

AT HOME IN

Woodland Heights



DAILY ESSENTIALS

HOUSTON JUNIOR FORUM'S NEWEST PROGRAM

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Daily Essentials - Everyday Confidence Marks Second Year of Impact In Houston

HOUSTON JUNIOR FORUM'S NEWEST PROGRAM SUPPORTS WOMEN AND SENIOR ADULTS IN NEED

Submitted by Debbie Sechler, Houston Junior Forum

May marked the two-year anniversary of Daily Essentials – Everyday Confidence, the newest initiative of The Houston Junior Forum (HJF). Launched in May 2024, the program offers personal care supplies to qualified low-income individuals who receive no support for these essential health-related items.

“Through this initiative, we aim to restore confidence, support public health and serve our neighbors with compassion and care,” said Lois Van Vooren, Chair of *Daily Essentials – Everyday Confidence*. “For many of the individuals we serve, our quarterly deliveries provide critical supplies, and a much-needed human connection.”

Background

In 2023, HJF, a women-organized nonprofit, in its 80th year of operations, committed to providing charitable services for children, women and senior adults in the greater Houston area, began researching how to address this critical need, particularly affecting women, families with children and senior adults. While the Texas Lone Star Card provides financial assistance for food through the Texas Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs, it does not cover basic health and toiletry items such as soap, toothpaste, shampoo and detergent. HJF found that no other nonprofit in Houston was regularly addressing this need.

In response, in May 2024, HJF launched *Daily Essentials, Everyday Confidence*, a program that involves purchasing, packing and delivering these daily essential items to those in need. Thanks to an initial large donation, HJF was able to purchase soap, shampoo, deodorant, body lotion, toothbrushes, toothpaste, moisturizer, and laundry detergent to sustain the program in its early development. Volunteers from HJF met quarterly to pack these daily essential items and HJF labeled, boxed, and delivered the boxed items to qualified individuals. To ensure effective and thoughtful distribution,



HJF partnered with Interfaith Ministries of Houston's Meals on Wheels program to serve senior adults, and with The Women's Home to reach women in transitional settings.

Tammie Mailloux, the Volunteer & Collaborations Coordinator at The Women's Home says, "Our residents so greatly appreciate the personal care and dental hygiene items provided by the Houston Junior Forum, particularly as they work to reclaim their stability."

Current Status and Growth Plans

To date, HJF has delivered more than 1,500 boxes of daily essentials items to qualified individuals. Looking to expand the program, in its second year HJF piloted a corporate engagement model in which local businesses hosted "packing events" where employees gathered to assemble toiletry kits for distribution. Once assembled, members of HJF deliver the boxed items to those in need.

Wealth management firm, Linscomb Wealth, stepped up to host the first pack partner event, which included donating to HJF to purchase the daily essential items and giving staff time during the day to pack the items. According to Phillip Hamman, President & CEO, Linscomb Wealth, hosting a day of service is a meaningful way for the team to put their values into action. "Partnering with the Houston Junior Forum allows us to give back to an organization that makes a real difference in the lives of women, children and senior adults in our community, and we're proud to support their mission through hands-on service."

Houston-based onsite energy solutions company, ERock, recently hosted an in-

house pack day, where employees worked together to pack 75 boxes of personal care items in under two hours. Corey Amthor, ERock president, said, "Supporting the communities where we live and work is important to ERock, and we're proud to partner with organizations like the Houston Junior Forum to help provide essential items to those who need them most."

"We see these pack partner events as a promising avenue for increasing community involvement while raising awareness about this unmet need for Houstonians with limited access to resources," said Van Vooren. "In our third year of operation, we are looking to expand our pack partner events to any group who is looking to make an impact on the Houston area. We recently had a group of new HJF members organize a pack partner event for themselves and their friends." Dawn English and Julianne Gable, HJF members, describe their pack partner afternoon – "After meeting at a Houston

Junior Forum (HJF) Daily Essentials volunteer event and becoming fast friends, we knew this type of experience could easily be hosted outside the organization as a way to support the program and introduce others to the important work of HJF. We hosted a Daily Essentials pack-party pairing having fun and giving back at the same time – it was a huge success!"

For anyone interested in organizing a pack event, here is the process:

First Step: Get the Products

To get started, we first need the products

- Participants can buy the required daily essential items. HJF will provide a list of products.
- The organization or group can purchase products in bulk for the event.
- If preferred, an organization or group can make arrangements with HJF and they will buy the necessary items.

Houston Junior Forum provides a detailed list



Kids Meals



Preschool



Old pic of volunteers

Cover Story

in advance specifying the required products, sizes, and quantities to ensure a successful packing event.

Second Step: Gather Your People

The Houston Junior Forum will deliver the *Daily Essentials—Everyday Confidence* packing boxes to the packing event location. Participants need enough space to set up an assembly line for volunteers. Expect to pack 100 boxes in two hours. As a pack partner, an organization or group may include a note card in the box acknowledging its contribution. The Houston Junior Forum, with your approval, will recognize you through our social media channels.

