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# The Junior League has given itself a tough act to follow

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The Junior League of Arlington just wrapped up its 25th year, and organization members didn't bother to give themselves even a modest plaudit or two. That means somebody needs to do it for them.

Here's the summary: Over the past quarter-century, league members have provided financial or volunteer help to 108 nonprofit service organizations, some of which the league helped create.

Members have raised more than \$2 million and reinvested it in those 108 causes, and have donated more than 1 million hours of time.

"We'll beat those numbers easily for our second quarter-century," said Arlington Junior League President Sabra Ellis.

Maybe so, but it's a tough act to follow. For example, the league created what is now Dental Health for Arlington, which provides free or low-cost dental care for low-income adults and children.

"The league also began the Arlington Rainbow Room pantry after we discovered that children being taken in by Child Protective Services often showed up with nothing at all, sometimes even a toothbrush or a spare change of clothes," said Ellis. "So the pantry supplies clothes and supplies for those children, and we continue to provide money and volunteers for the pantry."

This year alone the league will invest more than \$50,000 in a variety of projects, including the AIDS Outreach center (HIV prevention and advocacy of sound HIV public policy), Friends of the Public Library (fundraising for the city library system), Boys & Girls Clubs of Arlington (grants and volunteers), Community Partners of Tarrant County (basic needs of abused children) and SafeHaven (supporting victims of domestic violence via the former Women's Shelter). There's also a program in which members walk horses ridden by handicapped children, an activity both highly therapeutic and a delight for the kids. Volunteers are also involved with the Make a Wish Foundation and an immunization program for children.

Part of the league's formula for success, Ellis says, is that it has been willing to change with the times.

"As with other organizations, it's getting increasingly more difficult to find volunteers," she said. "We feel we have a really good product that women should be excited about being part of."

When the Arlington Junior League chapter was chartered 25 years ago, the *Junior* meant women ages 21 to 40. Most members were homemakers. These days, 80 percent of members are working, and slightly more than 25 percent are single.

"We also long ago dropped that 40-as-a-maximum-age business," Ellis said. "We now find that it's exactly women over 40 who have time for the volunteerism that's a critical part of our mission."

In these times, too, most league meetings take place in the evenings. Members volunteer in a wide variety of nonprofit organizations; a minimum contribution of 60 hours annually is required.

Additional volunteer hours are required for the league's two main fundraisers, Holiday Magic in late fall

and a spring golf tournament.

There are also some financial costs and training requirements for new members, whom the league calls provisionals.

It's not a lightly accepted role.

"When provisionals finish their training I guarantee they'll have a terrific sense of what community and participation are all about, as well as how every one of us can make a real difference," Ellis said confidently. "We expect every member to become something of an expert in volunteer and leadership skills."

### **Junior League of Arlington**

The league has about 130 active members and typically adds 30 to 40 every year.

**Open house:** Prospective members can get information at 6:30 p.m. July 19 at the Center for Community Service, 4002 W. Pioneer Parkway.

**Online:** [www.jlarlington.org](http://www.jlarlington.org)