

WINTER 2026



# FOCUS

The Official Newsletter of the Junior League of Lansing



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Leia Cooper-Rigg, 2025-2027 President



I am filled with pride for the incredible work that each of you contributes to our mission, and I am humbled and honored with the trust you have given me to lead our incredible organization. By now, our updated mission is engrained into all of our members: Junior League of Lansing is an organization of women whose mission is to advance women's leadership for meaningful community impact through volunteer action,

collaboration, and training. I want to expand on this a bit more to share the vision of Junior League of Lansing which is "dynamic women impacting lives."

As I look around at our meetings, events, volunteer activities, and celebrations, I think about the members I've gotten to know over my time in League. Dynamic is the perfect word to describe them! We all come into League with different strengths, backgrounds, and reasons

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## 2025-2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Leia Cooper-Rigg

President, 2025-2027

### Alexis Murray

Executive Vice President, 2024-2026

### Allison Purtell

Secretary, 2024-2026

### Lisa Whiting Dobson

Treasurer, 2025-2027

### VACANT

Sustaining Member-At-Large, 2025-2027

### Maggie Louks

Nominating Chair, 2025-2026

## MANAGEMENT TEAM

### Alexis Murray

Executive Vice President, 2024-2026

### Brittany Risk

Community Vice President, 2024-2026

### Tricia Brentar

Education Vice President, 2024-2026

### Beth Ronning

Fund Development Vice President, 2025-2027

### Carlee Knott

Membership Vice President, 2025-2027

### Lori Noyer

Sustaining Management Advisor, 2024-2026

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE 2025-2026

Maggie Louks, Chair

Janine Medler

Resa Tran-TenBrink

Ana Whitman

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Junior League of Lansing is an organization of women whose mission is to advance women's leadership for meaningful community impact through volunteer action, collaboration, and training.

## President's Message, continued from page 1

for joining, and those can turn into different reasons for staying. Regardless of why we joined or why we stay, we all impact lives: lives of the women we serve alongside, and the lives of those in the community, our projects, time, treasure and talent impact.

What the Junior League does differently, our competitive advantage, is that we develop a network of women empowered as leaders creating community change. The Association of Junior Leagues International says, the vision of the Junior League is Women Around the World as Catalysts for Lasting Community Change. For 125 years, the women of the Junior League have been catalysts for change in their communities. The number of projects and initiatives fill pages of history books. Our founder Mary Harriman said it this way more than 100 years ago, "We have the responsibility to act, and we have the opportunity to conscientiously act to affect the environment about us."

We have work to do in this community. We also have work to do within our League, to support our members, both Actives and Sustainers, and to bring other women alongside us on this journey as Provisional/New Members. I look forward to serving our membership, and it is my desire to show up with both grit and grace in every interaction.

Our Mission is our true north. Everything we do should be held against this standard. Our mission calls us to "Develop Women to do a World of Good." Learn from one another and then give back what you learn. Remembering that nothing we do is small, it all makes an impact!

I step into this role excited to learn and serve alongside all of you in contributing to the development of women as catalysts for lasting community change.

Thank you again for this opportunity and I am looking forward to what we can accomplish together.

~Leia



Congratulations to our 2026-2027 Leadership Slate that was confirmed at the Annual Meeting held on Jan. 13.

**Board of Directors**

- President-Elect: Alexis Murray
- Executive Vice President: Melanie Beil
- Secretary: Amanda Pugh
- Nominating Chair: Brittany Risk

**Management Team**

- Executive Vice President: Melanie Beil
- Communications Vice President: Kristina Bilowus
- Community Vice President: Chrissy LaFountain
- Education Vice President: Charley Hays

**Nominating Committee**

- Nominating Chair: Brittany Risk
- Nominating Committee Member: Cheryl Cequeria
- Nominating Committee Member: Susan Lutz
- Nominating Committee Member: Allison Purtell

**Dues Update**

At our Annual Meeting, members also approved a dues increase for Active and Provisional members beginning with the 2026-2027 League year.

