

*Part III*

# The Essentials of Key Message Use

## *Key Messages: An Introduction*

Brand development relies not only on creating a collective visual identity for the Junior League, but also on creating Key Messages and other communications tools that reinforce the strengths of our organization in written and spoken form.

*The Essentials of Key Message Use* is designed to help Junior League members communicate Key Messages or basic information about the Junior League in a variety of situations through the use of a common vocabulary.

It includes five general Key Messages that hold true for the entire Junior League as well as a step-by-step guide that helps each Junior League customize and apply the Key Messages in everyday situations.

Finally, there is a four-part section with pointers on issues to keep in mind; Key Messages to highlight; and ways to incorporate Key Messages when addressing specific audiences including:

- Prospective members
- Potential funders/sponsors
- Community partners
- Members of the media

*This section of The Communications Connection should be used as a reminder of how to frame Key Messages about the Junior League when speaking or writing to various constituents of the organization.* It can be reviewed prior to meetings, presentations and other Junior League events and should be duplicated for any member who will be called upon to speak to various audiences. *The Essentials of Key Message Use* is designed as a springboard for a wide variety of communication efforts, sparking new ideas and stories, and suggesting effective approaches in your work with the very important members of the Junior League community.

## *General Junior League Key Messages*

Each of the following Key Messages is designed to encapsulate one “key” point about the Junior League. Please note that each message includes mention of the Junior League name—this is to ensure that the Junior League name is reinforced through repetition.

Keep in mind that these messages must be customized and adapted for specific audiences. A conversation you might have with a prospective member just beginning volunteer work may be different from one you have with a woman who has 25 years of fundraising experience. Similarly, a donor who has already contributed to the Junior League would need less expository information than a new funder you might be trying to cultivate. The important tactic is to first listen to your audience to understand who he or she is. Then, present him or her with a valid message about the Junior League — but one that will be specifically meaningful for that listener.

Each message answers a specific question: What is the Junior League? How does the Junior League help communities? Who are the members of the Junior League? How are funds raised and spent? What are the benefits of membership?

It is helpful to keep these questions in mind when trying to remember the following Key Messages:

- #1 The Association of Junior Leagues International is made up of 296 Junior Leagues in four countries. Together, we are one of the largest, international volunteer organizations for women interested in making a positive impact in their communities.
- #2 Members of the Junior Leagues are accomplished collaborators who build coalitions, identify community needs, and develop effective and responsive programs to serve those needs.
- #3 The Junior Leagues reach out to women of all races, religions and national origins who demonstrate an interest in and commitment to voluntarism.

- #4 Each year, the Junior Leagues collectively raise millions of dollars for community-based programs through a variety of fundraisers.
- #5 Junior Leagues empower women through leadership training and development to take action in their communities.

## *How To Customize and Use Messages*

As mentioned, Key Messages encapsulate one key point at a time. They do not necessarily need to be memorized word for word. Instead, one needs to know the question each message is answering and, in the interest of creating a collective identity, use as much of the language provided as possible to answer that question.

The rationale behind the development of each Key Message is also explained to help you understand the significance of highlighting certain Key Messages for specific audiences (see “How to Use Key Messages for Specific Audiences”).

In addition, each of the Key Messages we have provided can also be customized to incorporate your League name as well as your League’s activities and accomplishments.

Finally, think of the Key Messages as portals or “springboards” that open the door to discussing your League activities and accomplishments in a more detailed manner, rather than bullet points that need to be memorized.

The following section on applying the Key Messages is designed to help you customize and use each of the general Key Messages outlined previously.

## *Applying Key Messages*

### **MESSAGE #1 – WHAT IS AJLI? /WHAT IS THE JUNIOR LEAGUE?**

- The Association of Junior Leagues International is made up of 296 Junior Leagues in four countries. Together, we are one of the largest, international volunteer organizations for women interested in making a positive impact in their communities.

