

JUNIOR LEAGUE of WICHITA

women IN A league

OF THEIR OWN



EIGHTY-TWO YEARS AGO, a group of women joined together to provide free milk and ice for the community. In October 1932, they opened a resale shop providing affordable clothing and household items. Since this organization of women volunteers began, they have grown to over 800 members and have contributed over \$5.4 million to the Wichita community through projects and training programs. Who are they? The Junior League of Wichita, Inc. (JLW).

To celebrate their 75th anniversary, JLW raised and donated \$1.5 million to the Sedgwick County Zoo for construction of the Pride of the Plains exhibit in 2000. "For nine years, *Big Cat Day* and *Lions, Lollipops and You On Parade*, the predecessors to Kids' Zoobilee, have helped to sustain the zoo endowment, which provides funds to support zoo exhibits," said Melissa Graham, Zoo Special Events Manager.

Last year, this project reached almost 2,500 children and adults and grossed \$40,000. The money raised was split equally between the zoo and JLW for community projects. "All the money we raise goes straight back into the community," said Charissa Jarboe Gale, JLW Director of Community Relations.

This year's Zoobilee will be June 2. "It's going to be great," said Angie Steven, Zoobilee chair. "There are twenty food vendors, including Bella Luna and the Texas Roadhouse. For the older kids, Music Theatre of Wichita will perform Disney's 'High School Musical.' And the ticket price covers everything." Tickets are \$15 in advance or \$17 the day of the event.

"There will be arts and crafts sponsored by Home Depot and Monart School of the Arts," said Naomi Shapiro, Chair Elect. "We have wonderful sponsors including (but not limited to) Reddi Industries, Fugate Enterprises, Rand Graphics, 105.3 The Buzz, Cox Communications, and Boeing who provide monetary support and in-kind gifts."

Money Talks: Financial Literacy for Teens was one of the many projects to benefit from the 2006 Zoobilee. JLW partnered with Youth Entrepreneurs of Kansas for this project, which teaches high school students how to manage credit and finances and avoid such problems as bankruptcy and credit card debt. The investment in the community for this program is more than \$10,000.

Reading Rocks: Literacy for Lifelong Learning is a one-year collaboration of the Wichita Public Schools, Wichita Public Library, and the Junior League of Wichita. New library books have been donated to three Wichita public elementary schools, where over 1,000 students will be impacted in the first year. JLW is investing more than \$60,000 in the community through this program.

Annual projects like these are funded by the profits from JLW fundraisers: the Holiday Galleria, Kids' Zoobilee, the Junior League Shop, and the *Women of Great Taste* cookbook.

It takes hundreds of member volunteers to provide this kind of service, leadership, and charitable contributions to the greater Wichita area. JLW is currently accepting new members, so if you are interested in making a difference, now is the time. For more information, log on to www.jlwichita.org.

"It's the best thing I've ever been involved in," said Lynn Ward, JLW 2006-2007 President. ●

~B.D. THARP



Photos courtesy of Tracie Rodehaver & Sedgwick County Zoo

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KEYWORD

ORGANIZATIONS