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FEATURED

## VJSL to celebrate 80 years

By Desiree Carver [desiree.carver@gafnews.com](mailto:desiree.carver@gafnews.com) Feb 10, 2016



Submitted PhotoThe Merry Marketplace began in 1974 as an arts and crafts show. The event is now a staple of the Valdosta Junior Service League's fundraising efforts.

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VALDOSTA — The Valdosta Junior Service League will host a celebratory bash for its 80-year anniversary.

Since March 3, 1936, the Valdosta Junior Service League has been working to better the local community through a variety of charitable events and ventures.

It started when 45 women came together to improve Valdosta and to promote volunteerism among women. The league has grown into a 120-woman venture contributing more than 5,000 community service hours.

Women are asked to join and sign on for an eight-year commitment. The age range is roughly 25 to 45 and boasts a variety of women from single, career women to women with families.

The league requires women give a minimum of 40 hours a year to projects.

Through the years, the league has loaned its woman-power to many non-profits and causes throughout Lowndes County.

“The league has allowed me to become familiar with all the organizations out there,” said April Steel, VJSL event chair. “There are so many doing great things.”

One cause that has remained at the forefront of the women’s work since the 1950s has been health screenings. A health fair was organized in 1977 with screenings for hearing, vision and dental care. In 1979, the sight screenings were combined with hearing screenings, with the league continuing to screen hundreds of third- and sixth-grade students.

Another large project was adopted when the league purchased the Converse-Dalton-Ferrell House in 1982. It was purchased on the league's 48th anniversary to preserve a treasured historical landmark in Valdosta.

In 1983, the house was added to the National Register of Historical Places. Restoration on the home is ongoing with the latest project focusing on restoring the front columns.

Two of the largest fundraisers for the league are Merry Marketplace and Tossed and Found which raise the bulk of the money for league projects.

"All money raised stays local in the community," said Jennifer Denham, VJSL publicity chair. "We try to support as many non-profits as we can. We are trying to make sure we are helping everyone: elderly, adults and children. We want to make sure we are touching as many in need as we can."

"Cheers to 80 Years" is the celebration being hosted to honor all of the years of good work done by the league, according to organizers.

"This is a way to say thank you for allowing us to do this," said Steel. "Every woman in that organization feels honored. It's a way to thank sponsors and the women who came before us."

Those being recognized at the event for supporting the league include Guardian Bank, Plastic Surgery Associates of Valdosta and Southeast Capital Investment Group.

Festivities begin 9 p.m., Feb. 27, at Valdosta Country Club, and are open to anyone who would like to attend. The band Clydesdale plays.

Tickets are \$30 per person and \$50 per couple. They can be purchased at Steel's Jewelry, City Market and Dr. Merriman's office. Tickets will include one drink and a dessert. There will also be a cash bar. Attire is dressy casual.

The event is fully funded by current members of the VJSL and does not utilize any league funds, according to organizers.

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