Chapter Name
Junior Auxiliary of Houma

Submitted by Name and Email Address
Meagan Armstrong, meaganarmstrong1@hotmail.com

Address
423 Woodfield Blvd
Houma, LA
70364

Population Category
30,000 and Above

Name of Project
Sweet Seniors

Project Category
Outstanding Existing Project

Total Hours of Service Given by Members
105

Active Membership of Chapter
40

Number of Members Participating
15
| **Purpose of Project** |  
To enrich the lives of the elderly. |
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cost of Project</strong></td>
<td>480.00</td>
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<td><strong>Number of Persons Served</strong></td>
<td>190</td>
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<td><strong>Narrative</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Digital Photo</strong></td>
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Sent from National Association of Junior Auxiliaries, Inc.
Chapter Name: Junior Auxiliary of Houma
Chapter Address: P.O. Box 8031, Houma LA 70360
Population: over 30,000
Sweet Seniors

It’s in our prayer we say at every JA meeting, “lives without love, whom none have visited, lifted, comforted.” These words resonated with me as I joined this organization. And was a big reason I became chair of our service project Sweet Seniors in April 2016 after serving in a few project events. The events were amazing, but with the resources and manpower of our organization I asked, could we make an even bigger impact.

Due to my father’s Alzheimer’s diagnosis a few years ago, the bulk of my family vacations are in Maine visiting with my father in his nursing home. During these trips I bring my daughters (age 2 and 6) to spend the days attending home events and activities. I witnessed firsthand how much both the elderly and the youth thoroughly enjoy spending time together. My girls love the simplicity of the activities and being the center of attention, and I could see the joy on the resident’s faces when my kids were around.

When I became chair of our Sweet Seniors Project, we helped out with bingos, and our main event was helping put on a Mardi Gras Ball. I knew that our mission was to fulfill a need, and that we were currently doing, but I also wanted to provide something that otherwise would not exist without our Junior Auxiliary Chapter. As I contemplated things that I can do to improve this project I realized that the common denominator for all of the joy and happy moments from my experience with nursing homes all involved “KIDS”! It wasn’t the money spent or the elaborate plans, it was simply our time, our heart and our KIDS. At that moment I knew I just wanted to get kids into our local nursing homes! The homes that house our nations veterans, retired teachers, mail carriers, mechanics, grandmothers, grandfathers, farmers, etc. These people have been contributing members of our local community and
brining kids into the homes is the perfect way to fulfill just what our elderly are so desperately craving for, and of course our chapter members agreed.

Our first activity of our revamped Sweet Seniors Project was in September 2016 at a local nursing home. The event was planned for just after school but before the residents’ dinner. We visited with the residents and simply painted rocks together. Each table had a few children sitting with the elderly as well as our JA members. The activities director said it was the biggest turn out for an activity they had ever seen. We posted a few photos on social media and placed some of the inspirationally painted rocks in local parks and received a great response from the community! So what next?!

October was right around the corner, and I knew just the thing that the residents had been missing. Many of these residents do not have the opportunity to see kids dress up in costumes. Trick or Treat around a home seemed obvious, but do our kids need MORE candy? Then a light bulb went off, why don’t we get our children to give the candy to the residents. Residents get to see kids in costume and get candy and our kids get to give back to their community. So in October we had our first Reverse Trick or Treat at a local nursing home. Our kids, alongside our JA members, dressed up as Superheroes, Princesses and Ninja Turtles, to name a few, and went door to door handing out candy to the residents. They absolutely loved seeing the children dressed, and it was apparent that it added joy to their life. And let me tell you those kids ate up all of that attention. The outpouring of praise and thanks we got from the residents, their families, the facility and the community was astonishing. I felt like we had filled a need and accomplished something that otherwise would not have happened. We had touch “lives without love.” One resident stated “thank you, you gave us all something to look forward to all week.”

Our committee is currently making plans to hit even more local nursing homes this October!

In December, we did caroling, hot cocoa, and cookies during which our chapter went to a local assisted living home with approximately 65 residents. But this was not your classic caroling event. We made them cocoa, talked with them, ate cookies together, then we had a sing-a-long, getting
suggestions from both the residents and our kids of course. It was the pure definition of spreading Christmas cheer and having our kids at the event truly made it even more special for all. I was so proud of our organization and our kids for truly embracing the Christmas spirit. We also plan to continue to expand this event to more nursing homes this coming year.

We have also done stamping projects, bookmark projects and made cards with the residents at the home with minimal cost and tremendous reward. It was amazing to see the dynamics of our kids step in and help those residents who were having difficulties using the stamps. Hearing the kids say “Let me stamp that for you” “What color” “Do you want to me to write your name on it?” And of course the “how do you spell that?” It was beautiful to see the kids and residents work together. We even helped a gentleman take his first selfie! Now that was a big smile!

It is evident that incorporating our kids in the Sweet Seniors Project not only breathed new life in to our service project, it added so much life to many seniors in our community. We have “lifted the fallen whom none have lifted or visited.” And equally important, we as JA members are teaching our own children the importance of service and compassion to carry on that service torch in the future.