



Spirited

JLLR PRESIDENT HELPS BETTER THE CITY, AND HAS FUN WHILE DOING IT.

AS PRESIDENT OF THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF LITTLE ROCK, IT'S COURTNEY MCLARTY'S CHARGE TO BUILD EFFECTIVE FEMALE LEADERS IN OUR COMMUNITY. AS A PUBLIC DEFENDER, IT'S HER JOB TO MAKE SURE EVERYONE HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS, AND AS A WIFE AND MOTHER...WELL, YOU KNOW WHAT HER DUTIES ARE THERE. SOUNDS LIKE A HEFTY LOAD, RIGHT? BUT WITH HER BUBBLY PERSONALITY AND CAN-DO ATTITUDE, SHE MAKES IT LOOK EASY AS PIE.

Born in Albany, Ga., and raised in Little Rock, McLarty graduated from Central High School before attending the University of Georgia, where she received her bachelor's degrees in Classical Greek and Latin, and later, the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville School of Law where she received her J.D.

She works full-time as a public defender, representing indigent criminal defendants in Pulaski County Circuit Court. It's a far cry from her childhood dream to become a rock star, but we still think she rocks.

And we bet we're not the only ones. Her husband is Jamie McLarty, who she claims keeps her going day-in and day-out, and the couple has two children, seven-year-old Mary Jett and four-year-old Cole, and a dog, Milo.

She joined the JLLR in 1999 because she was interested in volunteering and wanted to meet other women like herself. On June 1 of this year, she took the helm as president, a position she said she never imagined.

"The president acts as the executive officer in charge of the overall operations of the JLLR," she said. "The president presides over all board and general meetings of the JLLR, and as the spokesperson for the JLLR, acts as a liaison between the JLLR and the community, among lots of other duties."

Begun in 1914 as an auxiliary to the United Charities, McLarty says that the JLLR affiliated with the Association of Junior Leagues in 1922 and then incorporated in 1929. Since that time, the 88-year-old organization has been involved in numerous community projects (see sidebar). "We ARE what we do for the community, and we have done a lot in our time," she said. "Our projects are important to me because Little Rock is important to me, and our community projects improve the lives of the people who live in our community." When asked what her favorite JLLR project is, McLarty replied,

*** FIREWORKS:**

CL: "My grandmother lived in Hope, and we would always shoot fireworks in her front yard. I remember writing words in the air with my sparklers and enjoying lots of watermelon!"

*Some programs of the JLLR,
PAST AND PRESENT
(YEAR EACH WAS BEGUN)*

Baby Welfare Station	(1921)
Visiting Nurses Association.....	(1937)
Speech Correction School.....	(1947)
Arkansas Arts Center	(1958)
Bargain Box.....	(1962)
Gaines House.....	(1966)
"Little Rock Cooks" cookbook.....	(1973)
Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN).....	(1973)
Trapnall Hall renovation	(1976)
Riverfest	(1977)
Bargain Barn	(1978)
Traditions cookbook.....	(1983)
Little Rock Potluck.....	(1989)
Holiday House.....	(1991)
Children's Museum of Arkansas	(1992)
Apron Strings cookbook.....	(1997)
"Trees for Tomorrow"	(1997)
ArtReach.....	(1999)
Tomberlin	(1999)
Nightingales.....	(1999)
Project 2000.....	(2000)
Womens City Club (purchased)	(2001)
ABC.....	(2001)
Buckle Up and Be Safe	(2001)
KOTA Camp for Fun.....	(2001)
Pigs on Safari	(2002)
Girls Realizing Opportunities Within (GROW).....	(2003)
Partners for Hope.....	(2004)
Bargain Boutique.....	(2006)
Stuff the Bus.....	(2006)
6th K Café.....	(2007)
Families and Communities Together (FACT).....	(2007)
Big Taste of Little Rock cookbook.....	(2008)
Be Wise, Immunize	(2009)
Senior Citizens Activities Today (SCAT) Night Owls	(2009)

THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF LITTLE ROCK, INC. IS AN ORGANIZATION OF WOMEN COMMITTED TO PROMOTING VOLUNTARISM, DEVELOPING THE POTENTIAL OF WOMEN AND IMPROVING THE COMMUNITY THROUGH THE EFFECTIVE ACTION AND LEADERSHIP OF TRAINED VOLUNTEERS. ITS PURPOSE IS EXCLUSIVELY EDUCATIONAL AND CHARITABLE.

