



**JUNIOR LEAGUE
OF LOS ANGELES, INC.**
Women building better communities®

Spring
2017

Distinguished State Leaders Highlight Public Policy Session



This past November, the Junior League of Los Angeles (JLLA) hosted California State Treasurer John Chiang and Los Angeles County Supervisor and former California State Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas at the third session of JLLA's Public Policy Institute. JLLA sustainer and past president, Beth Quillen Thomas, moderated the event.

The session was devoted to the topics of state and federal government, but our esteemed guests also discussed engagement in the local community and shared their own insights on how to best get involved in government, the importance of mentorship, and their experiences with public challenges. Though the session delved into serious topics, there were light hearted moments as well. When Chiang gave instructions

on how to use an online tool he developed to return Californians' unclaimed property, one JLLA attendee checked the site on her phone to discover she had \$3.85 waiting for her! The crowd cheered. It was a fun and informative night overall, with important lessons from both Ridley-Thomas and Chiang.

Specifically, Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas has been heavily involved in Empower LA, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment in Los



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community
connections
issue 2

A member of The Association
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Angeles. Added to the City Charter in 1999, the Neighborhood Councils were established to bridge the gap between elected city officials and constituents. Neighborhood Council participants are people looking to make a difference in their communities, and almost 100 neighborhood councils have been formed since its founding 25 years ago. The goal is to raise the civic IQ of constituents by helping residents engage in the issues that are most important to them, such as safe roads, health care, and transportation. Ridley-Thomas talked at length about the benefits for both city leaders and communities, saying, "I am pleased to have been fundamentally party to it and as a result of it, I am a better public servant."



State Treasurer John Chiang also addressed what he feels is the biggest financial issue facing Californians today:

income inequality. While California is fortunate to have a large economy, the high cost of housing has contributed to income inequality in the state. Chiang recounted some of the challenges he faced as state controller during the financial crisis of 2008, including the difficulties related to balancing an unrealistic budget and his desire to provide financial transparency to Californians despite being met with significant resistance. Chiang believes an informed populace is the best path for a strong California.



When asked about their greatest influences, both Chiang and Ridley-Thomas cited their families, as well as the importance of finding mentors in your field to provide guidance throughout your career.

Ever the ambitious bunch, the audience asked the best ways to get involved. Chiang had this final piece of advice, which JLLA members will surely take to heart, "Learn more about whatever you're passionate about and get engaged!"



"A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives."

~Jackie Robinson

Dear Community
Connections Readers,

Welcome to the 2017 Spring
Connections! Thank you for reading

this issue and for your continued support and partnership. It's been a busy year and it's hard to believe we are already in the spring! During the 1st half of the League year, we had many incredible accomplishments and we have much to look forward to for the remainder of the year. In January, we proudly unveiled our Community Impact statement:

"The Junior League of Los Angeles empowers our members to improve access to resources for Los Angeles area transition-age foster youth and underserved students seeking higher education."

Our Impact Statement focuses not only on the areas where we seek to improve the community, but also calls out our desire to empower our members to create significant and lasting change. Our members are a diverse and talented group of leaders who identify and tackle critical challenges and inspire shared solutions with compassion, understanding and a collaborative spirit.

This edition of Community Connections focuses on how we are embracing our Community Impact statement by highlighting the work we do to improve the community, our advocacy efforts in our focus areas and the impact of volunteering and leadership development on our members.

This spring we have had many exciting opportunities to go "All In" with our Community Impact statement. During the week of March 13th we organized a Community Impact Week with our four community partners: Alliance for Children's Rights, Children's Bureau, Mar Vista Family Center and The People Concern/ Daybreak. Our members had the opportunity to visit these partners and gained a deeper understanding of the critical issues with which they are confronted and how JLLA can continue to be an effective partner to address the needs of the communities each organization serves. Thank you to each of our community partners for spending time with our membership!