*RATIONALE This Key Message instantly summarizes what the AJLI/ Junior League is and what it does as well as explains the breadth of the Junior League brand. This message helps you describe the Junior Leagues to audiences who are unfamiliar with them.*

### **YOUR LEAGUE VERSION**

- The Junior League of [INSERT LEAGUE NAME] is a volunteer organization for women interested in making a positive impact in their communities. We are part of The Association of Junior Leagues International, which is made up 296 Junior Leagues in four countries.

### **USE THIS KEY MESSAGE AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR**

- ❖ Discussing the relationship of your local Junior League to other Junior Leagues
- ❖ Highlighting the history of the AJLI and your League's past accomplishments
- ❖ Explaining the structure of the organization

## MESSAGE #2 – HOW DO THE JUNIOR LEAGUES HELP COMMUNITIES?

- Members of the Junior Leagues are accomplished collaborators who build coalitions, identify community needs, and develop effective and responsive programs to serve those needs.

*RATIONALE This Key Message is designed to instantly highlight the contributions of the Junior Leagues and reinforce the professional and strategic skills of Junior League volunteers. This Message helps differentiate the Junior Leagues from other volunteer organizations targeted towards women.*

### YOUR LEAGUE VERSION

- Members of the Junior League of [INSERT LEAGUE NAME] are accomplished collaborators who build coalitions, identify community needs, and develop effective and responsive programs to serve those needs.

### USE THIS KEY MESSAGE AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR

- ❖ Discussing how your League has worked with other organizations
- ❖ Explaining how your League identifies community needs and develops programs
- ❖ Highlighting successful programs involving your League

### MESSAGE #3 – WHO ARE THE MEMBERS OF THE JUNIOR LEAGUE?

- The Junior Leagues reach out to women of all races, religions and national origins who demonstrate an interest in and commitment to voluntarism.

*RATIONALE This Key Message reinforces the AJLI Reaching Out statement, highlights the Junior Leagues' desire to increase and improve the diversity of League membership, and helps deflect negative stereotypes/perceptions.*

### YOUR LEAGUE VERSION

- The Junior League of [INSERT LEAGUE NAME] reaches out to women of all races, religions and national origins who demonstrate an interest in and commitment to voluntarism.

#### USE THIS KEY MESSAGE AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR

- ❖ Explaining your membership and recruitment process
- ❖ Highlighting members of note or members who have made a difference through participation in the Junior League
- ❖ Discussing negative stereotypes about the Junior League and the organization's desire to become more inclusive and/or diverse

#### **MESSAGE #4 – HOW ARE FUNDS RAISED AND SPENT?**

- Each year, the Junior Leagues collectively raise millions of dollars for community-based programs through a variety of fundraisers.

*RATIONALE This Key Message helps the Junior Leagues reinforce their image as community partners that raise money for community programs. By focusing on the programs first and the fundraisers second, we establish the seriousness of our goals and Mission. This Message is especially relevant for audiences that may see us as a “social” organization that throws parties.*

#### **YOUR LEAGUE VERSION**

- Each year, the Junior League of [INSERT LEAGUE NAME] raises money for [INSERT AREA OF FOCUS OR KEY COMMUNITY PROGRAMS] through fundraisers such as [INSERT KEY FUNDRAISERS i.e. BALLS, HOLIDAY FAIRS, etc.,]

#### **USE THIS KEY MESSAGE AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR**

- ❖ Highlighting how much money your Junior League has raised for the community
- ❖ Explaining how the majority of money raised (you may wish to include percentages) goes back to the community
- ❖ Discussing community programs that benefit from Junior League fundraisers in greater detail



## **MESSAGE #5 – WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP?**

- The Junior Leagues empower women through leadership training and development to take action in their communities.

*RATIONALE This Key Message is designed to help differentiate the Junior League among prospective members who may be shopping around for a volunteer opportunity as well as to reinforce the expertise of our membership among audiences that are interested in working with us.*

### **YOUR LEAGUE VERSION**

- The Junior League of [INSERT LEAGUE NAME] empowers women through leadership training and development to take action in their communities.

