



LeagueAires Mission Statement

The mission of LeagueAires is to bring the joy and healing power of music to older adults and to those with special needs.

A History of LeagueAires Serving the Community Since 1966

In 1965, four young women—Ruthy Frenzel, Mandy Johnston, Mary Kunz and Patty Strong—all Junior League of Minneapolis (JLM) members and Skidmore alumnae—casually talked at a Skidmore alumnae meeting about forming a singing group. Later that year, while participating in a JLM talent show, the same four women brainstormed about how to use their talents and experience in singing, dancing, acting, costuming, and public relations. As a follow-up to this discussion, Mandy called hospitals, nursing homes and schools to evaluate the need for a traveling musical therapy group. Seizing upon their vision of forming a women’s choral group that would bring therapeutic music to special needs audiences in the community, Ruthy presented the idea to the JLM Board. Following a thorough assessment of volunteer support and community interest, the JLM approved the formation of LeagueAires.*

Marjorie Nordstrom became the first director of LeagueAires, and the group began meeting in the summer of 1966. At first, LeagueAires sang predominantly in nursing homes, and the program was strictly musical, with an audience sing-along being an integral part of the show. Choreography followed later. Before the conclusion of LeagueAires’ inaugural year, Marj Nordstrom knew she would be moving and unable to continue as director. Marj’s good friend Betty Kringlee auditioned successfully for the position and served as LeagueAires director for the ensuing 27 years, from 1967-1994! Other beloved directors since Betty’s retirement include: Norma Pierson, who directed from 1994-2004; Lynda Stahl Sleeper, from 2004-06; Jeanie Brindley-Barnett, from 2006 to 2016; and Walter Tambor, from 2016 to the present.

Through the years, LeagueAires has grown from a charter group of 18 vocalists in 1966 to nearly 60 singers and support staff today. Originally comprised solely of JLM members, LeagueAires has, for decades, welcomed to its ranks women from the Twin Cities community who are not affiliated with the JLM. In order to ensure permanence, the JLM awarded LeagueAires the status of an ongoing service, rather than that of a short-lived project. Today JLM sponsorship dollars provide continuing support to LeagueAires’ mission.

LeagueAires music selection is guided by the ages and interests of its audiences, which have included under-served school children and special needs youth and adults, as well as senior care residents. Its well-paced program of therapeutic music features group choreography, individual dancers, sing-alongs, props and costumes, percussion, and featured vocalists. Its repertoire includes but is not limited to popular standards, TV and Broadway show tunes, novelty numbers, gospel tunes and patriotic songs.

LeagueAires performs in the Twin Cities each trouping season for as many as 40 venues, touching more than 5,000 lives—as a group, volunteering more than 10,000 hours. Each year LeagueAires appears at JLM meetings and events. Through the years it has scheduled occasional road trips to Northfield, Rochester, Duluth, Two Harbors, Silver Bay and Red Wing and has made special appearances at such places as the Holidazzle Parade;

Orchestra Hall in March 1984; the International Special Olympics held in Minneapolis in 1991; our nation's White House and the United States State Department in December 1997; several Chicago venues while celebrating LeagueAires' fortieth anniversary in April 2006; the Minnesota History Center in 2008 in observance of the 150th anniversary (sesquicentennial) of Minnesota's statehood; and at the inaugural Sue Hodder Flag Day at the University of Minnesota Amplatz Children's Hospital in 2012.

LeagueAires is more than a troupe of entertainers; it is a sisterhood of song. We are proud to tell our audiences that LeagueAires has been sponsored by the Junior League of Minneapolis since 1966 and has been in partnership with MacPhail Center for Music since 2006. When LeagueAires' 27-year member Sue Hodder succumbed to cancer in 2011 after an extended, courageous battle, her family established an extremely generous annuity in her memory for LeagueAires to use in perpetuity to enhance their mission in ways previously not possible. LeagueAires will be forever indebted to the JLM, MacPhail, and to the family of Suzanne Holmes Hodder.

* Called Leagueaires for 23 years, the spelling of the name was changed in 1990 because of a Monday lunch visit to Jax in northeast Minneapolis between morning and afternoon performances. Jax, which has a longstanding tradition of printing matchbooks for its guests, had printed the name as LeagueAires; the rest is history.

Visit the LeagueAires Website at www.leagueaires.org

JLM Mission Statement

The Junior League of Minneapolis 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. The Junior League of Minneapolis reaches out to women of all races, religions and national origins, who demonstrate an interest in and commitment to voluntarism.

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