

Junior Achievement of Memphis and the Mid-South



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Junior Achievement of Memphis and the Mid-South

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Our Mission

Junior Achievement's mission is to educate and inspire young people to value free enterprise, business, and economics to improve the quality of their lives.

Our Vision

Our vision is to raise the next generation to a higher level of economic independence.

JA's Background

Junior Achievement has a long history of educating the youth of our community. JA was founded in Memphis in 1955 to ensure that children had a fundamental understanding of the free enterprise system. To this end, we have developed a portfolio of programs that address key issues facing our educational system, promote student achievement and meet the expectations of a range of constituencies that demand results. Through our business, economic, and entrepreneurial educational programs, we:

- Impart to our youth the basics of the free enterprise system,
- Inspire our youth to achieve and be entrepreneurial,
- Involve volunteers in meaningful activities while being role models to our youth, and
- Invest in a brighter future of our community

The Need

Improve and increase education in our children in the areas of economics, financial literacy, and workforce readiness. Children need to be better educated on how to make the right financial decisions, and they need to be better prepared when they begin their careers. When looking at statistics for the City of Memphis, the numbers are alarming.

- Shelby County Schools have an average drop-out rate of 30+% with some inner-city schools even higher.
- More than 30% of Memphis families have no banking relationship at all-neither savings, checking or credit card accounts.
- It's been well-publicized that Shelby County has one of the highest personal bankruptcy rates in the nations and we've been on that list for a number of years. This high bankruptcy rate has a negative impact on the community's economic growth.

- More importantly, those students that need the program the most are those having the most difficult time participating due to financial reasons.

What if we were able to show students at an early age the importance and benefit of staying in school? What if we could show them that it really matters how well they do in school? What if we could teach them leadership skills? What if we could teach these students at a young age how to budget and manage money, instilling a lifelong basis for making sound financial decisions?

Junior Achievement can do all that and more.

The Request

Junior Achievement of Memphis and the Mid-South is requesting \$12,000 in funds to allow three (4) inner-city Shelby County School's the opportunity to participate in our JA BizTown program for the upcoming school year.

In past years, to help schools afford the JA BizTown program, the Shelby County School system was able to supplement schools' participation, but funding cuts over the past few years now prohibit them from doing so. This request is needed due to the lost funding from the school system. With 81% of the Shelby County Schools considered Title 1 schools, many families cannot afford the \$30 per student fee. Losing the subsidy has been devastating to many of our public school kids and these are the students who need the program the most. No one should miss this opportunity simply because they do not have the personal funds to do so.

JA BizTown

JA BizTown is one of several programs at JA that can help benefit elementary aged students in the areas of financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and work readiness. JA BizTown is a 12,000 square-foot microcosm of a city with brightly colored storefronts that represent every major economic component of a community. Its fifteen enterprises include retails shops, bank, city hall, restaurant, radio station, distribution center, and wellness center. These students run every aspect of their own city: there is a mayor, banker, policeman, chief executive officers, personal trainer, radio disk jockey, salesmen, and many more professions. Students get to feel empowered with their own responsibilities and spend the day fulfilling their roles in business and city government.

Imagine a city where the productivity forecast is great, sales figures look promising, and most companies pay off their business loans by lunchtime. This city, run by fifth and sixth-graders, is called JA BizTown. This program now exists in more than thirty cities around the country including our own here in downtown Memphis.

By preparing for and assuming the roles of producers and consumers, managers and employees, and government official, students learn firsthand about the economic process that will affect their future. Everything students will need to become productive, functioning citizens is covered prior to their visit with a four-week in-school curriculum. This includes holding elections, conducting interviews, securing business loans, writing radio advertisements, and creating sign designs for their businesses.

JA BizTown is an interactive instructional program that reinforces students' language arts, social studies, health, math and technology skills by giving them real-life applications. A perfect way for younger students to get a glimpse of what the future can hold for them by allowing them to experience being an adult for a day. The simulation vividly illustrates the connection between hard work and tangible success, while teaching responsibility, leadership, decision-making and team building.

Not only does JA BizTown positively benefit children, it allows teachers to create a learning environment in which students are given opportunities for real rather than imagined experiences, active rather than passive learning, and actual decision-making with the consequences they can cause. Teachers in the Memphis area can expound their teaching styles and allow their students a one of kind learning experience when they are given the opportunity to teach the JA BizTown curriculum followed by the simulation day. Students are able to come full circle with the classroom lessons and the on-site visit. There is no other program in our area who offer such a unique program for our students.

Along with students and teachers, parents are given a role to play during the JA BizTown simulation. Every school will need 15-30 parent volunteers to help students manage their shops and help guide them in making informed decisions. Research has shown that parent involvement in their child's education is positively related to the child's achievement. Our hope is that these parents' involvement after their support in JA BizTown will continue and they will remain engaged in their child's education future. This can result in having a long-term positive impact on children and their educational outcome.

The effects that JA BizTown has on the community are long lasting. As adults, we are called upon to make financial decisions every day of our lives. However, this crucial life skill is virtually ignored in elementary education. It is JA's firm belief that the best way to affect positive change in a community is to give the children the knowledge they need to make good decisions, the confidence they need to succeed and the skills they need to be work ready. Now is the time to invest in the lives of the children of Shelby County, so they can have a bright future that will positively impact our entire community.