On March 11th and 25th our New Members organized "Thrive Through Literacy" events across the city to coincide with Read Across California Month. They distributed books to children in need while inspiring them about the adventure of reading and introducing them to literacy resources within their local communities.

In upcoming "Days at City Halls", our members will have the opportunity to visit several city halls in our metropolitan area in order to connect with local government officials and to learn about the role of advocacy and how to engage in public policy.

The Junior League of Los Angeles continues to build upon a legacy of being agents of positive change in a complicated world. In order to continue to make an impact, we need your financial support and partnership at a time when local community engagement and leadership is even more critical. I invite you to join us on Saturday, May 6th for our Spring fundraiser, Angeleno Night, at Union Station. It will be a glittering evening celebrating all things Los Angeles and evoking the "Old Hollywood" era- you won't want to miss this event!

All the amazing work that has been accomplished this year would not have been possible without the outstanding leadership of the Board of Directors and Management Council and the extraordinary commitment of our entire membership. This year, I have had the privilege of getting to know so many of our wonderful members and I am deeply grateful for the unwavering dedication and enthusiasm that all of you exhibit as you work to move our mission forward. I am so profoundly honored to serve as president and I cannot thank each of you enough for your tireless service to JLLA.

As we near the home stretch of this League year, I encourage each of us to look for opportunities to embrace the vision of our community impact statement and consider: *How can I make a difference in just one person's life? What will be my legacy of impact?*

Warmest regards,

Ness Okonkwo
President, 2016-2017
Junior League of Los Angeles

Vicki Clark: Welcoming the New Year with Inspiration and Laughter



On a rainy Tuesday evening in January, at Le Meridien Delfina Santa Monica, a packed room waited to hear Vicki Clark speak. Clark, a member of the Peter F. Drucker Foundation's training team, Senior Governance Consultant for BoardSource, and AJLI consultant, has devoted the past 30 years of her life to building capacity in organizations and inspiring community leaders.

The meeting began with opening remarks from President Ness Okonkwo, who unveiled JLLA's new community impact statement:

"The Junior League of Los Angeles empowers our members to improve access to resources for Los Angeles area transition age foster youth and underserved students seeking higher education"

This well-rounded statement was the jumping off point for Vicki as she came to the podium. She greeted the standing-room-only crowd with a large smile and a reminder to "make sure to focus efforts on the impact on the JLLA member, not just on the community". This was a refreshing exclamation because the needs of the members and the training opportunities can get lost among the many projects, drives and fundraising events they all work so hard to accomplish.

Vicki not only inspired those who attended the January General Membership Meeting, but prior to her talk she presented a special lecture for the Sustainers on "11 Commandments of Wildly Successful Women". Some of her key points included:

- Stepping out of your comfort zone to achieve new goals
- Making a plan to defy the odds
- Seeing mistakes as road signs and not roadblocks
- Taking time out for self-care

Vicki highlighted that women are more likely to give our time, money and resources, even when we have less of it to share. Therefore, women will be the driving force to shape the

future and change the world! She notes, ***"The women and legacy of the Junior League have always been on the cutting edge of training, advocacy and woman-to-woman support, no matter the age or life-stage."***



Everyone left feeling empowered, inspired and challenged to take on a new year of planned community impact service projects, JLLA events and leadership development opportunities.

League Advisor Highlight: Meredith Johnson



"You get as much out of JLLA as you put in." This is something I have told several JLLA members both as New Member Advisor and a League Advisor. This is why I chose to be in leadership ever since I graduated from my New Member Year. I met so many amazing and inspiring women my first year and I knew I wanted to continue with JLLA. I joined JLLA to meet other civic-minded women and build lasting friendships. However, I continued in leadership because I wanted to build upon the amazing work of my fellow members.

I decided to become an Assistant after my New Member year

because it is the only time a member can experience that role. I was the Assistant to the Training Vice President and in this role I learned more about the League than in any other position I've held. I realized the importance of training our members to be good volunteers. What I learned inspired me to be more involved with the League.

