

It had been almost a year since my dad passed at the age of eighty-nine. He was a devoted father of 10 children and a retired Buffalo police officer. While it was difficult watching him struggle the last few years of his life, my life became less demanding.

My mom, who is quite healthy and extremely independent, did not need me as often. Our three children seemingly became adults overnight, and there were no longer any children's activities to attend.

Still, most of my time seemed fully occupied. I was striving to balance my job, as well as striving to enhance my personal life.

I was not looking to join an organization until I attended a strategic planning workshop for the Junior League of Buffalo. At this meeting, I was introduced to the Life Coach Program. Life Coach is a mentoring program designed to inspire single women to make positive choices to enrich their lives.

As a social worker in the city, I knew this program could help so many. Daily, I listen to many women tell their stories. Most stories begin with, “Once upon a time, there was a little girl who never knew her father.” The middle of the story includes harsh realities such as depression, drugs, illiteracy, abuse, fear and loneliness. Some girls are resilient and some triumph. They try to write their own story and strive for “happily ever after.”

Often, it's difficult for them to begin a new chapter in life without having a good role model. The Life Coach Program provides not only a role model but also workshops to address topics that empower women.

Although my life seemed to be too full to make another commitment, I still volunteered to be a member of the Junior League of Buffalo. The Junior League has allowed me to utilize my professional experience and participate in the Life Coach Program. I am now able to watch young women re-write their painful stories. Slowly, I watch as women develop the fortitude to make positive changes in their life.

I sometimes wonder why I am not at home taking care of chores and household tasks that need attention. Yet, somewhere inside of me knows the truth. I am part of something bigger than myself – I am part of a team, committed to trying to make other individuals stronger so they are able to empower themselves and/or their children.

I am part of the Junior League of Buffalo. I volunteer because I believe that I am contributing to a greater cause and empowering the next generation. I thank the Junior League for being a catalyst for change - one young woman at a time.

If you want to be introduced to powerful women who impact Buffalo, join the Junior League of Buffalo. Within this great organization, there are numerous volunteer opportunities that can fit into your busy schedule. In addition to sponsoring the Decorator's Show House, the Junior League has assisted the Food Bank of Western New York, Literacy Volunteers, Child and Family Services, Boys and Girls Clubs, Haven House, EPIC and several other programs in the community.

Junior League fundraising events have produced more than \$3.3 million for the Western New York community. We can always use more volunteers in helping young women rewrite their stories.