Currently, Provisional dues are less than the fees that JLL has to pass along to AJLI, so this increase will offset the difference (an increase from \$35 to \$43).

For Active members, there has not been a dues increase in several years, so this is a nominal CPI adjustment of \$10 to address rising costs (an increase from \$138 to \$148).

Please consider rounding up your dues to support Junior League’s Endowment Fund! Contributions are tax deductible and support the continued financial sustainability of our League.

**2025 Welcome New Members**

- Lauren Anderson
- Kristina Bilowus
- Megan English
- Sarah Esler
- Morgan Johnson
- Melanie Smith
- Renee Wilson

**In Memoriam**

- Karen Kiser
- Karen Noe
- Mary Olson (Past President)
- Janice Reed



**NOMINATING UPDATE**

## Outgoing President's Tribute

It is a joy to take a few moments to celebrate our outgoing President Stephanie Collier.

Anyone who has attended a Junior League meeting over the past two years knows that a tribute to Stephanie has to start with our mission: advancing women's leadership for meaningful community impact through volunteer action, collaboration, and training. She has quite literally put our mission on everything we do: from our meeting materials and slides, to our events and projects, our community engagement, and our vision for the future. Her commitment to Junior League's mission has guided our League over the past two years through several significant milestones and achievements.

Under Stephanie's leadership, our League launched a comprehensive Strategic Planning Initiative for the 2024-2027 League years, giving us a roadmap rooted in our mission that acknowledges the challenges we face and outlines a path to growth.

Stephanie also led the effort to establish a new partnership with our association management firm, GCSI. She made sure we have expert support behind the scenes so we can keep our focus on the things that really matter—our members, our mission, and our community.

Stephanie brought us closer to the international Junior League network through her engagement with AJLI and was also a driving force in convening our Michigan Leagues, encouraging more collaboration and networking across our state.

Another highlight of her presidency was the creation of the CARE Task Force—an initiative to evaluate our focus area and make sure we're putting our time and energy into the issues that matter most in our community.

At a time marked by financial challenges for many nonprofits, Stephanie's background in financial management helped guide us to ensure we maintain

the Junior League's strong financial position and establish clear policies for continued sustainability.

She's also always the first one to jump in to organize a good photo op!

The results of these efforts on our League's growth is clear in our member engagement and recruitment, event attendance, community partnerships, and fundraising impact. After a few difficult years coming out of the pandemic, we are on the right track to ensure a dynamic, vibrant, and engaged organization that will continue to contribute to the Lansing community for many years to come.

On behalf of the League, Stephanie, we are grateful for your service, inspired by your example, and will stay focused on our shared mission.

Thank you and congratulations!



**Collier**

## 2024-2025 Board of Directors and Management Team - Thank You!

### Board of Directors

President: Stephanie Collier  
Executive Vice President: Alexis Murray  
Secretary: Allison Purtell  
Treasurer: Lisa Whiting Dobson  
Nominating Chair and President-Elect: Leia Cooper-Rigg  
Sustaining Member At-Large: Janine Medler

### Management Team

Executive Vice President: Alexis Murray  
Community Vice President: Brittany Risk  
Education Vice President: Tricia Brentar  
Fund Development Vice President: Ana Whitman  
Membership Vice President: Resa Tran-TenBrink  
Sustaining Management Advisor: Lori Noyer

### Nominating Committee

Nominating Chair: Leia Cooper-Rigg  
Nominating Committee: Stacy Bogard  
Nominating Committee: Maggie Louks  
Nominating Committee: Lisa Sack

## 2024-2025 Grants

**Community Impact Grant:** \$15,000 to Haven House. Haven House’s mission is to guide and support families who face homelessness on their path to stable homes.

**Community Response Grant:** \$2,500 to Helping Hands Food Pantry. Helping Hands’ mission is to extend Christ’s hope and compassion by striving to alleviate hunger in our community.

**Community Response Grant:** \$2,500 to the MSU Student Food Bank. MSU’s Student Food Bank supports MSU community members facing food insecurity.

