

"A well educated individual has a far

Making the Grade

EDUCATION AND THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF TULSA

OVER THE PAST 80 YEARS, THE LEAGUE'S POSITION ON EDUCATION HAS BEEN TO UTILIZE THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE OF ITS MEMBERS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN OUR CITY.

Outreach efforts began when the Crippled Children's Hospital (now Children's Medical Center) was opened in 1927. Members were often involved in teaching the patients, many of whom lived there for months at a time. As JLT's membership grew, the organization became involved in an even greater variety of community programs. League projects have focused on health, welfare, the arts, and most recently, women in transition; however, education has always been and continues to be an important area of JLT involvement. The League has played a tremendous role in shaping education in Tulsa. A handful of JLT projects are highlighted here, many of which are still in place today.

JLT paired with the Tulsa Library from 1949 through 1967 to offer many successful outreach programs. One in particular was the Books to Shut-Ins initiative. The League also redecorated the Children's reading room at Tulsa Public Library and participated in a puppet program with the Tulsa City-County Library. The successful 1974-1975 Volunteers in the Library project demonstrated the effectiveness of trained volunteers and prompted the hiring of a permanent volunteer coordinator. JLT's long-time partnership with the library system also fostered the Citizens Information Service, a project designed to encourage citizens to participate in both community planning and decision-making.

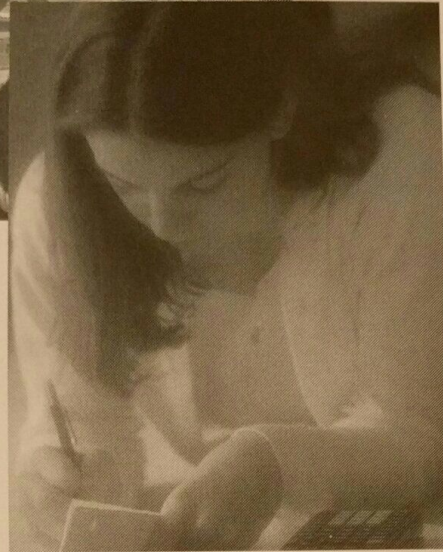
JLT members rallied around the cause of deaf education, leading to the establishment of the Junior League School for Hard of Hearing at the University of Tulsa in 1964. The project ran until 1969. Additional financial support was provided the following year as two TU students were awarded deaf education scholarships.

The Model Day Care Curriculum project was active from 1969 until 1973.

The program began at South Haven through the support through the Friends of Day Care community board. In the last year of the project, JLT financially supported a South Haven representative to attend the Oklahoma Health and Welfare conference.

Still in existence today, the Science Enrichment project (1985-1988) was created to enhance science curriculum by integrating hands-on experiments. Co-sponsored by the Amoco Production Company Research Center and Tulsa Public Schools, 56 League members participated in the program. By the third year of the project, JLT had given \$38,000 in financial support. Science Enrichment and JLT were recognized at the Association for Junior Leagues International annual conference and the concept was eventually marketed nationwide.

Literacy Task Force began in 1986-1990 and continues today. JLT members are still involved in this joint effort through TPS and the Tulsa City-County Library. The children's



program, “Take Reading to Heart,” was added to many schools’ curriculums and was also presented at both the Oklahoma and National School Volunteer conferences. “Teach a Reader,” the adult program focused on recruiting community volunteers and produced a public education video for the library. In December 1991, JLT received the “Hall of Fame Award” from Tulsa City-County Library for 40 years of service to the library system.

The Excellence in Education Committee (1988-1992) adopted a proactive approach to shape the future of Oklahoma educational standards. League members concentrated on researching early childhood education programs and then teamed with the Public Affairs Committee to advocate for educational reform. A coalition of representatives from TPS, Child Care Resource Center, Tulsa Mental Health Association and the Junior League developed the Parents As Teachers Advisory Board. In April 1997, Oklahoma First Lady, Mrs. David Walters, joined the Advisory Board and in December of the same year, the Board received \$40,000 in the form of a United Way venture grant. The program was implemented soon after.

JLT’s Youth Self Esteem Committee (1989-1991) invited agencies including Growing Healthy in Oklahoma Foundation, Mental Health Association, and Domestic Violence Intervention Services to

submit project proposals for consideration. League members chose to support the Tulsa Volunteer Center’s Youth Volunteer Corps . which would give junior and senior high school students the opportunity to serve on racially and socio-economically integrated service teams during holiday breaks, weekends and summer vacation. When the Youth Volunteer Center did not receive its anticipated funding, League members went back to the drawing board and became involved in Going to Bat for Tulsa Kids (1992-1997). JLT members worked one-on-one with area middle and elementary school children, serving as friends, positive role models and educational advocates. This public school mentor program is alive and well today.

The Tulsa Aquarium Task Force (1994-95) devoted time to researching and then recommending ways in which JLT could participate and assist with the educational programs of a new Tulsa Aquarium. Marine life was highlighted on bookmarks, activity sheets and an educational video created by League

members. School children were invited to attend presentations given by League members inside Holly, a 60-foot long inflatable whale!

In order to provide children with a greater understanding of science, mathematics and technology, the Harmon Science Center opened its doors in 1993. League members were responsible for the center’s volunteer project by recruiting community volunteers and refining the program.

Several projects kept League members busy in the mid to late 90s, including *Tulsa History A-Z*, and *Tulsa History Centennial*. League members published *Tulsa History A-Z* in 1997. The book, designed for third graders, was the result of a three-year collaboration with the Tulsa Historical Society and Tulsa Preservation Commission.

Different and The Same, a pilot program developed by Family Communications, Inc. — the producer of Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood — (1999-2003) enhanced cross-cultural awareness and promoted excellence in education in conjunction with The National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ). The last year of the project, JLT presented the program to the community at a JLT open house on Martin Luther King Day.

The Founders’ Scholarship Program was launched with money received from a Paragon Award presented to President Debbie Ball in 1999. For the past five years, the Scholarship Committee has supported JLT’s mission of educating women while assisting in the transition from high school to college. Two \$1,000 scholarships are awarded annually to senior high school women who demonstrate an outstanding level of volunteer service commitment to the greater Tulsa area. Through the gracious support of several Sustaining League members, the committee has on occasion been able to award an additional scholarship. ❶