I wanted to ensure that the incoming class of New Members would have the same amazing experience as I did. I knew I could do this by continuing in



leadership and becoming a New Member Advisor. I enjoyed shaping the New Members' League careers and facilitating lasting friendships, and am proud to say that several of my New Members have continued in leadership and truly impacted JLLA.

Unfortunately I had to move on from that position so others could have the same great opportunity, but I knew I still wanted to shape League members' careers. It was an easy choice to become a League Advisor. In this role, we are empowering those in leadership to learn how to resolve issues or problems in their own council. Each leader developed their own rules and expectations at the beginning of the year. During a recent council meeting, one of the leaders shared her lessons learned from the first half of the year and told

the group what she would have done differently at the beginning of the year. Being a great leader is not just learning how to delegate, but also learning from your experiences.

I am thankful for JLLA and everything it offers. I took advantage of the opportunities afforded to me by the League and I encourage all members to do the same. By giving back to the League, I have learned new leadership skills and developed lasting friendships. I have learned to become a more empowered woman with the support and training from JLLA.



Annual Giving Fund Member Spotlights

**Katie Dru,
Active**



Q: Why did you start giving that first year?

A: I transferred to JLLA in 2011. I chose to donate beyond my dues because, to me, giving is an essential part of being a volunteer. How can I ask others to support JLLA if I don't do so myself?

Q: What motivates you to keep giving every year?

A: I get so much more back from JLLA than I put in. I get a sense of community, connections throughout the city, extraordinary leadership training, countless opportunities to give back, and an amazing network of women as my friends. I also have served on the Board, and know from that experience just how much each additional dollar amplifies JLLA's ability to carry out its mission.

Q: Best thing you love about JLLA?

A: The opportunities to be a leader and to learn new skills.

**Laura Jane Kessner,
Active**



Q: Why did you start giving that first year?

A: Because I want to support the mission of JLLA through my time and financial support.

Q: What motivates you to keep giving every year?

A: I understand that Annual Giving comprises a critical part of our budget. We rely on those funds to support our exceptional training programs. Also in order to apply for grants, it is important to demonstrate that our members financially support JLLA.

Q: Best thing you love about JLLA?

A: The training and being around incredible women from whom I have learned so very much.

**Elizabeth Curtis,
Sustainer**



Q: Why did you start giving that first year?

A: Our dues to JLLA and AJLI really only cover the overhead costs of Rainey House and our small staff, so it's important for JLLA to have the financial flexibility for any opportunities or needs that arise. Making an additional gift at the dues deadline is an easy way to contribute every year.

Q: What motivates you to keep giving every year?

A: I'm interested in keeping JLLA strong for the community, and for current and future members to benefit from the amazing trainings in development, projects, communications, etc. available to all members.

Q: Best thing you love about JLLA?

A: I am very proud of what the League has accomplished with so many community partners over the years.

Angeleno Night

What's fancy, fun, full of interesting people and supports a great cause? It's Angeleno Night—the annual Junior League event you won't want to miss! Mark your calendars for Saturday, May 6th and get your most fabulous attire ready for an amazing night out at Union Station in downtown Los Angeles. But we're not just going to tell you to go -- we're going to tell you WHY you should!



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Top 5 Reasons To Attend Angeleno Night

#5: It's getting a makeover!

The Angeleno Night committee is introducing some exciting new changes this year. JLLA is cashing in its casino chips for an even grander theme...Old Hollywood! This theme was carefully chosen as a way to pay homage to the history of our new venue, which was built in the height of the golden age of Hollywood and film. Take a gamble and trust us: you'll love the new scene.

#4: The night is packed with all of the elements that make any event a smashing success.

