

Civic Leader Profile: Carolyn Whiteside



When did you join the Junior League? 1983

Describe some of your Junior League projects and committee work. The Junior League appealed to me because it provided me with opportunities to volunteer at a number of different places.

As a Junior League volunteer, I worked with school children at Black Creek Pioneer Village, participated in the last “Toronto With Ease” publication (for people with disabilities) by doing all the PR and promotion for the booklet (I learned how to run a complete publicity campaign from that experience) and volunteered for the Royal Academy of Art’s fundraising ball. I was also active with the JLT Designer Showhouse fundraisers, which included managing the gift shops for the George Brown and Glendon houses – demanding roles that helped me learn how to run a retail establishment. I also worked as a designer liaison on the Ronald McDonald and MacLean Showhouses, as well as the JLT DelectABLES Designs fundraiser. Sitting on the Junior League of Toronto Board for a term as the Sustainer Chair was a great opportunity to see board work in action.

How has the Junior League impacted your life? The Junior League has taught me many things, including how to chair effective meetings, be assertive, manage fundraising events and develop good board governance. It has been very helpful in all my subsequent community volunteering. My knowledge of public relations that I gained through my JLT experience helped me obtain roles as chair of communications committees on three community boards. Having a Junior League background has given me the confidence to connect with government officials, Ministry of Health supervisors and United Way inspectors.

I’m proud to call myself a “Leaguer.” Every new role I’ve

accepted in the League has been something I knew nothing about, so it was a chance to learn new skills. I have gained confidence in myself and developed life-long friendships from my League connections.

Tell us about some of your community work outside of the Junior League.

Thanks to my Junior League connections, I spent a few years on the board at JobStart and a great many years on the board of CANES Home Support for Seniors, which I chaired for seven years. I still volunteer in my local church and in the Garden Club of Toronto, where I served a two-year term on their board of directors.