**2024 Community Fund Grant:** \$4,589.68 to Ending Violent Encounters (EVE), which provides supportive services, including housing resources, to survivors of domestic and sexual violence, stalking and elder abuse.

**2024-2025 Volunteer Hours: Over 300!**



Haven House Grant



Helping Hands Food Pantry Grant

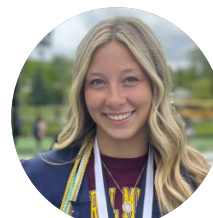


MSU Student Food Bank Grant

## 2025 Scholarship Recipients

### Bernice Olds Roe Scholarship

**Isabella (Izzy) Watson** graduated from East Lansing High School and attends Central Michigan University to pursue undergraduate studies in preparation for a career in medicine. Her application highlighted her commitment to service, stating, “Through education, mentorship, and service, I am dedicated to making a lasting impact.” Her community involvement included National Honor Society, Links Program, and the Student Environment Club. Izzy also served as an East Lansing High School Tutor, and a Michigan High School Athletic Association Legacy Referee for Lacrosse.



Watson

### Other Scholarships

**Elaina Andrews** graduated from East Lansing High School and attends Louisiana State University. Her community involvement and volunteer activities included Capital Region Community Foundation Youth Advisory Committee, Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, Women’s Center of Greater Lansing, ELHS National Honor Society, and Spartan Dance Center Company.



Andrews

**Courtney Ouderkirk-Griffin** graduated from St. Johns High School and attends West Michigan University. Her community involvement included the Girl Scout Silver Award, Kid’s Sports Camp, CCRESA Career Expo, Dance Assistant, and the Humane Society.



Ouderkirk-Griffin

# COMMUNICATIONS

## AJLI Launches Every Woman. All Things.

A powerful new initiative launched by The Association of Junior Leagues International, Every Woman. All Things., is dedicated to addressing women's mental overload and the issues that contribute to it. To reimagine life where role strain, role conflict and burnout are no longer the cost of being everything to everyone.

From balancing caregiving and careers to managing financial stress, societal expectations, and the unique challenges of aging, women today are carrying more than ever. Every Woman. All Things., is about saying enough and beginning the conversation that can lead to change.

Through this initiative, we will:

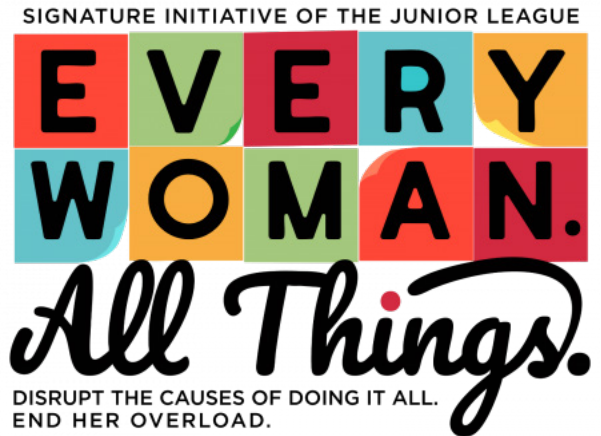
**Raise Awareness:** Shining a light on the invisible load women carry.

**Start Conversations:** In our homes, workplaces and communities.

**Listen and Learn:** Exploring how these challenges impact women differently.

**Collaborate, Develop and Advocate:** Working together to develop community impact while raising our voices for systemic change.

This initiative will provide resources, education and opportunities for dialogue to support women in our communities and beyond. While there is no single solution, we know progress begins when we come together to talk about what matters most.



# COMMUNITY

*The Community Council focuses on developing community partnerships, volunteer opportunities, grantmaking, and advocacy efforts.*

## 2025 Find the Good Day

Our year kicked off with the third annual Find the Good Day Service and Social. Members toured the MSU Student Food Bank to learn how Junior League's community grant supports its work. Thank you to Sustainer Jaimie Hutchison and Spartan Shelf staff for coordinating a successful household item drive for MSU Spartans and a tour of your brand-new space! Members followed up with a social at The Graduate's Rock Bar.

