



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 15, 2008

CONTACT: The Junior League of Winston-Salem, Roonie Craig at 336-722-9681

## **The Junior League of Winston-Salem donates a Playground for 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

**Winston-Salem, NC** What better way to celebrate Mother's Day weekend than by building a playground and beginning a library for homeless teen mothers and their children? This is exactly how the Junior League of Winston-Salem, Inc. (JLWS) celebrated its 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on May 9 and 10 as a gift to our community and to My Aunt's House, the first comprehensive residential program for homeless teen mothers and their children in Forsyth County. Roonie Craig, Community Vice President of the JLWS, stated "The effort this weekend was blessed to be organized between two days of strong storms that hit our county. All volunteers worked hard and had fun assembling the playground equipment, shoveling a mountain of mulch, and securing timbers around the perimeter of the playground. It was a very special and rewarding weekend for all involved."

The JLWS is an organization of women committed to promoting volunteerism, developing the potential of women, and improving the community through effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. As a celebration of its 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2008, over 50 JLWS volunteers installed an age-appropriate, commercial grade playground area for My Aunt's House, located on the campus of The Children's Home on Reynolda Road. The playground area will create a community for the adolescents and children living at My Aunt's House, providing for them a place where the families can congregate, enjoy, and learn from each other. In conjunction with this project, JLWS volunteers donated over 160 parenting and children's books to My Aunt's House. The Junior League of Greensboro is collecting additional books to grow the library. "It is our vision to build healthier families and a stronger community. The JLWS's 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary gift to the community gives us an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the homeless teen mothers and children at My Aunt's House," commented Allison Reaves, President of the JLWS.

The idea for My Aunt's House originated with the Forsyth Adolescent Health Coalition (FAHC), which has been meeting consistently since 2003. This coalition is an initiative of concerned professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteers in Forsyth County that was formed to advocate for, and develop concrete strategies for addressing the health needs, specifically teen pregnancy issues, of our community's adolescents. The Children's Home, Inc. (TCH), a

501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that has been providing residential services to children and youth since 1909, embraced FAHC's vision and is preparing to renovate My Aunt's House, currently Reynolds Cottage on TCH campus, for use as transitional housing by six homeless pregnant or parenting adolescent girls and their, up to, two children each. There will be a licensed child development center in the basement of My Aunt's House that will serve up to 30 children from Forsyth County, including the children who live there with their mothers. The mission of this comprehensive program is to provide homeless teen mothers and their children with the shelter, basic necessities, adult-supervision and services they need in order to grow into healthy, strong families. The goals of My Aunt's House are to ensure safety and health of teen mothers and their children during the crisis of homelessness, to help teen mothers make and implement plans for adequate living arrangements that will prevent repeated homelessness, to bolster teen mothers with skills, supports, and services that will get them ready for more independent living situations, to ensure that teens progress toward high school graduation or achieving a GED, and to help teen mothers delay further childbearing until they achieve adequate maturity and stability.

The Junior League of Winston-Salem, Inc. is an organization of women committed to promoting volunteerism, 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.

With well over 1000 members, the Junior League of Winston-Salem has helped to inspire and to establish vital Winston-Salem- based community organizations and events, including the Arts Council, Children's Museum of Winston-Salem, Ronald McDonald House, SciWorks, Komen North Carolina Race for the Cure, and READ TO ME and BOOKMARKS Festivals. More information on the Junior League of Winston-Salem can be found at [www.jlws.org](http://www.jlws.org).

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