

NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT: Junior Achievement of Delaware

BY DANIEL LA MASTRA

» One of the biggest hurdles that many young people face, is acquiring the skills and knowledge needed to maintain financial and economic stability while also planning for their futures. The task of learning about the many intricacies that comes

students around robust curriculum and compelling learning experiences to prepare young people for success in work and life. “JA shows kids how to earn and manage money, explore career options, and how to be entrepreneurial in their approach to obstacles and opportuni-

From the employer perspective, we give employees meaningful ways to have structured interactions with young people so that employers can build their workforce pipeline from the ground up.”

This is exemplified in the many Learning Experiences that JA offers, with



with planning and keeping up with one’s personal finances can be daunting, especially to those who lack the resources and knowledge. Inspiring young people by giving them the tools and experience for economic success is what Junior Achievement of Delaware does every day.

Junior Achievement (JA) is a global nonprofit designed to connect successful adult role models, teachers and K-12

ties,” says Rob Eppes, president of Junior Achievement of Delaware. “This is accomplished by focusing on our three pillars: financial literacy, work readiness, and entrepreneurship, which are JA’s primary content areas.”

When asked about JA’s role within the community, Eppes explains, “From the student perspective, we make whatever learning that’s happening at school relevant to students’ lives and futures.

one of the more popular being JA Biztown, a day-long visit to a simulated town where elementary students learn to work in banks, restaurants, and even vote for mayor. JA Biztown helps students learn and understand how to play an active role in the economy as a working member of his or her community.

Junior Achievement also offers the JA Career Exploration Fair, which is a program that introduces students to a wide range of career options across many different industries. Events like this are important because it encourages high school and middle school students to think about their

futures and what type of career they might want to pursue.

Like any other organization, Junior Achievement has pivoted how it delivers programming due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The nonprofit was able to convert to online learning quickly because JA USA had already started investing in online experiences prior to the pandemic.

“When the pandemic hit, suddenly we were so grateful that JA USA had made

these investments and had content that they could turn around pretty quickly,” remarked Eppes.

When talking about JA’s demand within schools and the community Eppes says, “JA is in greater demand by educators today than it’s ever been. We are more aligned with the Department of Education priorities and standards, particularly around Career and Technical Education.”

This fact alone is substantial proof that Junior Achievement is adapting to meet today’s workforce demands. JA USA has expanded their reach to the point where more than 4.8 million students per year attend some sort of JA program, with Delaware reaching 17,000 students a year on average, through partnerships with 160 schools and agencies.

Eppes was inspired to work for JA when he began participating in the original JA Company Program during his freshman year at Newark High School. At a young age, Eppes saw how JA could empower young people to truly take charge of their futures. “When I come to work every day, I am a living, breathing example of JA’s impact on the life of a young person.”



Daniel La Mastra interned for the State Chamber in the spring of 2021. He recently graduated from the University of Delaware with a degree in world history.



Chair Message

BY KATIE K. WILKINSON

»» Let’s talk about the importance of internships! At Fulton Bank, our

team is very excited about welcoming both a summer intern as well as a military intern in the coming months. Internships can provide employers and potential employees with the opportunity to “test drive” a job, a team, and an organization. In some ways it is a “no strings attached” approach to recruitment.

Let’s talk about the importance of internships!

Internship development is also a way for leaders to empower others on their team to lead and manage in a way that provides growth for the employee and skill building for the intern. This creates a “manager in training” arrangement, which can enhance responsibility and accountability for all.

How many of you can look back on the start of your career and point to an internship or a summer job that really helped launch you into – or out of – a career trajectory? My grandfather was a banker in Philadelphia, and he was my hero. I didn’t know much about banking at the time so we started to talk about it. I really believed that I wanted to follow in his footsteps. In my early college years, I landed a summer job as a bank teller with Bank of Delaware. I loved it,

and it really did start to prepare me for my current career. I learned critical soft skills around customer service, listening, communication, professional dress, and task accuracy. I interacted with so many interesting people with different backgrounds and stories and learned to navigate conflict and complaints.

During my junior year in college, I recall telling my roommate (who had no interest in banking) that I wanted to find an internship at the Federal Reserve Bank. It didn’t matter to me where it was; I just felt like that was my perfect opportunity. I was actively seeking this kind of an opportunity when suddenly my roommate ran into our room waving a newsletter from the college Career Development Office. There it was – an internship with the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston! I landed it and it was truly the launchpad for my career in banking.

I’m not sure what my career path would have looked like without those opportunities. Organizations and people invested in my professional and personal development through these internships. The experiences helped me develop strong skills in communication, customer service, and listening. We need to continue to invest in such programs – as a business community and as a Delaware community committed to growth, equity, and success. Supporting apprenticeship and internship programs – like Intern Delaware – and retraining programs such as Forward Delaware, are solid, proven ways that we can invest in our best natural resource, human capital.