For more information or to sign up as a “Pack Partner,” please contact the Daily Essentials team at dailyessentials@hjfhouston.org

Since the program’s inception, HJF volunteers have made quarterly deliveries to residents at the Heights House, an independent senior living center. An essential component to the program is volunteers interacting with residents physically and emotionally.

Personal care goes beyond just cleanliness,” said Susan Rosenbaum, co-founder of *Daily Essentials – Everyday Confidence*. “It impacts mental health, school participation, employment opportunities and overall well-being. Our goal is to bring everyday confidence to those who need it most. Houston Junior Forum encourages public participation in the program through product contributions at the Houston Junior Forum Resale Shop, located at 1815 Rutland St. Participants receive a 10 percent discount on their next purchase at the resale shop. In addition, supporters can contribute items by shopping the Amazon Wish List, linked on the HJF website.”



About Houston Junior Forum

The Houston Junior Forum has given more than one-million hours of community service during its 75-year history to organizations such as Christian Community Service Center (CCSC), Gracewood, Harrison’s Heroes, HJF Resale Shop, Houston Food Bank, Interfaith Ministries, Meals on Wheels, Kids’ Meals, Literacy Now, The Nehemiah Center, See to Succeed, Third Age Learning Center (TALC) and Undies for Everyone.

Each year, HJF members provide tens of thousands of hours of services to many of the organizations providing services to children, youth, women and senior adults in the greater Houston area.

To learn more, visit <https://houstonjuniorforum.org/>, or follow them on Instagram and Facebook.

GABBY'S BBQ

Gabby's BBQ opened in 1978 and is located in the Garden Oaks/Oak Forest area of the Houston, Heights neighborhood. Family owned and operated for over 40 years, the second generation has taken the reigns and are committed to continuing the legacy and tradition of slow smoked BBQ for many years to come.

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NATIONAL
DOG DAY
AUG 26

Ways to Celebrate Your Furry Friend

Submitted by Lexi Breunig

1. Take an Adventure Walk – Skip your usual route and explore somewhere new. A different trail, park, or neighborhood gives your dog fresh sights, smells and experiences to enjoy.
2. Treat Them to Something Special – Pick up their favorite treat or try a homemade dog-friendly recipe. From frozen peanut butter snacks to pupcakes, a tasty surprise is always appreciated.
3. Plan a Doggy Playdate – If your pup enjoys socializing, invite a canine friend over or head to a local dog park. A little extra playtime can make for a very happy dog.
4. Have a Photo Shoot – Capture your dog's personality with a mini photo session. Whether they're striking a pose or caught mid-zoomie, you'll end up with memories worth keeping.
5. Pamper Them – Book a grooming appointment or create a spa day at home with a bath, brushing session, and plenty of belly rubs.
6. Give Back to Dogs in Need – Celebrate National Dog Day by donating supplies to a local shelter, volunteering your time, or supporting a rescue organization. It's a meaningful way to help dogs who are still waiting for their forever homes.



HJF Community Grants Impact over 30,000 Houstonians

Submitted by Deanna Belanger, Houston Junior Forum Community
and Public Relations

With the awarding of the 2026-2027 community grants, the Houston Junior Forum will impact the lives of over 37,200 people in the greater Houston area this year. From a total of 33 applications (10 service sites and 23 nonservice sites), HJF awarded \$160,068 to 10 service sites and 9 nonservice sites. While HJF's grant funding remained about the same as last year (\$157,840), grant applications increased by 18%, reflecting the current reductions in available charitable funding nationwide.

The organizations receiving grants represent a cross section of our mission's support groups (children (14), youth (13), women (5), and seniors (6)). Winning grant recipients are: Catholic Charities' *Blessed Beginnings* program, CCSC's *Back to School* project, Community of Houston (COR), Gracewood's *Life Center*, Holly Hall's new maintenance vehicle project, Houston Food Bank's *Back Pack Buddies* program, Interfaith Ministries' *Meals on Wheels* program, Kid's Meals's summer meals program, San Jose Clinic's PAP smear program, Houston Health Foundation/See to Succeed's I Care Tonometer for their new mobile unit, Sight into Sound's new equipment, SpringSpirit's college awareness program, Third Age Learning Center (TALC) food for meals, The Harris School's sensory regulation room, and Undies for Everyone. Grants are awarded annually to HJF's service sites and selected non-service sites. Organizations with 501c designation that align with HJF's mission are encouraged to apply. Grant applications are due in March and awarded in May. Grantees must use grants between June and February, and submit a final report by the end of February. Any unused grant money must be returned. Apply for a grant by emailing HJF: [hjfccommunitygrants@gmail.com](mailto:hjfcommunitygrants@gmail.com).