## Done-in-a-Day and Done-in-a-Meeting

Back by popular demand, the Community Council has brought back DIAD and DIAM opportunities for members each month.

Our GMM and event item drives have supported the Child and Family Charities Nonprofit Hub, Greater Lansing Women's Center, and the Greater Lansing Food Bank.

Our DIAD volunteer activities have supported Haven House Trunk or Treat, Silver Bells Food Drive, and Child and Family Charities Gift Unloading.

## 2025 Community Fund Grant

Each fall, the Junior League of Lansing's membership selects a community organization in our focus area of food, shelter, and essential needs access to receive the Community Fund Grant. JLL's Board manages the Community Fund, a separate account created specifically for this grant. The award amount changes each year depending on the investment performance. This year's award amount is \$4,533.39. Members nominated organizations through the online form and three organizations are randomly selected for a full membership vote.



Community Vice President: Brittany Risk  
SPAC Delegate: Heidi Hansen

Volunteer Co-Chairs: Lauren Enty and Ashley Smith

The winner of this year's Community Fund Grant is the Capital Area Housing Partnership. Capital Area Housing Partnership is a nonprofit organization based in Lansing, Michigan that focuses on developing strong, diverse neighborhoods throughout the region. It provides affordable housing, supports homeownership opportunities, and offers financial counseling services. CAHP's work includes building and rehabilitating homes, delivering housing education, offering down payment assistance, and helping prevent homelessness.



Find the Good Day 2025



JLL Members at Catholic Charities Event



Trunk or Treat 2025

# EDUCATION

The Education Council promotes training and education for leadership, new members, and all League members, plans General Membership Meetings and member engagement events, and coordinates all educational programs and processes for League and the community.

Education Vice President: Tricia Brentar  
Member Events Co-Chairs: Charley Hays  
and Sarah Esler

## Member Events

During October, we hosted our first Member Brunch at Cooper's Hawk.

November gave members a chance to shop a VIP event at the opening of Kendra Scott in Eastwood Towne Center and enjoy cute kitties and coffee at Constellation Cat Cafe.

December was our Annual Holiday Open House, featuring the second annual members Favorite Things Party and a Gluten-Free Food Drive for the Greater Lansing Food Bank. We also hosted our third Bubbles and Bows Toy Drive, supporting the Christmas Room for Eaton SIREN Shelter with wrapping and bow making for members, and a presentation by Kaitlyn Fales from SIREN.

Much more to come in the New Year from our Member Events team: Barre, Pilates, Member Brunches, and more.



*Holiday Open House Planning Committee*



*JLL Members Social Event at Constellation Cat Cafe*



*Holiday Open House*

## GMMs and Trainings

President Leia Cooper-Riggs kicked off our League year in September at our new General Membership Meeting location in September at One North in Lansing. Education VP Tricia Brentar took members on a (treasure) hunt through Member Essentials and talked about available AJLI training.

October followed with training from Janine VanStee, ADHD Life Coach. Training and General Membership Meeting were held at the Child and Family Charities Nonprofit Hub and we also heard from members of the organization about their work in the community.

Junior League Member and SPAC representative Heidi Hansen spoke at our November GMM about SPAC and the work that they are doing. She helped our members understand how to contact our elected officials, how a bill becomes a law, and upcoming bills that SPAC will support this session.

There is still exciting training in the works for this League year.

Endowment Chair: Jennifer Charette  
Endowment Vice Chair: Michelle Lange

# SPECIAL THANKS

## Legacy Society Members

Anonymous  
Ken and Ginny Brooks  
John and Sandy Grettenberger  
Sue Mills  
Mary Beth Pirich

This year marks the 41st anniversary of the Junior League of Lansing Endowment Fund. The Endowment supports the mission of JLL in perpetuity and we are grateful to our founding members for the foresight to establish this endowment fund to benefit the women of this community.

As of Feb. 3, 2026, the current fund balance is \$816,709. As our Endowment Fund balance grows, its financial impact on our League will continue to grow.

