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**Women Build**


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**Junior League success**

Over the last 15 years, the Junior League of Tyler, Texas, has given \$305,000 to Habitat for Humanity of Smith County. That money has enabled HFH Smith County to build eight Women Build houses.

The partnership is an example of how establishing local, long-term relationships with other organizations, such as the Junior League, can prove fruitful for Habitat affiliates. And Women Build can serve as the perfect vehicle to getting that relationship started.

The Tyler Junior League is a member of the national women's organization dedicated to promoting volunteerism and building better communities. The Tyler Junior League not only donates funds for a Women Build every other year, but they also place four League volunteers within the affiliate. These volunteers receive Habitat training and then partner with homeowner families to assist them with financial issues such as setting budgets and even decorating the home.

Hannah Walker, director of Family Services, said that the missions of HFH Smith County and the local Junior League are very similar, with volunteerism and family service high on the scale of each. Walker said the Tyler Junior League made it known that they were interested in a good mission match and good public relations so that they could raise awareness and more money.

"Look for the focus of your local Junior League so you can see if there is a match with your affiliate," Walker advised. "In our case, the League wanted to create a sustainable partnership that they described as 'leaving bricks and mortar in a family's life.'"

Kathy Bauman, of the Tyler Junior League, said that their League has a broad focus for giving, including areas involving youth, family, arts, education and health. She said that some Leagues have a narrower focus so some Habitat affiliates might not be as successful initially.

"But keep trying," Bauman said. "Because as local Leagues change, so do their focus and priorities. Don't be discouraged by a 'no' at first. It's all about establishing that relationship."

Bauman suggests inviting League members to Women Build events so that they can get a feel for the program and become informed about your work. "And certainly submit grant applications to your local Leagues on a regular basis," Bauman said. "Just always being mindful of the deadlines for project proposals and requirements."

The Junior League is one of many local organizations Habitat affiliates should consider when looking for organizations that can help your affiliate – and your Women Build program – raise funds and recruit volunteers to serve more families in need of housing.

Call your local Junior League today and get started building the relationship. To find out if there is a Junior League in your community, visit [www.ajli.org](http://www.ajli.org) and then visit the "Partnership Opportunities" page. There is a link at the bottom of the page to "[Locate a League](#)."

For any other outreach questions – or suggestions – feel free to contact the Women Build department at Habitat for Humanity International. Terry Gaar is Women Build's training and outreach specialist, and she can be contacted at (229) 410-7520 or at [wbttraining@habitat.org](mailto:wbttraining@habitat.org).

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