000 members across six countries, united by a shared Mission to advance women’s leadership for meaningful community impact.

Throughout its history, Junior League members have addressed critical issues including childhood hunger, literacy, public health, environmental advocacy, and women’s equality. The organization continues to evolve in response to the changing needs of the communities it serves.

For the Junior League of Denver, this anniversary is both a celebration and a reflection. It’s an opportunity to recognize the generations of members who have strengthened our community through volunteerism, advocacy, and leadership, and to look ahead to the future we continue to build together.



2026 AJLI Annual Conference



Ink Committee

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

JLD Headquarters

Junior League of Denver

1301 S. Washington St., Denver, CO 80210

phone: 303.692.0270

email: info@jld.org

web: JLD.org

hours: Monday — Friday 9 am–4 pm

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



JUNIOR LEAGUE OF
DENVER

1301 S. Washington St.
Denver, CO 80210



[@juniorleaguedenver](https://www.facebook.com/juniorleaguedenver)



[@juniorleaguedenver](https://www.instagram.com/juniorleaguedenver)

#JLD

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Denver, Colorado
Permit No. 134