

Children's Museum Partners With Local Junior League

Many communities have organizations devoted to making them a better place to live. One such group is the Junior League, and this women's organization is a great source for nonprofits to turn to for financial and volunteer assistance.

Just ask officials with the Children's Museum of Phoenix (Phoenix, AZ).

As plans for the museum's \$12.3 million capital campaign, Childhood Dreams Built by You, began in 2001, a museum board member who also belonged to the Junior League of Phoenix (Phoenix, AZ) suggested they contact the local chapter for assistance.

Museum representatives submitted two proposals, one for volunteer support and one for financial support. The Junior League approved both, becoming one of the first supporters of the campaign with a \$250,000 naming gift (The Junior League of Phoenix Classroom) and more than 1,500 hours of volunteer support that continues yet today.

"The early commitment made a terrific difference to our ability to leverage other major gifts on the project," says Deborah Gilpin, museum president and chief executive officer. "The volunteer help truly made our programs possible when we had no site. Volunteers prepped materials, 'schlepped' materials, manned exhibits at community events and came to understand the museum very well. They became advocates for us."

Gilpin adds that, thanks to the partnership, hundreds of community members now have an affinity and sense of pride in the museum they helped make possible.

Gilpin offers the following advice to organizations seeking to partner with a local Junior League chapter or similar community-based organization:

- Invite the group along for support, but stay true to your vision. Do not give up design control.
- Determine volunteer availability as some chapters are unable to provide volunteers during the summer and early fall.
- Be prepared for annual changes in leadership. Expect the need for extra communication during this time.

Source: Deborah Gilpin, President and Chief Executive Officer, Children's Museum of Phoenix, Phoenix, AZ. Phone (602) 253-0501. E-mail: dgilpin@childmusephx.org