While you'll notice some changes this year, you can still look forward to all of the things you've loved about past years' events: black-tie attire, live entertainment provided by DJ KISS and dancing, locally crafted hors d'oeuvres and cocktails, photo booths, a wine pull, and a curated silent auction that will include high quality items and exciting experiences.



#3: An amazing venue awaits...

Angeleno Night will take place at Union Station in downtown Los Angeles. The event will be held in the ticket concourse, which has recently been restored to the original look and feel of the year it was built, as well as the south patio. Built in 1939, this venue has just the right blend of history, charm, and glamour -- it's the perfect location for a night like this, with the added bonus of amazing photo ops!

#2: You're in for a celebration of everything that's great about Los Angeles.

Angeleno Night will truly be a celebration of our city and the things we love about it. Throughout the evening, you will enjoy exciting experiences and vendors that are unique to our area -- such as Golden Road Brewery's beer and The Bosco's interactive photo booths -- as well as individuals and organizations that reflect the diversity of our wonderful city.

#1: You can truly make an impact on our community just by buying a ticket.

By attending Angeleno Night, you'll be supporting an event that provides funding towards all of the Junior League's projects and programs that create lasting change in our community, specifically in the areas of education and foster youth. To the right are just some of the ways that your donations to the League could promote tangible, impactful action throughout our city.

So there you have it: 5 reasons why you can't say no to this amazing night! We want each and every one of you to feel like you can help make this event a success for the ultimate betterment of our community. If you'd like to get more involved, you can provide introductions to potential sponsors or donate items to the silent auction or wine pull. Can't wait to see you all there!



Project Drives Pack a Punch!



Living in Los Angeles can seem like a dream: perfect 75 degree sunny weather, a short trip to the mountains, beaches, or deserts and access to some of the best restaurants and entertainment in the world. Under its sunny façade, however, Los Angeles is currently facing two major issues throughout the city: homelessness and low literacy rates among impoverished communities. Los Angeles residents, no matter their neighborhood, have witnessed the hundreds of thousands of homeless people, many of whom are mentally ill. A little further under the surface, and less visible, is the staggering low literacy rates. For instance, only 35% of fourth graders in our public schools can read proficiently at grade level (readingpartners.org). The Junior League of Los Angeles has taken steps to make a difference in these two areas through our annual Project Drives.

The Helping Hand Bags Project Drive benefits JLLA community partner, Daybreak and the broader population of people suffering from homelessness in Los Angeles. The bags are packed with necessities such as soap, socks, tampons, a toothbrush, toothpaste, and snacks that can be given to those in

need. League members helped assemble 250 hand bags at a Done-In-A-Day event.

This multi-month drive raised over \$2,000 through hand bag sales for Daybreak, which is the only organization on the Westside that offers services to homeless women suffering from long-term debilitating mental illnesses and poverty. JLLA partners with Daybreak to offer a Women's Empowerment Program where JLLA members visit once weekly with a curriculum designed to help inspire and motivate women to succeed. JLLA programming teaches life skills and tools that foster confidence and inspire change.

To help address low literacy rates in Los Angeles, JLLA spearheads a book drive to collect Scholastic books and distributes them to all four of JLLA's community partners: Daybreak, Alliance for Children's Rights, Children's Bureau and Mar Vista Family Center. JLLA collected monetary and in-kind donations and evenly distributed books to each community partner based on their clients' reading levels, percentage of Spanish speakers and other needs. The goal of this drive is to provide each community partner with books that will help improve literacy and encourage reading among families at home. JLLA raised \$1,250 in book sales. We also received a generous donation of new K-12 books from a community member. In total over 439 books were donated to our community partners!

Although buying a single book may not seem like it will cure chronic illiteracy in our city's impoverished youth, every book makes an impact. As a Kindergarten teacher in a Title I school in South Central, I see the need, but more importantly, the desire of these kids and their families to read. In order to do so, however, they need access to books, and in homes that are barely scraping by with rent and food, books aren't on the 'must buy' list. I believe reading is the most important skill, as it permeates all other disciplines, and serves as a



gateway to lifelong engagement in academics and school. Reading has the ability to reach my most difficult students who already 'hate' school at the age of five by validating their interests and engaging them in learning. Giving a book to a child is the most special gift because you are not only giving them an escape to a different world, but also a stepping stone to a brighter future.

