



## Junior League Helping Spark New Nonprofit Ideas, Improve Leadership

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There's an exciting feeling when helping develop or fund a particularly innovative or unique program. Reaching those who need a hand up and finding a more effective way to do so is what generates headlines, enthusiasm and momentum for a local nonprofit.

But how does an organization come up with that idea? How do they know what kind of structure to have in place to make sure the program operates in the best way? Where can they see how other organizations like theirs around the country have overcome obstacles similar to those we face in our community?

Many times, it's interacting with new people, absorbing new ideas. That's why the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln and the Junior League of Springfield have awarded capacity-building grants to help organizations find the next big idea or improve management by defraying the cost of attending conferences or bringing in strategic planning consultants.

It's a critical component to make sure organizations are operating as well as they can be.

"Running on a tight budget can be challenging and limit opportunities to focus on professional development, which can be critical for building capacity and moving forward in positive ways," former Junior League of Springfield grant committee chair Kristin Nisbet-White said.

"Being able to provide support for an organization to have the opportunity to grow professionally, make connections, and gain valuable information and insights is one way that the Junior League of Springfield can provide a unique type of support and add value to community organizations."

The Junior League of Springfield is a women's volunteer organization that has been around for more than 75 years. In developing civic leaders who identify a community's most pressing needs, the organization takes a wide look to see how they can help the community. The most recent grants reflect that overview, furthering organizations that address inequality, food insecurity, the arts, and women and children.

"We have so many organizations in the Springfield community that are doing incredible work to support a variety of people and causes," Nisbet-White said. "It is heartening to see just a slice of this work and the opportunities for growth."



Not only does Nisbet-White feel more connected to the community because of Junior League's presence in many areas, but she's been able to see the needs of many organizations looking to explore new ideas or develop a long-term strategic plan.

"The Junior League has offered me many opportunities to grow personally and professionally," she said. "I feel much more connected to the Springfield community through involvement with the organization and I appreciate the opportunity to grow in relationship with an amazing group of women leaders."

Since 2012, more than \$45,000 has been awarded to organizations in Sangamon, Christian or Montgomery County. Organizations can apply for the Junior League of Springfield Capacity Building Grant Program starting April 1. The deadline is Friday, May 3, and a link to the application can be found at [CFL.org](http://CFL.org).

*For more information about the Junior League of Springfield Capacity Building Grant Program, visit [CFL.org](http://CFL.org).*