

Charity Ball 2024

An Out of This World Cosmic Disco



Ashley Snider

BY AUDREY HANES
PHOTOGRAPHY BY AUDREY POFF

Junior Auxiliary of Jonesboro's 12 service projects, which make a difference in the lives of an estimated 5,000 children in Craighead County each year, are completely funded by the nonprofit organization's annual Charity Ball. The glamorous event, now in its 53rd year, promises to deliver attendees and patrons a night that is Out of This World.

Ashley Snider, the 2024 Charity Ball chair, is currently serving in her sixth year with Junior Auxiliary of Jonesboro (JA). The Jonesboro native graduated from Nettleton School District before earning a degree in early childhood education at Arkansas State University and pursuing a career in education – first as a kindergarten teacher in St. Louis, then as a first-grade teacher at Jonesboro School District's Visual and Performing Arts Magnet

School. She worked at VPA for several years after she and her husband, Andy, moved back to their hometown in 2017 to open Snider Performance + Spine.

"It was the perfect fit for me," said Snider of her time at VPA. "My love for teaching children to read blossomed there, and I finished up my master's and specialist (degrees) to do just that. As the clinic grew, so did our family. We welcomed our son, Beckett, and my role shifted to focusing on staying home with him and helping at SPS as we adjusted to this new way of life and navigated COVID with the rest of the world. ... Susannah joined our family in the beginning of 2023 and has been my right-hand girl for all of the volunteer work that comes with being a member of Junior Auxiliary.

"JA has been such a wonderful resource for me to stay involved in the community that we love so dearly and do what I am called to do – invest in the children so that the future of our community remains bright."

Snider has served on the Kickstart Kindergarten, Literacy & More, Scholarship and Growing Healthy projects, and she has volunteered with Community Outreach Programs (COPs), The Learning Center (TLC), Girls Enrichment Junior and Senior High and Consolidated Youth Services (CYS) during her six years as a JA member. In addition to those projects, JA also funds and volunteers for Share & Wear, Crown Club and Molly the Megabody.

"Kickstart Kindergarten will always hold a special place in my heart; magical things are happening down those kindergarten halls," she said. "Growing Healthy was such an exciting project and possibly my favorite. It was hands on; I was getting to see so many of my former students, and the energy was always so high. It's hard to beat the excitement of inflating pig lungs with a bicycle pump."

The 2023-24 JA President, Haley Thomas, has also served in a variety of roles during her five years with the nonprofit organization. Thomas and her husband, Keith, have two sons, Townes and Whitman, and giving back to the community is something the family prioritizes.

"I appreciate the opportunity to be a part of Junior Auxiliary because it aligns with my passion for making a positive impact in the community, especially in addressing the needs of children," said Thomas, a University of Arkansas graduate who serves as the director of clinical operations for Families Inc. "The organization's focus on identifying and meeting the needs of the children in Craighead County resonates with my values, and I am eager to contribute to that mission. I was drawn to this organization because it is recognized as a great and impactful organization. Its history of bringing about positive change and making a difference in the lives of individuals is impressive. Being part of such an organization allows me to be part of a collective effort towards creating meaningful change.

"I particularly love working alongside all the talented women within the organization. The presence of skilled and dedicated individuals provides an enriching environment for collaboration and learning. I believe that the diversity of talents within Junior Auxiliary contributes to innovative solutions and effective initiatives."

The 96 active members of the service organization served a total of 2,800 hours to impact the lives of more than 5,000 children in Craighead County in 2023, none of which would have been possible without the funds raised at Charity Ball each year. With close to 600 attendees and many local businesses donating auction items and sponsoring the event, it takes everyone in the community to make the event and JA itself a success.

Snider says she wanted the theme to speak to what JA is raising money for, which is where the tagline, "A Bright Night for a Brighter Tomorrow," came from.

"The theme was inspired by a combination of (the tagline) and my husband, Andy," said Snider. "The most fun we have at events like this is when Andy pulls the sunglasses out of his jacket pocket, and he can absolutely tear up a dance floor. (He will also not approve that I am sharing this info.) He inspired the welcome gift for guests that is sponsored by St. Bernards – neon sunglasses for all of our guests to wear at night, because investing in our community's future guarantees it to be bright.