In addition to these drives, community member Stephanie Kiesau made an incredible contribution to Projects Council in 2017, donating over 100

stuffed animals from her personal collection. These stuffed animals were in new condition and worth over \$1,000. They went to the Children's Bureau Christmas Store, which serviced approximately 800 people this holiday season. Each family was able to get at least one stuffed animal and each child also received a book and a toy.

We are so grateful to everyone who has contributed to the JLLA Project Drives! Your generosity makes a significant impact in our ability to serve the needs of our community.



Mar Vista Family Center



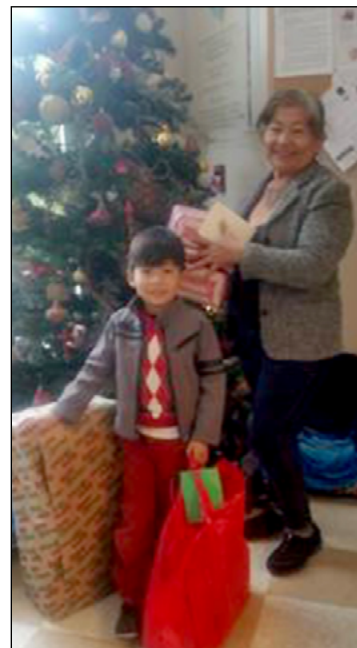
The Junior League of Los Angeles (JLLA) historically has had strong and long-lasting relationships with its community partners. This point was noted by Vicki Clark during her inspirational presentation at the first general meeting of 2017. JLLA's partnership with the Mar Vista Family Center is a great example of our commitment to our community partners.

Through our six-year partnership with the Mar Vista Family Center, we support an after-school program for kids aged eight to twelve. This year, JLLA is working with 25 children and has planned activities related to an "Around the World" theme. Every Monday evening for six

weeks, members plan a craft and an educational component for the children. The first half of the year the students learned about Pakistan (salt scrub), Malawi (pottery), Vietnam (lanterns), Spain (castanets), Guatemala (friendship bracelets), and Australia (dot art).

Not only does JLLA sustain relationships, but we also seek new ways to serve our community partners. For the first time in 2016, during the Holiday season, JLLA senior leadership adopted three families connected to the Mar Vista Family Center. These families were identified by Mar Vista's Executive Director, Lucia Diaz, and she provided their holiday lists to members of JLLA's Management Council and Board of Directors. The

Management Council adopted a single mother raising her child and grandchild. The Board adopted a family of



six - a mother, a father and four children. Our Projects VP, Liz Svatek, along with some of her friends, spearheaded the adoption of a family with a single mother. In total, over \$800 of gifts were donated enabling the families to have a brighter holiday season.

Our partnership with the Mar Vista Family Center continues to flourish. We are excited to develop creative and innovative ways to make more of an impact on these families in need.



Spotlight on SPAC: Meet our Delegates

For those who don't know, SPAC stands for State Public Affairs Committee.

This group is responsible for representing JLLA to other Junior Leagues across California and to the California State Legislature. They attend monthly calls and quarterly meetings across California to advocate for the interests of JLLA within the government. In addition to supporting or opposing legislation by writing to lawmakers' offices, they also think about laws that SPAC itself may want to write. With all of that legislative activity, it can be hard to put a face to this Committee, so let's meet our savvy SPAC Delegates for this year.