#### **USE THIS KEY MESSAGE AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR**

- ❖ Discussing development/training programs offered by your League
- ❖ Citing examples of Junior League volunteers who are professionals and community leaders
- ❖ Highlighting members who have benefited from membership in the Junior League

## *How To Use Key Messages for Specific Audiences*

Once you have created a customized set of Key Messages for your Junior League using the examples above, you may wish to create a one-page Key Message “tip sheet” for all League members.

This “tip sheet” can be used during interactions with prospective members, potential funders/sponsors, community partners and members of the media. Include your customized Key Messages as well as “springboards” for discussion (see above) on your “tip sheet.”

Ideally, any time a member of your League discusses the Junior League, they should touch on three or more of the Key Messages to explain what the Junior League does, who its members are, etc.

Key Messages should also be subtly and appropriately incorporated in all written communications including letters, press releases, news sheets, brochures, etc.

Below are some additional points to remember when addressing specific audiences, a listing of Key Messages that should be particularly emphasized for that audience and ways to incorporate key messages in your interactions with each group:

# Prospective Members

KEY MESSAGES TO HIGHLIGHT: #2, #5 AND #3

A prospective member is anyone who may be interested in joining the Junior League or anyone whom your League would like to cultivate as a member. This includes daughters of Junior League members, women currently involved in other volunteer organizations, friends, neighbors, associates, etc.

Our research shows prospective members are most interested in making a difference in the community, secondarily in personal growth. It's vital, therefore, when addressing this audience to emphasize your Junior League's performance in community impact. Communications should focus on the League's value to the local community. Show the range of your League's accomplishments by making reference to several volunteer programs—possibly one from the past, a current program, and one being planned for the future. The training and leadership skills that Junior League membership instills can also be referenced. If the benefits of personal connections are mentioned, it should be shown how they have community impact, e.g., our long-standing relationships with others in the community help us get things done. Finally, communication with prospective members should demonstrate inclusiveness and should invite others to participate.

SCENARIOS FOR KEY MESSAGE USE:

- Orientation meeting/Outreach Lecture
  - ❖ Help new members understand the Junior League by walking them through the key messages and points of discussion associated with each message
- New Member Recruitment
  - ❖ Develop a presentation based on the Key Messages that can be used by any League member interested in talking to her professional association, workplace or social circle about the Junior League

- New-member brunch/Introductory Tea
  - ❖ Incorporate key messages in welcome speech
  - ❖ Assign current members to introduce one key message each and discuss issues associated with the message

# Community Partners

KEY MESSAGES TO HIGHLIGHT: #2, #1 AND #5

Community partners are any organization with which the Junior Leagues work to serve community needs including community advisory boards, other non-profit organizations and community groups. These partners need a better understanding of what your League does, how it works collaboratively with its partners, and how to discuss the Junior Leagues if they are approached by additional sponsors or media. Community partners can benefit from an explanation of the structure of the organization as well as how a larger network of Junior Leagues in four countries supports your Junior League—this may spark opportunities for your League partners and expand the reach of your programs.

When addressing community partners, emphasize the value the Junior Leagues place on partners, without whom, the Leagues cannot do their work. Community partners will want to know why they should work with you and what your Junior League has to offer, so cite specific examples of other organizations you have partnered with successfully. Emphasize the value of collaboration — of the synergy that is created when two forces come together to work toward one goal. Prospective partners may also need to be reassured that their own imperative, goals or missions are taken into account. Let community partners know that members of the Junior Leagues are hard-working, resourceful, cooperative—and will do what it takes to make a difference in the community. Showcase members’ eagerness to work with others, as, for example, in a remark we heard from one Junior League member during our research: “Just tell me where to go and what to do.”

Finally, it is worth taking a little more time with your community partners to help them understand the Junior Leagues so that they can be not only program partners but also communication partners.