Our members generously support our League every year through donations, tribute gifts in memory or honor of a loved one, and dues round-up. Thank you for remembering the Endowment Fund throughout the year, whether it's a year-end donation, birthday or Mother's Day gift, or simply to make a gift to let someone know you are in their thoughts, your gift matters.

We invite you to join the Legacy Society. Please consider making a gift of \$5,000 or more by pledge or an estate gift. For more information or to make a gift today, please visit [jllansing.org/endowment-fund](http://jllansing.org/endowment-fund). Thank you to our existing members who have made this commitment.

We would like to recognize our donors who made contributions from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025.

Susan Allis  
Deborah Atkinson  
Kathryn Ault  
MaryAnn Austin  
Candace Barnes  
DeaShondria Bedenfield  
Melanie Beil  
Justine Bell  
Kristina Bilowus  
Stacy Bogard  
Carolyn Boger  
Christine Brogan  
Virginia Brooks  
Juliette Buckberry  
Christina Carr  
Jennifer Charette  
Barbara Clark  
Barbara Cleland  
DeDe Coy  
Patricia Croom  
Marilyn DesJardins  
Kathie Drolett  
Barbara Duda  
Carolyn Dudley  
Lynn Dwight  
Caryn Edwards  
Paige Edwards-Werhan  
Wendy Faulhaber  
Barbara Fishell  
Tricia Foster

Barbara Galloway  
Donna Gardner  
Marcia Gresens  
Linda Grua  
Lori Hacker  
Jody Haddad  
Barbara Hamilton  
Phyllis Harden  
Debby Harrison  
Annie Hayes  
Diane Hollister  
Katharine Hude  
Phyllis Irwin  
Tracy Jelneck  
Jan Kahl  
Elizabeth King  
Suzanne Kregel  
Cathy Lazar  
Pat Linnell  
Sandy Little  
Alexis Lupo  
Katie Lynwood  
Dorothy Martin  
Karen McCloskey  
Janine Medler  
Marcia Merando  
Suzanne Mills  
Dianne Mohnke  
Nanci Mooney  
Betty Moore

Alexis Murray  
Lori Noyer  
Marilyn Nugent  
Beverly Oetzel  
Jennifer Pace  
Maggie Papesh  
Candy Parker  
Susan Patterson  
Mary Pirich  
Mady Rush  
Pamela Ruth  
Nicki Sanford  
Catherine Schwartz  
Denise Shaheen  
Nancy Shepard  
Linda Smith  
Laura Stoken  
Amy Suhrheinrich  
Lutz Susan  
Diana Tarpoff  
Mary VanWieren  
Angela Vlahakis-Bigelow  
Pamela Wakeland  
Mary West  
Lisa Whiting-Dodson  
Ana Whitman  
Alex Wiesner  
Barbara Wirtz

# ENDOWMENT FUND

# FUND DEVELOPMENT

*The Fund Development Council coordinates and evaluates all League fundraising efforts, manages all League solicitation needs, and researches and reports on revisions or additions to fundraising efforts.*

Fund Development Vice President: Beth Ronning  
Annual Fund Chair: De'Shondria Bedenfield  
Event Fundraiser Co-Chairs: Amanda Pugh and Carlie Richards

## Annual Fundraiser – Raffle

De'Shondria Bedenfield is leading this year's raffle as Chair, supported by Michelle Adams. The committee focused on securing prizes and coordinating pickups early in the year. Ticket distribution began in November, and engagement has been positive among Active and Sustainer members. The drawing was held on Feb. 17.

## Fundraising Event – 5K

This year's 5K Co-Chairs are Amanda Pugh and Carlie Richards, supported by Kily Buta and Jasmine Stinson. The committee is building on lessons from prior years to improve event experience. The race and venue contracts have been signed, with the race scheduled for Sunday, June 7, with brunch to follow at The View. Registration is now open on RunSignUp, and planning is underway for sponsorship outreach and phased marketing.

