Civic Leader Profile: Martha S. Russel

When did you join the Junior League?

1971

Name some of your Junior League projects and committee work.

My Junior League experience has been quite varied. It has included being a Fundraiser Chair, Vice President of Training and Education and being the driver of lifelong Junior League membership,

How has the Junior League impacted your life?

The value of my Junior League experience can be measured in many ways; however, two in particular have allowed me to grow personally: the friendships of 30 years, and the training which gave me the initial skill set and confidence to sit on community boards.

The Junior League of Toronto is well known for the training it offers, and it definitely gave a "leg up" to those of us who wanted to make a meaningful difference in the community. As my community involvement increased, with the equivalent number of challenges, there was always a mentor to offer support, enabling me to take on more and more opportunities. I am often asked what came first--my passion for governance or my desire for a better community. After serving on numerous boards and committees, I see these as intrinsically connected, and I thank the Junior League for giving me the opportunity to develop both.

Describe some of your community work outside of the Junior League.

I have participated on more than 20 community, provincial, national and international boards and working committees, which has provided me with a vast depth of experience from which to draw. I am past President of Volunteer Toronto, and I currently serve as the Order of Saint Lazarus' Hospitaller for the Toronto Commandery and Vice-Chair of the National Palliative Care Project Committee. I am proud of my 25 years of work in hospice, first as an educator and advocate, and now as I work to build a free-standing hospice where people can end their lives peacefully with dignity.

I believe Toronto is a better city for the involvement of our members who sat at boardroom tables and dared to ask the challenging questions.