



Name of Project: A Change of Seasons for "The Four Seasons"
2019 Women's Symphony League Ball

Volunteer Association: Women's Symphony League of Tyler
P.O. Box 6823 | Tyler, TX 75711
wslyer.org

Orchestra Name/Address: East Texas Symphony Orchestra
107 E. Erwin St. | Tyler, TX 75702
etso.org

Event Chair: Jennifer M. Gaston | 903-952-1548 | jennifer@tylertoday.com

Purpose of the Project: "To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven - a time to break down and a time to build up." The annual presentation for the Junior Symphony League (JSL) at the Women's Symphony League (WSL) Ball had seen declining numbers from the JSL members participating and the WSL members attending. The presentation and WSL Ball had ALWAYS been held on Friday evening with a JSL Dance to follow on Saturday evening. The ball was a formality for presenting the seniors; the dance was a party for seniors, juniors and their friends. The dance had become more about the friends and less about honoring the members of the JSL. Let's just say the dance needed a break down (elimination) and the ball needed a build up (overhaul). The change had been discussed in prior years - but nothing happened. Change is hard - but to everything there is a season - and it was time for a season of change! We needed an increase in participation at all levels and we needed this to happen in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration. Without changing bylaws and with little drama, we made the bold move and changed the dynamics of this signature event for seasons to come!

Project Development:

What?

The WSL in collaboration with the JSL aspired to bring together JSL honorees (their families and friends) along with the WSL membership for one evening to honor the JSL seniors and juniors; recruit future JSL/WSL members; and raise much needed funds for the East Texas Symphony Orchestra. We aspired to eliminate the JSL dance that had become a liability to the reputation of the organization. We aspired to create a premier fundraising event that would be on everyone's calendar. We aspired to raise \$100,000 for music education in our community.

Why?

Participation in the Junior Symphony League was declining in part due to the parental concerns/member concerns over the JSL Dance. Attendance at the WSL Ball was declining. Our thought was to change the structure . . . move the entire event to Saturday; continue with presentation of seniors; introduce the juniors (outfitted in formal attire and allow them to stay after presentation); allow each JSL member to invite a date/guest; make one room/hall like a dance with "hot" new band; keep traditional band in main hall; keep energy high for all involved.

How?

Make it easy: MobileCause was used for all aspects of finance for the event - from fundraising to reservations.

Make it about Music: The East Texas Youth Orchestra performed and greeted guests as they arrived in the main foyer. An ensemble made up of ETSO musicians performed "The Four Seasons" for the presentation of the Junior Symphony League. The Pictures Band kept the beat going in the main hall. The Live 5 Band made the JSL members happy on the south hall dance floor. (Apparently, they did not miss the "old" JSL dance.)

Make Money: Sponsorships of everything! Text to Donate. Benefit Drawing for \$5,000 Shopping Spree. Wine and Dine Pull. Casino with great prizes. With the exception of the bands, all vendors were locally sourced.

Financials: Total Income: \$269,368.58 | Total Expenses: \$169,772.67 | Net Profit: \$99,595.91

Timeline: Plan for change initiated July 26, 2017 | Dream became a reality March 2, 2019

Volunteer Requirements: Chair plus 60 volunteers

Community Impact: This was a firmly grounded former project . . . the fresh approach was to combine the past "seasons" with the new "season". Through the theme choice of "The Four Seasons" we conveyed letting go and growing forward to our membership. By combining the best of the former project (presentation on Friday/dance on Saturday) into an event that brought new life and change (junior presentation in formal attire and staying for the evening) into one signature event. With four musical groups - ETYO, ETSO, plus two bands - no one ever said let's go back to the way it was before! Attendance and community buzz said it all. The attendance jumped from under 500 to 700. Grandparents, families and friends came from near and far. Inquiries regarding membership in JSL were noted. Class size went from 86 in 2018-19 to 100 in 2019-2020. The change has become a bylaw and accepted with wide acclaim by WSL and JSL membership alike. The event net proceeds were \$99,595.91. This event was a success in every way. See for yourself: <https://youtu.be/5rwApm6-OhQ>