SCENARIOS FOR KEY MESSAGE USE:

- Meetings with representatives of other not-for-profits; leaders of agencies such as soup kitchens, libraries, shelters, etc.; directors of social programs

- Incorporate Key Messages in written correspondence prior to meeting, explaining purpose of the Junior League, how it works, etc.
- Reinforce Key Messages as you discuss how you have worked with other community partners as well as the caliber of your League volunteers
- Create a community partner leave-behind that reiterates key messages; establishes a protocol on how to mention/discuss the Junior League's participation during media interviews or sponsor meetings

# Potential Sponsors/Funders

KEY MESSAGES TO HIGHLIGHT: #4, #2 AND #5

Potential sponsors/funders includes individuals, corporations, and foundations that are in a position to provide funding or product support for your program. It is important to emphasize your League's expertise in creating programs and managing funds, as well as the benefits of partnering with Junior League members.

With potential funders, emphasize the two-fold value the Junior Leagues provide by connecting funders to a strong local organization which is part of a network of similar organizations in four countries. The Junior Leagues can open a door for donors responding to the needs of the local community, but also provides the potential to connect corporations and other sponsors with the Association of Junior Leagues International – a larger entity with great breadth and history. The Junior Leagues are a trusted means to an end, responsible with money, and keyed in to the needs of the communities they serve. Let potential funders know about your Junior League's track record with other donors and sponsors as well as your accomplishments with social programs and community partners.

SCENARIOS FOR KEY MESSAGE USE:

- Meetings/correspondence, grant proposals
  - ❖ Incorporate Key Messages with specific examples of program and financial successes
  - ❖ Create a marketing leave-behind with fact sheet emphasizing Key Messages
- Junior League fundraisers
  - ❖ Include Key Messages in welcome speech, marketing materials
  - ❖ Provide informative Junior League tent cards highlighting Key Messages
  - ❖ Highlight Key Messages in signage, newspaper announcements, advertisements and tax deduction receipts

# Media Representatives

## KEY MESSAGES TO HIGHLIGHT: *ALL MESSAGES*

The media include broadcast, magazine and newspaper reporters in your area. They also include the editors of newsletters disseminated by your partner organizations, sponsors and venue managers. All media seek compelling *stories*. To be newsworthy, there must be *a specific story or event*. *Community impact* is the key ingredient to emphasize in communications with the media. Be sure to establish the *relevance* of the initiative you are promoting by describing how it taps into a current subject or hot topic for the community. By doing this, you will demonstrate your Junior League’s responsiveness to issues of the day.

Journalists and other representatives of the media have an enormous impact on the image and visibility of the Junior Leagues. But there is a cautionary note: in the past, the media has been known to seek out and emphasize the “white gloves and pearls” image that has dogged the Junior League brand. It is vital to counter this impulse with evidence that belies the stereotype. Cite hands-on work that your Junior League has done, provide information not only about events and fundraisers but also the programs that they are designed to fund. Finally, be aware of your members’ successes and ensure that they are noted as Junior League members in all mentions in the media.

## SCENARIOS FOR KEY MESSAGE USE:

- Press materials
  - ❖ Incorporate Key Messages in all press releases as a boilerplate to be included at the end of each release
  - ❖ Create a quick Key Message fact sheet to be sent to reporters requesting information about the Junior League



- Editorial meetings
  - ❖ Meet with feature reporters at local papers to discuss the Junior League’s contributions to your community—use Key Messages as a starting point for discussion
- Letters to the editor/Op-ed pieces
  - ❖ Incorporate the Junior League Key Messages in letters to the editor or op-ed pieces that touch on issues supported by your League
- Member media interviews
  - ❖ Ensure that every member has your League’s Key Messages so that in the event of a media interview they can refer to them even if the interview is not about the Junior League

## Conclusion

*Consistency is The Key.*

The secret to building a cohesive identity for the Junior League brand is consistently communicating the same messages to all of our audiences while highlighting local relevance. *The Essentials of Key Message Use* is the first step in helping you develop a lexicon for discussing the Junior League whether you are in Edmonton or Albany. It is designed to ensure that your local accomplishments are in the forefront while reinforcing that the Junior League brand represents the same standards of excellence wherever it is found.

Together, by promoting a unified visual identity and communicating comprehensive and cohesive messages, we can capture the interest and enthusiasm of all our audiences and position the Junior Leagues to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of a new century.