New Entry: Eleanor Slaughter Award Application

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Chapter Name  
Junior Auxiliary of Harrison

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Name of Project  
Recruitment

Narrative  
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Sent from National Association of Junior Auxiliaries, Inc.
Let's go back five years into the Junior Auxiliary of Harrison chapter's history. In our 2013-2014 calendar year, we won this award, Eleanor Slaughter, for our achievement in the area of reengagement. To sum up that narrative, members were resigning and taking leave of absences in large numbers, and the remaining members had poor attendance and little motivation to carry out the Junior Auxiliary mission. That year they vowed to overcome, and they did. Their efforts, that were worthy enough to be garnished an award, did pay off. There was renewed energy in our chapter, which they were able to carry on and maintain presently. The Provisional class they added that year consisted of seven women who are all still current active members with vision and passion for community service. The Harrison chapter's current members seemed completely renewed. There is great comradery and heartfelt service taking place; our chapter has a positive attitude and great team work. But, this year a new problem arose—we had been unable to add very many new members, only adding four in three years.

Despite the majority of all current members having been retained and reengaged during the last several years, we still found ourselves again discussing the very real possibility of dissolving our beloved chapter. Last year, completely uncharacteristic of the Harrison chapter, we did not meet the minimum standards. We had twelve active members and two were going to associate status. We did replace those two with two Provisionals, but again that put our membership total at twelve going into this year—still three members shy of the national requirement. Due to lack of membership, we had no one to take several of our positions and also had to cut down our number of projects. The 2014 Provisional class is heading into their last active year and makes up over half of the membership. So the board decided that in light of all this, we would either have to add nine provisional members this year or begin looking into the process of dissolving.

The first phase of our plan was to get more provisional nominations. In the past, members were only recruited by nominations from an associate, life, or active member. Plus,
our active members could only nominate two Provisionals. This year we decided to try something completely new. We would still ask for nominations from current members. However, instead of limiting them two nominations, we encouraged members to nominate all the women they thought would be a good fit.

The plan’s second step was to host our first ever Membership Drive. The drive would be open to the public; anyone who wanted to stop by and find out more information about Junior Auxiliary was welcome. The Membership Drive was held on September 21st in a central location in town. We handed out cupcakes and informative brochures. The ladies interested in joining gave us their information to be invited to our Provisional Tea. The Membership Drive was a great success. Something that is unheard of happened, and all twelve active members were in attendance! That shows you how big of a priority it was to each of us to save our chapter. We were able to mail out 38 invitations to our Provisional Tea!

The final step was to increase our PR and advertising. The Membership Drive was advertised in the local newspaper as well as social media pages. Members also shared it on their own personal social pages. Our chapter’s Facebook page was used much more frequently this year, increasing the communities’ knowledge of Junior Auxiliary. Lastly, our brochure was updated and printed professionally.

There was no shortage of passion to recruit, but there was also not a shortage of challenges. One of the biggest challenges is finding women who can say “yes” to such a big commitment. At this point in time, everyone is just plain busy. Most women in our community work outside the home, on top of raising families and already feel stretched thin. This has been a huge challenge in getting new members. Only a very small percentage of women invited to join decided to be provisional members, and then a few less move to Active status. We overcame this obstacle by significantly increasing the number we invited to join. Another large
obstacle, which is most likely an issue in any southern, small town, is gossip. Past members or people in the community still had a negative view of Junior Auxiliary. They remember the Harrison chapter of five years ago that was burnt out and disengaged. This challenge was met by increasing our presence on social media to show the community all the ways we serve. The Membership Drive also helped, inviting them to come meet us face to face. We were able to showcase to the public the great friendship between our members and the passion for the community that we possess. We shared our heart and assured those in attendance that we didn’t want to burden them or make them more overworked and overwhelmed, but wanted to give them an amazing opportunity to serve their community in any capacity that they could offer.

What overcoming these obstacles means to us and to our community cannot even be put into words! I can tell you that it means there’s no mention of dissolution. It means our engagement, retention and recruitment are stronger than ever. It means our chapter had eleven Provisionals this year, meeting our membership goal! All eleven of them plan to go Active next month! I can tell you that you will not be seeing our name among the Eleanor Slaughter Award entries next year and hopefully not five years from now either! We have clear vision, quick hands, cheerful love, great daring, and we hope to keep our light shining and be united now and forever more.