

# A Mother of Charities

Junior League of San Diego continues legacy as a launchpad for San Diego philanthropic work

BY DEANNA MURPHY



ANDREA MYERS: PHOTO COURTESY OF SELTZER CAPLAN MCMAHON VITEK ALL OTHER IMAGES BY AMANDA NOEL

**S**TEEPED IN HISTORY, FEW charitable organizations have a more distinct aura than Junior League. Despite its name, there is very little that's junior about the 119-year-old international organization. A network of chapters throughout the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and the United Kingdom, Junior League has served as not only a venerable means of organizing women in charitable endeavors within their communities, but also as a training ground for those volunteers to take their skills beyond its boundaries in the creation of new nonprofits. It was in that spirit that the Junior League of San Diego chapter was founded in 1929.

Nine decades later, JLSD remains faithfully committed to its mission to train and develop community volunteers while addressing issues within key focus areas. Of course, in 2020, that intention has been blanketed by a heavy overlay: COVID-19. That hasn't slowed current president and La Jolla resident Andrea Myers, who took the helm on July 1 of this year, deep in the throes of the pandemic. Clearly not one to shy from a challenge,

Myers, a partner in the San Diego-based law firm of Seltzer Caplan McMahon Vitek, was also in her third trimester of pregnancy with her second child. Undaunted, the ten-year JLSD member set to work on the ongoing project to fund the renovation of the organization's historic headquarters at 210 Maple Street in Banker's Hill. Originally built in 1916



Andrea Myers





for San Diego Zoo founder Harry Wegeforth, the home was purchased by the League in the 1980s and serves as the site of organizational meetings as well as community trainings and projects. “210 Maple is the hub of our activity,” says Myers. A modernized kitchen, dedicated lecture space, hi-tech conference rooms, and even outdoor space will support their ongoing and diverse efforts — as soon as public health ordinances allow for it.

Because one large project wasn’t enough, under Myers’ leadership, JLSD spearheaded a diaper bank to support those most in need of help during the COVID crisis, securing 20,000 diapers in just the program’s first two months. “The need is there and I think the desire to help is there, it’s just being able to leverage the power of women and community that we have and direct it in different ways,” says Myers of the group’s ability to quickly adapt to present needs.

The pandemic has also pushed JLSD to look at other ways to fundraise as its traditional events, such as the popular annual Food & Wine Festival at La Jolla Cove, are on hold. So, in a more conventional turn, this month, JLSD will release cookbook — the third

in its history and its first in 16 years — featuring 200 recipes contributed by League members and the supporting community.

Though Myers’ primary responsibilities lie within the umbrella of Junior League, she emphasizes the organization’s importance as a springboard for other nonprofits. “I like what the Junior League stands for,” she says. “It’s really a training organization for women geared at creating meaningful change in the community. That’s where they learn to be civic servants, that’s where they learn to be organizational volunteers. A lot of our members then move on to found other nonprofits and other bigger organizations in San Diego, and they all point back to the fact that they learned how to be a volunteer in the Junior League. I think that’s a really great legacy for us.”

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“We’re proud of our league,” she continues. “I think we’ve done a lot over the past 90 years. I think we’re going to continue even though it’s a strange time. I’ve said it before: The role of a Junior League woman has never been more important, and we’re going to pivot and do what we can to help the community during these tough times — especially during these tough times.” [jlsd.org](http://jlsd.org) 