Beckett Snider

"Our decorations chairwoman, Katie Leonard, and her committee members have done a phenomenal job of bringing the vision to life. It's Out of This World: Cosmic Disco | A Bright Night for a Brighter Tomorrow, so guests can expect '70s throwbacks with disco balls and futuristic touches of bright lights, neon glow sticks, funky arrangements and, of course, to sparkle and shine."

The 2024 chair attributes the smooth planning of the event to the many chairs and committee members who have stepped up to make the fundraising event successful.

"It is a well-oiled machine, but Charity Ball has been around so long because we are constantly evolving," said Snider of the changes to the 2024 event. "We've expanded the gaming area to include the Austin Cook Hole-in-One Golf Game and will have food trucks for the after-hours portion of the event, with part of those sales being funneled right back into our fundraising efforts.

"Some changes that are more on theme: Dr. Zarr's Amazing Funk Monster will be on the Tommy's Express Carwash Stage right in front of our new light-up dance floor sponsored by Cavanaugh Auto Groups, and as the band wraps up, we will have DJ Spence from Suspence Entertainment, sponsored by Evolve Bank, to keep us dancing throughout the rest of the evening. Chef Marco Trimarchi has created a throwback menu for us, and of course our raffle prize is changing this year, as well. Tickets are currently on sale for a trip to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, for two, sponsored by Snider Performance + Spine. They can be purchased from any active JA member for \$10 each. There are lots of little on-theme

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**Ashley Snider, 2024
Charity Ball chair**



surprises we are excited about and can't wait for our guests in attendance to see for themselves."

Besides hitting the dance floor, Thomas says she is looking forward to celebrating the work JA does in the Jonesboro community.

"I am eagerly looking forward to this year's event for several exciting reasons," said Thomas. "First and foremost, I am thrilled about the opportunity to celebrate Junior Auxiliary's achievements over the past year. Recognizing and applauding the organization's successes is not only a moment of pride but also a chance to reflect on the positive impact we've collectively made in the community."

"Another aspect that excites me is the chance to express gratitude to the numerous patrons who play a pivotal role in making these achievements possible. Their support is invaluable, and the event provides a platform to personally thank them for their dedication and commitment to our cause."

Organizers say it is crucial for the community to support Junior Auxiliary by showing up and donating at Charity Ball because JA's ability to fulfill its mission and support the children in Craighead County is heavily reliant on the generosity of its financial donors and partners.

"Without their support, we cannot effectively break the cycle of dependence that many children in our community face," said

Thomas. "... Financial support enables us to continue providing essential resources and opportunities to those in need. Whether it's ensuring that children have proper clothing or offering mentorship and educational support, these initiatives require funding to make a tangible difference in the lives of those we aim to help."

"By attending Charity Ball and making donations, the community plays a vital role in empowering Junior Auxiliary to carry out its mission effectively. The collective support allows us to implement and enhance projects that contribute to breaking the cycle of dependence, fostering positive change and creating a brighter future for the children in Craighead County. In essence, the community's support is the cornerstone of our ability to make a meaningful impact on the lives of those we serve."

The 53rd annual Junior Auxiliary of Jonesboro Charity Ball will take place at 5:30 p.m. on March 9 at the Red Wolf Convention Center at Embassy Suites of Jonesboro, located at 223 Red Wolf Blvd. The evening will include a cocktail hour, dinner, a program, live and silent auctions, a live band, gaming, a DJ, dancing and more. Text CharityBall2024 to 243725 to purchase tickets, and follow Junior Auxiliary of Jonesboro on Facebook and Instagram for more information about the event.

Junior Auxiliary of Jonesboro presents Charity Ball 2024

Out of this World

✦ a cosmic disco ✦

Saturday, March 9

Text CharityBall2024 to 243725 to purchase your tickets NOW!

**Embassy Suites by Hilton Jonesboro
Red Wolf Convention Center**