

# JLT Elevator Pitch

By Katherine Haskell and Kelly Kirchhoff

*George Kaiser steps into your elevator in the BOK Tower. You know his foundation could provide an enormous donation, if only you could get his attention. “Mr. Kaiser, it’s an honor to meet you. Thank you for making Tulsa a better place.” “Thanks,” he replies, smiling. Then, your mind goes blank. You smile and nod; quiet ensues. 20 floors later, the doors open; he gets out.*

Or perhaps:

*At a cocktail party, someone you’ve worked with at the PTA mentions she just stopped volunteering at the food bank. You reply, “Sarah, you do great work on the PTA. Are you at all interested in working with the Junior League of Tulsa? We do so much around town like helping kids and throwing parties and I think you’d really enjoy it.”*

*Sarah looks confused. “I thought you had to be a certain age to join? Also, I don’t have that much free time.” “Uh, I don’t think there’s an age limit. And we work with Resonance and Children’s Hospital and do gardening and scholarship. But there are fun parties and American Girl and Holiday Market, too.” “Wow! Well, I’ll think about it. I’m not much of a gardener, you know.” Sarah drains her glass, quickly. “Looks like I need another drink. See you later!”*

Those scenarios might not unfold for most of us, but who hasn’t heard someone say, “What’s the Junior League?” or “I don’t think I’d fit in with the white-glove thing.” Or worse, “Don’t you have all the money you need?” Without having a quick, appropriate response on the tip of one’s tongue, golden opportunities to promote the Junior League are lost.

The solution? An “elevator pitch.” What’s an elevator pitch? Traditionally, it’s a succinct, on-point description of whatever you’re selling that could be spoken in the amount of time it takes to ride in an elevator (where Mayor Bartlett himself may be your captive audience). Also called an elevator speech, it’s **a 30 to 60-second narrative that explains who the Junior League is, what we do, whom we do it for, and why the listener should care and become involved.** The language of the elevator pitch should be credibly natural, concisely factual, and immediately understandable.

Each member of the Junior League – active or sustainer – needs to have an elevator speech at the ready. Yes, that means you need to practice it! We are the best promoters of this amazing organization we’ve joined, and recruiting new members or attracting new donors is an ongoing process at which we should all become adept. This article is to set that challenge before you, and provide a few suggestions you’re welcome to adopt or amend at your discretion.

Why not just memorize the Mission Statement? While the mission statement is an eloquent written description of what we do, the language is just formal and vague enough to prevent it from resonating with most listeners. An elevator pitch is not a sales pitch. It’s an introduction, an enticement. Do not go into excruciating detail — leave your potential member wanting to know more. Think Cliff’s Notes, not Encyclopedia Britannica. If you’re pitching the Junior League to the woman on the street, you need: a) a few descriptive sentences – the “hook”; b) a few facts to wow them – with passion and energy; and c) a direct or indirect call to action – the request. For example:

## “What is the Junior League?”

*“The Junior League is a women’s volunteer organization that has two purposes. First, we train women how to be the most effective volunteers and community leaders they can be. Second, we partner with other non-profits to help strengthen their organizations by providing trained volunteers for a variety of projects. We give about 40,000 hours of volunteer service annually. We run the Family Resource Library at Children’s Hospital, and partner with Global Gardens, Laura Dester Children’s Shelter, Gilcrease Museum, and Kids in the Kitchen. The entire organization is run by volunteers, so all donations support our organization and our training and volunteer programs.”*

*“Do you like volunteering? I do. I’m a member of the Junior League of Tulsa. We are an organization of women who meet regularly to plan projects that improve*

*our community. Our main focus is to support women and children in transition. It’s so much fun. Junior League also offers more than just meetings — we have opportunities to experience specialized education and training, we volunteer for community outreach projects, and we attend various fundraising events. It’s an amazing outlet. I’d like to invite you to come experience all of the opportunities that Junior League has to offer. I promise you’ll enjoy this worthwhile organization.”*

*“The Junior League teaches women volunteers how to run a non-profit organization from top to bottom. We go out and volunteer directly in the community, throw fundraisers, and make friends. We give about 30-40,000 volunteer hours a year, and support several community projects for which we provide hundreds of volunteers. There are nearly 800 women in the organization and we’re looking to double that. There are no restrictions of any kind to membership. Want to come to a meeting with me and check it out?”*

It should be noted that several standing committees have the responsibility for fundraising, underwriting, donations, and partnerships. We’re not all tasked with doing that work, though we are each tasked with member recruitment. However, if you know someone, or an organization, that would make a great partner for the JLT, a well-placed elevator pitch can help open doors when the fundraisers go knocking.

The elevator pitches above are designed to capture the attention of a potential Junior League member or donor. If you achieve that, the odds are good that you’ll get a chance to present our cause in more detail at a later time. So practice one of the pitches above, or create your own, and feel confident you can interest someone into joining our community. Now the challenge is finding the proverbial elevator!