**Mariana Aroditis –
Senior SPAC Delegate**

Mariana joined SPAC to see how JLLA affects legislation that aids our focus areas and to see how JLLA collaborates with other groups across California. That collaboration has been “remarkable” for her to witness and has been a huge takeaway for her. Another part of her placement she enjoys is seeing how legislation happens and anticipating how a law could have unintended effects on other existing laws. Her role as Senior Delegate has taught Mariana the importance of alliances, connections and being prepared.



**Erin Wolfson –
Junior SPAC Delegate**

While she currently works in the private sector, Erin has a background in government and politics which led her to pursue a role within SPAC. Her favorite part of her placement is working directly with legislators to advocate for the League's issue areas. It allows her to feel like change is really happening and she is a direct part of it. She has learned a lot about what's going on in the Junior Leagues across the state and enjoys not only finding the common ground among the Leagues but also identifying where our work and priorities are different.

Both of these ladies feel that SPAC is the best-kept secret in JLLA, and encourage you to learn more about this Committee. Throughout our daily lives and our volunteer work in JLLA we all see injustices and things we wish we could change. SPAC gives you the opportunity to actually enact those changes. If you are passionate about developing positive changes for women and children in California (and I know you are, because you're in Junior League), please consider applying for a placement on the State Public Affairs Committee!

JLLA Training Developing Women Civic Leaders

Many people think JLLA is primarily focused on direct service programs that improve the lives of women and children in Los Angeles. We have such a rich history of transformative community programs that it's easy to forget JLLA isn't just about what you give- it's also about what you get. Aside from the satisfaction of making a difference in Los Angeles, JLLA also gives its members incredible opportunities to grow as volunteers and as people. A core tenet of JLLA's mission centers around developing the potential of women and improving the community through the effective action and leadership of **trained volunteers**. Through an annual program of training and education, covering a range of workshops, seminars and events, our members make a significant impact on our community through what we have learned.

JLLA offers training programs like the Leadership Development Institute which helps members discover their personal leadership style and become more effective leaders both within the League and in the community. Board Fellows partners members with local non-profit Board of Directors and educates members about the issues Board of Directors face and

the skills they need to best serve on a non-profit board. JLLA also offers one-off training sessions which allow members to experience a wide range of topics like public policy, fundraising and career development.

At the January "Career Transitions" training led by member Mary Beth Ferrante, we learned how to find your passion in a career while keeping a personal balance. Mary Beth should know as she has held many high-powered jobs in finance and now is a career coach helping new moms and others returning to the workforce to find their passion and turn that into a fulfilling career.

One of the most important aspects of JLLA is our ability to train future civic and community leaders and that comes from more than just hands-on volunteering. As with all things JLLA, what you put in is what you get out, so please take advantage of the multitude of learning opportunities at JLLA. Make 2017 the year where you will take more than just your required number of trainings. Do it for the League. Do it for yourself. Remember, the more informed and educated you are as an individual, the better you can serve JLLA and the LA community.



INSPIRE

ADVERTISE IN INSPIRE! *JLLA's Yearly Magazine*

About Inspire

Published annually, Inspire is a full color magazine that serves as the official publication of JLLA. Its mission is to inform the community of the many events and causes that JLLA spearheads. Inspire serves as a source of news and information for JLLA membership and our community partners and as a tool to recruit those interested in joining our League. Inspire also covers our history and highlights our projects and fundraisers to demonstrate our achievements since our founding in 1925.

Circulation

A total of 2500 copies of Inspire are mailed annually in the summer. Distribution includes our membership, donors and community partners. Inspire has additional distribution via our website www.jlla.org.

JLLA Membership Profile

- 1100 Members provide over 60,000 volunteer hours annually
- Employed outside the home 85%
- Undergraduate degree 98%
- Post graduate degree 33%
- Household income of \$100K+ 50%

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Please contact us as soon as possible!

JLLA IN THE
COMMUNITY

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advertise in Inspire

JLLA Mission Statement: The Junior League of Los Angeles is an organization of women committed to promoting volunteerism, developing the potential of women and to improving the community through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable.

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