- JLLR Mission Statement

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"I could never choose; it would be like picking between my children."

A large part of the JLLR's success can be attributed to their commitment to training dedicated volunteers. "Part of the training we provide to our members includes educating them about our community," McLarty said. "We have community leaders who come and speak to our membership and help us keep a handle on what the community needs us to do."

To further expand their training program, in February 2010 the JLLR will welcome the Organizational and Development Institute (ODI) to Little Rock. This mission-based training, provided by the Association of Junior Leagues International (AJLI) will bring women from Leagues across the nation to Little Rock. McLarty says the League will also be offering the "ABCs and 123s of Training" to their membership, covering different topics each month, and "Lunch and Lead" training sessions throughout the year.

As an organization, McLarty says that the JLLR has provided its members—including her—with numerous learning opportunities. "The JLLR has allowed me to step out of my comfort zone and learn how to do so many new things," she said. It has also changed her perception of volunteering. "Volunteering is such a two-way street," she said. "You learn things yourself while helping others."

One of the newest volunteer projects the JLLR has spearheaded is called "Be Wise, Immunize," which is a partnership with the Arkansas Department of Health. "We will hold an annual health fair for children who attend the schools served by our community project, 'Stuff the Bus,'" McLarty said. "This health fair will be held in the spring of 2010 and will provide immunizations, vision, hearing, dental and general medical screenings."

A second new project is "SCAT Night Owls," a partnership with Senior Citizens Activities Today, Inc. (SCAT). "We will provide recreational and stimulating activities twice monthly to the seniors residing in Parris, Powell and Cumberland Towers."

Some of the things McLarty enjoys most about leading an organization of women

committed to helping the community is seeing their dedication in action and learning from them. We think she said it best in her recent "Message from the President." "The JLLR recognizes that we can all become better volunteers and leaders simply through our willingness to be teachable. By improving our own skills, we can change peoples' lives." ©

For more information about the JLLR and its community programs, contact their offices at 375-5557, or visit Jllr.org.

Upcoming

{ EVENTS OF THE JLLR }

August 6-7: "Stuff the Bus" school supplies delivered.

August 27: "Sip 'n Sign," the first meeting/open house.

August 29: Junior Leagues of Arkansas conference in Fayetteville.

September 17: First general meeting.

October 1: Sustainer Wine and Cheese party.

October 17: 6th K Café, held after Race for the Cure, at the JLLR building.

November 11-14: Holiday House, Statehouse Convention Center.

• **Preview Party:**

6-10 p.m., Wednesday

Tickets are \$35 per person. The event will include a silent auction, shopping, heavy appetizers from Palette Catering and drinks, and entertainment by Crisis.

• **Private Shopping:** 9 a.m. - noon, Thursday

Tickets are \$25 per person and includes a brunch by Palette Catering.

• **General Shopping:** Noon-9 p.m.,

Thursday; 9 a.m. - 9 p.m. Friday; and 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. Saturday

Ladies Night Out: 6-9 p.m., Thursday

Tickets are \$25 per person and include a Mexican buffet by Moe's Southwest Grill, plus two complimentary drinks, silent auction and Jones & Son raffle.

Gingerbread House Competition:

9 a.m. - noon, Saturday

February 12-14: ODI Conference, Statehouse Convention Center.

February (date TBD): "Bargain Boutique."

I fretted some more, and while fretting, while whiling away the time, I managed something astonishing. I took my e-mail inbox to zero for the first time since having my first e-mail account some fifteen-odd years ago. This accomplishment, shortly after finishing all my grading for the year—jubilation!

"You mean you like being with me more than being by yourself?"

My spirits still soaring, I walked up to Jefferson Elementary to bring Anna Cay home after her long day at kindergarten. It was one of the unexpectedly sunny days during those weeks of constant rain. At home, we grabbed a bucket of water and our several water guns, and for a solid hour dashed around the front yard, always daring back to the bucket with empty weaponry for refills, and getting more drenched than our raincoat-and-umbrella-covered selves had the past two weeks. Not a person who drove by didn't beam.

We cleaned up and walked to meet friends for dinner on the back deck at Casa Mañana, one of the best restaurant decks in town. Back home she read an entire book to me, and I finished reading a chapter-book to her.

"Daddy, I like you more than I like me."

"You mean you like being with me more than being by yourself?"

She nodded.

I let her fall asleep in my bed.

If only that damn tooth would come out.

I'm back from Vietnam now, the summer stretched before us. And that inbox? It's back up to nineteen. ©