**bRUNch & WALK 5K WITH LEAGUE**



*Sign Up Today!*

*All proceeds support the mission of the Junior League of Lansing.*

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**SUNDAY  
JUNE 7, 2026  
RUN/WALK: 9 AM  
BRUNCH: 10 AM**

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JUNIOR LEAGUE OF  
LANSING

# SUSTAINER UPDATE

Sustaining Management Advisor: Lori Noyer

## May 2025 Past Presidents and Sustainers Luncheon

JLL Past Presidents and Sustainers gathered at One North Kitchen & Bar in East Lansing on May 16 for the annual Spring Luncheon. We had a lovely time catching up and connecting with dear friends.

## Fall Luncheon

Sustainers “kicked off” the 2025-2026 League year with a tailgate-themed Fall Luncheon at One North Kitchen & Bar in East Lansing. Sustainers enjoyed a soup-and-salad bar while sporting their favorite team colors, participating in a raffle, and learning about ways to stay involved with League.

## Holiday Open House

Special thanks to Sustainer Kate Powers for hosting our annual Holiday Open House! Provisional, Active, and Sustainer members gathered to spread holiday cheer with festive snacks and drinks, a hot cocoa bar, and our Favorite Things gift exchange.

## Stay Involved!

Looking for ways to stay involved with League? There are many opportunities to support our mission, like helping with events, volunteer activities, scholarships, grants, and more. Reach out to Lori Noyer at [sustainingmanagementadvisor@jllansing.org](mailto:sustainingmanagementadvisor@jllansing.org) to get more information.



*Sustainer and Past President Spring Luncheon*



*Sustainers at 2025 Holiday Open House*



*Sustainers at 2025 Holiday Open House*



*Past and Current JLL Presidents*

# MEMBERSHIP

Membership Vice President: Carlee Knott  
New Member Co-Chairs: Kristina Bilowus and  
Elizabeth Townsley

*The Membership Council recruits, onboards, and supports New Members while also supporting current members throughout their League career.*

The Membership Council is off to a great start for the 2025-2026 Recruitment Season. We have had six new members join since the fall, bringing our total new membership up to eight New Members, well on our way to achieving 10 New Members by the end of the League year. Rolling recruitment has been working smoothly and all New Members have been making steady progress on their passports. One member has transitioned to Active status as of December 2025, with several others ready to transition soon.

The New Member Committee has hosted six stand-alone new member recruitment events around Greater Lansing. Several of the events also combined giving back to the community: Charcuterie for a Cause collected period products for Helping Women Period and the Gobble & Give event collected pantry food items for local food pantries. The New Member Committee also helped with recruiting at the Kendra Scott Fundraiser and Haven House's Trunk or Treat Event.

We continue to improve the New Member Orientation process by revamping the New Member packet to include a more detailed reference for New Members to learn about the history and current operations of the Junior League of Lansing. This includes current leadership structure and member photos, updated 2024-2025 community impacts, and leveraging updated branded templates and resources from AJLI.

Thanks to all who have supported our efforts so far, and looking forward to welcoming more New Members this Spring!

## 2025 Member Milestones

### 5 Years

Tricia Brentar  
Lauren Enty  
Brittany Risk  
Resa Tran-TenBrink

### 10 Years

Michelle Adams  
Ana Whitman

### Dual Placements

Leia Cooper-Rigg  
Nominating Chair and President-Elect

Beth Ronning  
Scholarships and Training

### 2025 New Sustainers

Domonique Brace  
Ally Caldwell  
Stephanie Collier  
Shajuana Tyson

## 2025 Membership Awards

**Living the Mission Award**  
Carlee Knott

**Community Service Award**  
Domonique Brace

**Spirit Award**  
Leia Cooper-Rigg

**Leadership Award**  
Alexis Murray

**League for Life Award**  
Lisa Whiting Dobson

**Woman To Watch Award**  
Megan English

**Women Building Better Communities Award**  
Membership Council and New Member Committee:

Risa Tran-TenBrink  
Carlee Knott  
Alexis Scovel  
Chelsea Stevens  
Elizabeth Townsley



Charcuterie for a Cause Recruitment



Lady Classic Caddie Auction Proceeds to JLL