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## **ASSOCIATION OF JUNIOR LEAGUES INTERNATIONAL CELEBRATES POWER OF WOMEN'S VOLUNTARISM**

*87th Annual Conference in Atlanta, April 23-25, Showcases the Power of Women  
Changing the World One Community at a Time*

*Erin Gruwell, founder of Freedom Writers Foundation, to Give Keynote Address*

**ATLANTA, GA – April 16, 2009** –“Create the Future” will be the focus of the 87<sup>th</sup> Annual Association of Junior Leagues International Inc. (AJLI) Conference held at the Downtown Marriott Marquis of Atlanta from April 23-April 25, 2009. Hundreds of delegates from Junior Leagues in four countries will gather to share ideas, recognize accomplishments and develop leadership skills—all focused on The Junior League Mission of improving communities through the effective leadership of trained volunteers.

“The Junior League of Atlanta sees this conference as a wonderful opportunity to further heighten our common understanding of those volunteerism principles that enable us to make a difference in our respective communities,” said Heather Ewing, President of the Junior League of Atlanta. We look forward to applying lessons learned in helping to shape a better tomorrow in Atlanta.”

Highlights of this year’s conference include a keynote address by Erin Gruwell, founder of the Freedom Writers Foundation. Her story as a teacher of “unteachable” teenagers in a racially divided urban community, was captured in the 2007 Paramount Pictures movie, “Freedom Writers,” starring Hilary Swank. In addition, AJLI will present an estimated \$90,000 in awards to Junior Leagues in recognition of exceptional program work in the areas of collaboration, volunteer training and community impact. Conference sponsors include: Talbots; Alexandra Investment Management; Favorite Recipes Press (FRP); Marsh; Océ and Digital Cheetah.

The Mary Harriman Community Leadership Award, named after the founder of The Junior League Movement and one of the association’s most prestigious awards, recognizes one Junior League member whose ability to motivate volunteers, overcome challenges and create positive change provides inspiration to women everywhere. This

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year's winner is Colleen Willoughby, Junior League of Seattle member and Founder of Washington Women's Foundation. Willoughby has dedicated nearly 50 years to Junior League causes and her commitment to meeting community needs reflects the very spirit of voluntarism exemplified by Mary Harriman and the foundation upon which the Junior League was built. Past recipients have included the Honorable Glenda Hood, former Florida Secretary of State and Mayor of Orlando; Sandra Day O'Connor, former U.S. Supreme Court Justice; Martha Rivers Ingram, chairman of Ingram Industries, Inc.; and former Missouri State Senator Betty Sims. This year's award is underwritten by Talbots.

"For more than 100 years The Junior League has been a powerful training ground for women leaders who are committed to making their communities better, safer and healthier places to live," said Debbie Brown Robinson, 2008-2010 AJLI President. "Providing training and recognizing members' accomplishments at our Annual Conference lets us further build the integral role women play in strengthening social services, raising awareness of key issues and funding important community initiatives."

The 87th Annual Association of Junior Leagues International Conference provides a time to spotlight the widespread impact of the network of 293 Junior Leagues' volunteer efforts. One current example is the ongoing Association-wide initiative, Junior Leagues' *Kids in the Kitchen*, which addresses the growing issues surrounding childhood obesity and poor nutrition. More than 200 Junior League chapters are conducting local events focusing around National Nutrition Month (March) in the U.S. and Canada. All events are designed to teach children and their families about healthy nutrition and lifestyles and many are part of year-long programs. For more information, visit the *Kids in the Kitchen* website, <http://kidsinthekitchen.ajli.org>.

#### **ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF JUNIOR LEAGUES INTERNATIONAL**

Founded in 1901 by New Yorker, Mary Harriman, the Junior Leagues are charitable nonprofit organizations of women committed to voluntarism, developing the potential of its members and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers.

Today, The Association of Junior Leagues International Inc. (AJLI) is comprised of more than 160,000 women in 293 Junior Leagues throughout Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom and the United States. Together, they constitute one of the largest, most effective volunteer organizations in the world. For more information please visit [www.ajli.org](http://www.ajli.org).

#### **ABOUT THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF ATLANTA**

*The Junior League of Atlanta, Inc., 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.*

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