

# BLUEPRINTS



## 85th Anniversary Issue 1923 - 2008

### JLSN Reaches Another Milestone

Since the founding of the Junior League of Stamford-Norwalk by eleven community-minded women on February 9, 1923, many milestones have been reached and celebrated. As we mark our 85th Anniversary, taking time to reflect on how we began, what we've accomplished and where we're going seems appropriate.

#### Defining a Milestone



Milestones originated as markers constructed on roads to reassure travelers that the proper path was being followed and to indicate distance traveled, or the remaining distance to the desired destination. Today, the word milestone is often used to describe phases of a project. In this sense, a milestone not only signifies distance traveled (key stages in a project) but also indicates

direction of travel since decisions made at milestones may alter the route through the project plan. Both definitions apply to the accomplishments and goals of JLSN over the past 85 years.

#### The Starting Point



In ancient Rome, the "Golden Milestone" marked the center of the Empire from which all measurements originated. Our starting point is our Mission. JLSN is an organization of women committed to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of

women and improving the community through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable. In 1923, JLSN's founders set out from this point and began serving the needs of our surrounding communities. Soon more than 40 members were working with charities including the Visiting Nurse Association, the Children's Home, Neighborhood House, the Red Cross and Stamford Hospital.

### Community Needs Guide Our Path



From this promising beginning, JLSN has founded or participated in the establishment of more than 80 community agencies including the Fairfield County Women's Center at Norwalk Community College, The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum, Domestic Violence Services, The River Project, Shelter for the Homeless (Pacific House), The Volunteer Center of Southwestern Fairfield County, Weir Farm Docent Program and

the Women's Crisis Center. In 2007, we set our course for another milestone with the **Building Healthy Families** initiative, which promotes the benefits of a healthy lifestyle through education, resource materials, workshops and fitness events for parents and children. Whether measured by the successful transition of a project to a community partner or the expression of joy on a child's face at a holiday party, milestones are goals worth reaching.

#### A Map for the Future



This year we celebrate our past successes and we re-dedicate ourselves to our Mission. JLSN's Community Assessment and Program Development Committee works with agencies and community leaders in our area to determine the current needs of women and children in our service area and how the League can best meet those needs. Our past accomplishments are a guideline, but we are prepared and excited for the challenges ahead.

Inside, we've compiled a brief history of the League. With so many accomplishments over the years, not every one could be included, but we celebrate them all the same. We've also asked members to share their experiences on some of our more recent projects. JLSN would not be the vital organization it is today without the dedicated efforts of all of our members and supporters over the years. Thank you to all of you; we look forward to reaching our next milestone.

# JLSN'S 85 YEARS

- 1923** On February 9, the first officers of the Stamford Junior League were elected; there were 40 members serving six charitable organizations.
- 1924 to 1935** The League increased to 129 members, working for 11 organizations. Volunteer work started for the Stamford Girls' Club and the Stamford Community Chest. The League is commended for its assistance to Unemployed Relief Committee. Cooperative effort started with the Big Sister organization and with the Girl Scouts.
- 1936 to 1945** Child Guidance Clinic established. Stamford Hospital Hostess Desk started as League project. The Stamford Workshop (Rehabilitation Center) started with a gift of \$1,000 from the League.
- 1946 to 1955** The Association of Junior Leagues of America (AJLA) citation for Outstanding Achievement in Community Service awarded to JLSN. Money from the League donated to the Stamford Arts for Youth Council. Blue Notes Glee Club formed in 1950. Branch of Toy Clinics of America Inc. formed as a new project.
- 1956 to 1965** Project establishing a recreation program at Southfield Village in Stamford accepted. The Art Education program expanded to schools in New Canaan and Stamford. *Going Places* guidebook was written as a community service. Lay-Reader Program was launched in New Canaan. League voted in two new projects: Aid to Blind Services and support of Homemaker Service in Stamford. STEP (School Tutorial & Enrichment Program) pilot project initiated in three Stamford Schools, jointly with the Stamford Volunteer Bureau. Lease for the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion in Norwalk signed. Headquarters set up in the Mansion and long-term plan begun to restore the Mansion as a public museum under sponsorship of JLSN.
- 1966 to 1975** Named changed to Junior League of Stamford-Norwalk, Inc. on April 1, 1966. Thrift Shop opened in South Norwalk as permanent fundraiser. League collaborates for second year with Connecticut State Employment Service providing volunteers to interview Stamford and Norwalk youth for summer jobs. Program 1:1, tutorial program for 3-year-olds, enlarged to six locations in Norwalk and Stamford. Voluntary Action Center (VAC) started in partnership with Stamford United Way and Mayor's office. New projects The Norwalk Family Planning Center, Wilton YES and Westport Cancer Education were approved by membership.
- 1976 to 1985** Community Return, Mansion School Services, Program 1:1 VAC turned over to the community. New projects approved: Domestic Violence Prevention; Norwalk Maritime Center; VIE, Senior Rights Assistance; Friendly Visitors Service and STAR projects. Provisional Class wrote, published and distributed a 16-page booklet, *You Are Not Alone*, detailing services available to battered women in Lower Fairfield County. Wilton Historical Society Project begun. JLSN approved a three-year Early Childhood Development Center Program with the Darien YMCA.

## 1920's



❖ The Junior League of Stamford-Norwalk began as the Junior League of Stamford on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1923.

## 1930's



❖ With the help of the Hospital Aid Society we opened the **Corridor Shop** at the Stamford Hospital.

## 1950's



❖ We sent shock waves with our radio programs for children, such as **The Magic Music Box**, broadcasted on WTSC for in-school listening.

## 1960's



❖ With guidance from Fairfield County on Alcoholism, an alcohol education project was started and drug education programs were presented in the schools.

