

>> From the Library of Congress in Washington DC.

>> Cheryl Kennedy: This is Cheryl Kennedy at the Library of Congress and now it is my pleasure to introduce Wendy Cumberland, president of the Junior League of Washington, a group that is celebrating its centennial this year and which is dedicated many use of services in the Washington DC area in the name of literacy and assistance to the needy. As part of their outreach to help improve literacy, they have for several years supported the National Book Festival by providing thousands of volunteers over the years for this worthy event. Thank you so much for joining us. Now the Junior League as I said is about to celebrate its centennial, could you tell us about some of the events and commemorations that you're planning.

>> Wendy Cumberland: Absolutely. It is my pleasure and thank you so much for inviting us to be here today Cheryl. As you mentioned, the Junior League has a very momentous occasion this year. I'm very proud that we're celebrating 100 years of community service in the Washington DC area and to mark that we have a number of special things going on this year in addition to our full complement of activities that we have on any given year. Coming up on September the 21st coincidentally the day before the National Book Festival kicks off this year, we will be celebrating the start of our centennial with a luncheon at the Mayflower Hotel. We will recognizing a number of our sustaining members. We are over 2400 members strong, but we also have a legacy of women who are still active in the community who are serving on other boards and who've gone on to do other amazing things and this is celebration to their involvement and engagement in the community. We will also have some special guest speakers and some special recognition and things that will take place on that day. So we're very excited and we're excited with the timing because the book festival is one of our favorite events of the year and fall is really special in the Junior League as a result of that.

>> Cheryl Kennedy: I understand that you're going to be obtaining a 100,000 books for children in the DC area who lack reading materials. Could you share with our listeners just how they can help make this dream a reality?

>> Wendy Cumberland: Absolutely. So the Junior League of Washington has been focused on the issue of literacy for the past 10 years and during that time we have put over \$600,000 to local organizations for making a difference on that important issue. Groups that we've partnered with who've received funds in the past include the Literacy Lab, Excel Academy, Washington Jesuit Academy, New Futures, Washington Middle School for Girls, Good Shepherd Ministries, Higher Achievement, The Seed School and Beacon House. In addition to giving monies to these organizations, we've also narrowed our literacy focus and this project that you mentioned has a really catchy name, it's called Resolution Read and we're excited because this effort will involve as donating and distributing 100,000 new books to children in the Washington DC community. This will allow us to focus on the importance of reading out loud to children, placing age appropriate books in home and also providing more books to schools and local libraries. We've actually already gotten our hands dirty and push, pushed up the sleeves, I think that you and many of your

listeners may know that there's a phenomenon in the summer called the summer slide. I'm not sure the exact statistics, but often children can regress in their reading skills over this summer. So we were able to put 6000 books in the hands of Washington School children in June and those went to students at Smothers Elementary, Morey Elementary, Ore Elementary, Hortense Kids, Excel Academy and the Washington Middle School for Girls. So is a really exciting week for us to kick off are here which begins in June each year and really help set these students up for success.

>> Cheryl Kennedy: Well I gathered from that list that you are very involved with working with local schools to achieve your literacy efforts. I'm assuming that you've mentioned almost all of the programs. Are there any that you might not have mentioned that our listeners will be interested in knowing about?

>> Wendy Cumberland: Well we also deal in addition to this Resolution Read project which we'll combine putting the books in the children's hands and also in the classrooms, we also will be reading aloud to them and we have current projects where we provide over 900 hours of tutoring through a variety of placements including college bound and higher achievement. We've talked a lot about children so far and children are extremely important, but I should also tell you that our members also lead book groups at some of our other community partners. Organizations like Community Family Life Services and we also provide essential life skill trainings at Calvary Women's Shelter. So it's kind of a full cycle I think approach to literacy, but there're opportunities for your listeners to get involved and help us. A 100,000 is a really large number, it's very exciting and I mentioned the luncheon on September 21st, it is a fundraiser and tickets for that are available jlw.org. We'll also have a gala in February at the National Building Museum which will also serve as a fundraiser for raising monies for the 100,000 books and of course if you're far, far away or your schedule is otherwise you know consumed, we would love to have you simply make a donation to us and that can also be handled at jlw.org.

>> Cheryl Kennedy: The Junior League of Washington also is deeply invested in reading aloud to children. Please tell us why reading aloud is so important to kids.

>> Wendy Cumberland: Early learning skills are the benchmark for success throughout their academic career as well as through life and we convened a task force that worked with community organizations all across at the Washington DC area to take a look at where is the greatest need and where can we make the greatest impact. So by setting students at for success by mastering and providing materials for these early, early learning skills and this early reading, it enables them to hit some important milestones that take place in a classroom and second grade and again in fourth grade. I believe that there are studies that show that are early predictors of success, benchmarks at the fourth grade level.

>> Cheryl Kennedy: As our listeners know the Junior League of Washington is deeply appreciated supporter of the Library of Congress' National Book Festival, providing hundreds of volunteers each year to make the event

possible. Please tell us a bit about this year's preparation by the Junior League of Washington and how volunteer recruitment within your organization is going?

>> Wendy Cumberland: Well this is one of the easiest parts of my job. The National Book Festival sells itself. The ladies who volunteer year after year continue to come back and they tell our other members what a great time they had. Reading is contagious, the enthusiasm when you're out there on the National Mall, greeting you know readers young, old, tourists that just stumble into things, locals who return every year searching for their favorite authors, it's just a tremendous volunteer opportunity. Also the chance to be outside, I think the location on the National Mall in the shadow of the capital and so many wonderful monuments, and the Library of Congress, it's a story book setting and it also gives our volunteers, there's a merit of choices for what they get to do, so we help ask for authors, we help in the children's tent, PDF kids and some of the other sponsors, have wonderful characters, so we help in that area. I think one of the biggest tasks that we handle is the book signing lines and for readers who haven't come, if you can just imagine the person that you most admire, your, like you just dream about this author and you just can't wait to meet him or her in person, now take that and multiply it by 100, 200, 300 even a thousand people that's how many folks show up to see these authors and it's such a wonderful thing. So, just as UPS focuses on logistics, Junior League also focuses on the logistics. But it's all done in a really fun way in a fun environment and we get just as much out of it as we're putting into it.

>> Cheryl Kennedy: We've been speaking with the president of the Junior League of Washington Wendy Cumberland. Ms. Cumberland, congratulations on the 100th anniversary of the Junior League of Washington and thank you for joining us.

>> Wendy Cumberland: Thank you very much.

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