

Celebrating the Season, Serving the Community

The Junior League of Little Rock's Holiday House is an annual tradition. But the "shopping event of the year" has a larger purpose – supporting dozens of community service projects in central Arkansas.

BY JENNIFER PYRON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY C. WAYNETTE TRAUB

atlanta native Aminah Eddings looks forward to the holidays with a little more eagerness than most. As the Community Vice President for the Junior League of Little Rock, she anxiously awaits the second weekend in November as the true kick-off to the season.

From Nov. 11-14th, the Statehouse Convention Center is transformed into a holiday wonderland, filled with Christmas trees, large displays of presents and ornaments and an impressive gingerbread house competition that draws some of the top bakers in Little Rock. The annual shopping event that also serves as the primary fundraiser for the League's myriad of community service projects, including Stuff the Bus, GROW, Buckle Up & Be Safe, Kota Kamp, and Nightingales at Arkansas Children's Hospital.

Eddings became an active member of the Junior League in 2003. "After moving to Little Rock, I wanted to become more involved in the community by volunteering my time," she wrote in a recent e-mail interview. "The League has not only given me the opportunity to make a difference in my community, it has also allowed me to acquire some very useful skills that I can apply to other areas of my life and I've developed some great friendships."

Eddings, a math teacher at Hall High School, not only stays busy with League projects. She and husband Khayyam are the proud parents of Khalil, age 2, and Masai, age 6. Here's more about their life and her service in the League in her own words.

Aminah Eddings, community vice president for the Junior League of Little Rock, is the busy, working mom of Masai, age 6, and Khalil, age 2.



What has been your favorite placement in the League? I am especially enjoying my placement this year as Community Vice President. As Community VP, I have the opportunity to work closely with our community project Chairs and assist them with various needs. It is wonderful to see projects evolve over time and the resulting positive impact that we are making on our community. For example, we have been able to equip approximately 2,000 students with the necessary school supplies to begin the school year, provide diapers to and educate teen moms on goal setting, and provide fun activities to the parents whose children are currently patients at Arkansas Children's Hospital. We have also held a retreat for the girls enrolled in our GROW project (Girls Realizing Opportunities Within) and provided Camp Aldersgate campers with special activities. All of this has been accomplished and we are not even mid-way through our League year! This is why I joined the League; because we truly make a difference.

What are a few things you wish everyone knew about JLLR? That it not only seeks to improve the lives of women and children but also serves as a source of effective voluntarism training. Whether it



is learning the art of fundraising, assessing the need to identify and develop the newest community project or learning how to effectively mentor girls, women can "Learn it in the League."



Aminah, husband Khayyam and the boys put the finishing touches on a gingerbread house designed by Tandra Watkins, pastry chef at The Capital Hotel.

What is your parenting strategy?

We try to show our sons the joy in life; it is not always about being serious.

Who is your mom role model?

My mother. She instilled in me and my siblings the love and complete trusting of God. My mother always told us to never settle and that we could accomplish whatever we set our minds to. She is one of the reasons that I am an educator, and I thank her for that.

What about your children do you find humbling? I find it very humbling the unconditional love that Masai and Khalil have for us. They are both so very loving and affectionate, and the hugs that they give can brighten up anyone's day.

What's your favorite thing about Holiday House? I love the festivity of Holiday House; everyone knows that when Holiday House arrives, it is truly the holiday season. I love attending "Ladies Night Out" with my girlfriends. It is great just to get out and holiday shop in a fun atmosphere. However, my favorite thing about Holiday House is what it accomplishes. The money raised from such a great event funds such community projects as "SCAT Night Owls," which provides recreational activities to residents living at Paris, Powell, and Cumberland Towers, and "Be Wise, Immunize" which will provide immunizations, dental, vision, hearing, and general medical screenings to school-aged children.

If you could only teach your sons one thing, what would it be? To love and trust God; if they do this then everything else will fall into place. *

Holiday House 2009: The Inside Scoop

More than 150 merchants from 17 states will display their wares this year. Holiday House general shopping hours are on Thursday, Nov. 12, from noon to 9 p.m.; Friday, Nov. 13, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and Saturday, Nov. 14, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. In addition to general hours, there are several special events planned. They include:

Preview Party – Silent Night, Not Tonight, Nov. 11. This fun evening will include entertainment by CRISIS!, heavy appetizers from Palette Catering, beer and wine, a huge silent auction and shopping incentives valid only at Preview Party. All of this for only \$35 per person – the League's version of an economic stimulus package!

Private Shopping – A Very Merry Morning, Nov. 12, 9 a.m. – noon. These \$25 tickets get you a fabulous brunch provided by Palette Catering, coffee from the Peabody and crowd-free shopping.

Ladies' Night Out – Stocking and Stilettoes, Nov. 12, 6 – 9 p.m. Grab a group of girls and enjoy a Mexican burrito bar, two complimentary drinks, a silent auction and a wine cork pull. All this fun while still being able to shop – what more could ladies ask for on a night out?

Saturday, Nov. 14 is a great day to bring the kids to Holiday House. They can have Cookies and Milk with Mrs. Claus for \$5 per child from 9 a.m. – noon, pictures with Santa by Joel's Photography, and then watch the State's top pastry chefs battle it out at the third annual Gingerbread House Competition from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.



CARING ABOUT KIDS AND FAMILIES IS ALWAYS IN STYLE!

Centers for Youth and Families is hosting a **FASHION SHOW** to benefit its Bess Chisum Stephens Community Center program with fabulous upscale looks and holiday attire from Dillard's (Event Sponsor) at Little Rock's DoubleTree Hotel on Thursday, **November 19th, 11:30 to 1:00 p.m.**

Tickets are \$50.00. For more information contact The Centers Foundation Office today at 501-666-9436.

CLASSES FOR CAREGIVERS OR PARENTS...

"A YEAR OF CELEBRATION" (2-8 years old)

Themed lesson plans that include art, song, math, and language highlighting patriotic holidays and other special holidays will be presented. Very hands-on workshop.

Saturday, November 21, 9:00 a.m. to noon
\$15.00 per person • Facilitator: Heather Bennett

"TODDLERS, TECHNOLOGY, AND TV... OH, MY!" (2-6 years old)

Strategies for re-teaching kids to use their imagination, play, and learn in a technology saturated society will be presented including tactics for working with parents.

Saturday, December 12, 9:00 a.m. to noon
\$15.00 per person • Facilitator: Heather Bennett

Space is limited. Call TODAY to pre-register for these classes at 501-666-6833, or email trowland@ctyf.org.

CLIP IT & KEEP IT!