## JLSN'S 85 YEARS

**1986 to 1990** JLSN participated in Connecticut's 350th Women's Celebration in conjunction with the opening of our Women's Resource Center at the Darien-Norwalk YMCA. Pet Companions placed pets at area nursing homes and provided one-to-one relationships with residents. Domestic Violence task force became a project focusing on the children at the Women's Crisis Center. Volunteer recruitment program developed for the Shelter for the Homeless. Norwalk Maritime Center opens with a \$120,000 grant for a touch tank from JLSN.

**1991 to 1995** Better Beginnings new parent education project is launched in collaboration with St. Joseph's Hospital. Weir Farm and Prevention through Education projects adopted. *Off the Hook* cookbook featured on national television show. Public Affairs Committee participated in environmental task force. JLSN honored by past projects The Women's Crisis Center and The Maritime Center. Focus areas were identified as Child Welfare, Positive Youth Development and Self Sufficiency of Women.

**1996 to 2000** Girls Achieve!, a science enrichment program for 4th and 5th grade girls was started. Voluntary Action Center for Mid-Fairfield honored JLSN. Membership approved a Strategic Plan for the League. Project VISION, (Volunteers Immersed in Stamford and Initiating Opportunities in Norwalk) is created. JLSN celebrated its 75th Anniversary. Reading Explorers, a program designed to improve reading skills of elementary school aged children was implemented. The Provisional Class conducted a garden revitalization at the Lathon Wider Community Center. Blue Notes celebrated their 50th Anniversary.

**2001 to 2005** The Carver Reading Crew literacy program for elementary school children was implemented at Norwalk's George Washington Carver Center. The Community Leadership Award was created to recognize individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the community. The JLSN Emergency Fund was established after the tragedy of 9/11. The Fairfield County Women's Center was established in partnership with Norwalk Community College and opened in the fall of 2004. JLSN launched a website. The 2005 Spring Provisional class organized the first Bound Around the Sound 5K road race at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport.

**2006 to 2008** JLSN organized a Hurricane Katrina Relief Effort sending funds, school supplies and backpacks for children relocated by the storm. JLSN Sustainers and PAC/SPAC committee hosted an Emergency Preparedness public forum for all eight of our service towns. JLSN presented first Kids in the Kitchen event in conjunction with the AJLI initiative on childhood obesity. Mission Accomplished hosted a mother's day luncheon for the single mothers at Malta House. *Building Healthy Families* initiative launched in fall of 2007 to provide health, nutrition and fitness programs as well as education and resources for community members of all ages. Healthy Parents nutrition education program in partnership with Stepping Stones Museum for Children approved and inaugurated in the spring of 2008.

### 1970's



❖ In 1970, we created a one-to-one tutorial program for 3-year olds in Norwalk and later expended into the **Carver Center** and **South Norwalk Congregational Church**.

### 1980's



❖ **Forging Community Partnerships: Responsibilities, Resources and Results** was attended by over 200 community leaders to set new priorities and directions for future collaborations.

### 1990's



❖ **CAPD** brought a new project, **Girl's Achieve**, to membership for approval.

### 2000's



❖ **Carver Reading Crew**, a literacy program for elementary school children was implemented at the George Washington Carver Center in Norwalk.

### Angel Tree Provides Christmas For New Moms and Babies



It is not easy being a first time mom. For the approximately thirty moms and their children in Family Center's Nurturing Families Network, being a new mom is made a little easier due to the support of weekly social worker visits and referrals to other state and local resources.

In 2002, Family Centers reached out to JLSN to provide Christmas gifts for the neediest moms and babies in the Nurturing Families Network. The League responded with unprecedented generosity and enthusiasm. Sustainer Bernadette Lynch was the program director for Nurturing Families Network (and has since retired) when the Angel Tree project began.

The Mission Accomplished Committee decorated a Christmas tree with ornaments with the names, child's age, and holiday wishes of these women and their babies. League members chose an ornament then purchased new toys, clothes, winter outerwear, diapers, and other necessities for these families. The first gift wrapping party was held at Bernadette Lynch's house. Family Centers' social workers then delivered the gifts to the families. The outpouring of holiday spirit and generosity by League members was truly overwhelming.

The Angel Tree wrapping party continues to be a popular event with League members. The League continues to provide these new moms and babies with the gifts and necessities that help to make their holidays special. For every League member who has participated in Angel Tree over the years, this event has been a way to truly make a difference in another woman's life.

Bernadette Lynch, JLSN Sustainer, and Melissa Lynch Davidson, JLSN Active



### Project VISION



In 1998, JLSN launched Project VISION (Volunteers Immersed in Stamford and Initiating Opportunities in Norwalk.) This multi-faceted community program focused on helping youth and families thrive and reach their full

potential. It provided a variety of volunteer opportunities in our service area. JLSN volunteers fulfilled our Mission through several programs, including Better Beginnings (New Parent Education and Families in Training), Express Yourself Arts Program, KidNet, The Garden Committee, Reading Explorers and Carver Reading Crew. The initiative presented the opportunity to work with community issues and build community partnerships with area residents, agencies and businesses.

Martha Witte  
President - 1999-2000

### Fairfield County Women's Center at Norwalk Community College

The FCWC promotes the advancement of women through educational programs and resources. The center is not only for the women at NCC, but those in the community as well. The best memory I have of the center is when I was one of three League members who helped a woman who had come to CT to escape an abusive husband. We offered no counseling, only agencies she could contact. We saw her several times, and then one day when I arrived there was a note from her thanking us for our help. She never returned to the Center. It wasn't the feel good factor of seeing a smile on her face but we knew we had made a difference.

Karen Gibbons  
President - 2007-2008

