

PEOPLE

Million-dollar smiles at John's Island Service League



Hope Woodhouse, Judi Miller and Pat Thompson.



Rita Murphy, Emily Tremml and Tina Nickel.

PHOTOS: DENISE RITCHIE

BY STEPHANIE LaBAFF
Staff Writer

A jubilant group of ladies gathered for a Celebration of Hope last Monday morning at the 38th annual John's Island Community Service League closing meeting, held at the John's Island Golf Club.

JICSL members were joined by the representatives of 39 nonprofit agencies to rejoice in the announcement that the league gave away \$1,025,000 this year. Community grants were provided to charities that serve local women, children and families through their health, education and human services programs, and schol-

arships were awarded to the children of John's Island employees.

The money was raised through fundraising efforts that included this year's Makin' Waves Gala, proceeds from the Tambourine Resale Shop, advertisements in The Little Black Book and the sale of unique JI belts.

"First and foremost, we are going to celebrate the amazing accomplishments of everyone in this room," said outgoing president Pat Thompson. "From the agencies we funded this season to the members of the Service League Grants Committee, our amazing board of directors and the many JICSL members who have volunteered their time, their talents and their money to help rewrite the future for a neighbor in need."

Guest speaker Judi Miller, CEO of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Indian River, Okeechobee and St. Lucie, has been intimately involved with the Treasure Coast nonprofit sector for 27 years.

"This breakfast is such a special time; a year-end celebration for the John's Island Community Service League and for all of your tremendous accomplishments. I have to believe when this foundation was first formed, the primary goal was fundraising, because they saw so many unmet needs. Despite the wealth in this community, there is also extreme poverty," said Miller.

"You have extended way beyond just fundraising. You have honestly been and become visionary leaders in philanthropy and transforming this community."

Miller said the league has brought foundations and other funding sources together to "do unbelievable collaborative work in terms of advocacy, educating agencies and coordinating and communicating joint problems.

You are not just about providing funds; you're about helping people. That kind of relationship-building is what's at the bottom of transformative change in the community," she said, adding that JICSL members are helping nonprofits succeed through mentorship.

"I didn't learn how to read until I was in the eighth grade," shared Miller, remembering her first-grade teacher telling her mother, "She's such a sweet little girl, and she's going to grow up to be a wonderful wife and mother someday, but don't expect too much from her."

Miller credits the mentorship of her third-grade teacher and her parents with helping her to overcome her learning difficulties. "I think about that first-grade teacher today and I think she would be really surprised to know that I have a doctoral degree, that I was on the school board for 24 years and that I've been a CEO for a three-county nonprofit for 27 years."

Commenting that just as mentorship made a difference in her life, she noted that the mentoring and support league members provide to local nonprofits has enabled them to grow and prosper.

"You're the perfect example that a candle loses nothing by lighting another candle. It just creates more light, more brilliance and more beauty."

As Thompson passed the proverbial gavel to incoming president Hope Woodhouse, the camaraderie and shared vision of the JICSL was apparent. Members of the board added their thanks with a photo montage as "Put a Little Love in Your Heart" played in the background. It's exactly what league members do every day through their dedication to the community. ■

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