

## NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT: **Jobs for Delaware Graduates, Inc.**

BY TYLER MICIK

»» Jobs for Delaware Graduates (JDG) has been providing a hand up to students since 1979. The organization began as a pilot program under Governor Pete du Pont to prepare at-risk high school students for transition from school to work. Its model was developed to support students who were struggling academically with the education, skills, and resources that would help them become more successful.

“Students come to Jobs for Delaware Graduates from a variety of backgrounds. Many face barriers such as low income, a lack of occupational skills, poor academic performance, and poor school attendance,” said President Nicole Poore.

JDG works to deliver student-centered instruction that prepares youth to graduate high school and compete for scholarships, post-secondary education, advanced training, and career opportunities on a higher level.

Today, Jobs for Delaware Graduates has 50 employees, operates in 10 middle schools and 23 high schools, and serves over 4,000 students each year. In addition to high school, the program expanded to also work with at-risk middle school students to expose youth to emerging careers and higher levels of education and training. Whether online or in person, JDG specialists work with guidance counselors to ensure students are meeting their educational requirements. What’s more, students receive credit towards graduation, complete community service, and engage in a number of leadership development activities.

As an approved Delaware Department of Education “Career



Pathway” program, students receive weekly in-class instruction from a comprehensive curriculum based on 80 key employability areas. JDG’s curriculum director coordinates with business partners throughout the state, such as ChristianaCare and Del-One Federal Credit Union, to create content that is in line with what employers seek in a candidate. Skills can include critical thinking, customer service, entrepreneurship, conflict resolution, and financial planning. As a JDG participant, students can also meet with business leaders and tour facilities to see firsthand different career opportunities. These visits ultimately create meaningful connections that often result in a job after graduation.

Based on this idea of building relationships between employers and students, JDG established the Creating Opportunities Through Real Experiences (CORE) program, which provides students with hands-on training at a job site. In 2018, ChristianaCare became JDG’s first CORE partner, hosting four students for eight months and exposing them to

clinical engineering, pharmacy, oncology, and rehabilitation services.

Through CORE, more than 80 students have completed over 9,400 hours of job shadowing or internship training.

As part of a national program, Jobs for America’s Graduates, the JDG model is backed by the support of 40 state affiliates. Together, specialists and administration across the nation work in tangent to educate, empower, and employ the next generation of confident, prepared professionals.

Jobs for Delaware Graduates prepares students for more than a job, it prepares them for the future. While some graduates may be stuck thinking about whether they want to attend college or enter the workforce upon graduation, JDG graduates finish school with a plan and with the skills necessary to be successful. JDG shows that sometimes all it takes for someone to be successful is for someone to offer them a hand up. For parents or students who are interested in finding out more about Job for Delaware Graduates, reach out to your school’s guidance counselor and ask if JDG is offered.