

NEWS RELEASE

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Junior Achievement of Wisconsin Shines the Spotlight on Local Volunteer *Changing the Lives of Students is Her Motivation to Continue*

LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN – Junior Achievement volunteer Amber Manke, of La Crosse, Wisconsin credits Junior Achievement (JA) for her professional success. While working to support her family as a teenager, Amber had a chance to take a Junior Achievement class in high school. The **JA Company Program**® used community mentors to teach high school students how to form a business, elect a Board of Directors, and sell a product, all while learning about corporate structure, quarterly reports, and the role of government.

The series of events that arose from her JA experience became a game-changer for Amber. Her JA mentor encouraged her to take a public speaking course. Amber won the “Speaker of the Year” award, a college scholarship, and a scholarship to attend the Dale Carnegie Program.

After graduating from high school at the age of seventeen, Amber applied for her first job at a bank in Dubuque, Iowa. Her former JA mentor, a Vice President at the bank, agreed to be a reference for her. Not only did he help her get the job, but he also took the time to coach her on banking etiquette and followed her banking career through her college graduation. Her JA experience introduced Amber to the importance of networking, deepened her public speaking skills, taught her how to navigate office dynamics, helped her develop effective communication skills, and showed her the power of community involvement.

“Financial literacy is not something that many children grow up understanding. If you live in a paycheck-to-paycheck world, the notion of contributing to a savings account, making responsible choices, and going to college are not a given,” said Ms. Manke. “JA was an extra-curricular activity that I could afford to participate in. Without the influence, education, and opportunities provided by JA, I truly feel I would not be where I am today,” added Manke.

While still in high school, Amber volunteered to teach her first JA program to Dubuque, Iowa fifth graders in 2003. In 2009, she moved to La Crosse, Wisconsin and connected with Junior Achievement of Wisconsin, serving on event planning committees, speaking at JA student events,

and emceeding the JA Technical Careers Challenge, an event that introduces middle school students to area businesses and the careers they offer.

Amber currently works as the Vice President of Electronic Banking at Coulee Bank and teaches one JA every year in the La Crosse area. "I feel an important sense of responsibility to 'pay forward' and support the organization that I feel has been so important to my success," said Amber, when asked why she continues to volunteer for Junior Achievement. Manke added, "The idea that the work JA does can change the lives of the children we reach is my motivation to keep volunteering."

Junior Achievement of Wisconsin has provided financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and career readiness programming to La Crosse County students for more than 18 years. Through partnerships with corporate volunteers, educators, and local donors, JA fulfills its vision for a world where young people have the skillset and mindset to build thriving communities. Over the past 5 years, the La Crosse office of Junior Achievement of Wisconsin has used a dedicated core of more than 620 volunteer mentors to serve 12,000 students in La Crosse County.