



BY CARLIENNE A. FRISCH

Although Katie (Fogal) Mons did not have the opportunity to participate in Junior Achievement (JA) while growing up, she was well acquainted with the multi-facet program when she assumed the responsibilities of JA District Manager for Greater Mankato on February 1. Mons worked for nearly two years as a JA District Program Coordinator, recruiting, training and managing 600 volunteers who served 10,000 students in the Greater Mankato area this year.

“I love the mission of Junior Achievement - to inspire and prepare young people to succeed in a global economy,” Mons said. “We are the world’s largest organization dedicated to educating students about college and career readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy through experiential, hands-on programs. It begins in

kindergarten, when each student gets a piggy bank and learns what the word ‘save’ means. In second grade, for example, students learn about their community - businesses, volunteers, local government and elections.”

In her former position, Mons developed JA program opportunities for schools in St. Peter and Cleveland, as well as working with the program in schools in Mankato, North Mankato, Eagle Lake, St. Clair, Good Thunder, Mapleton, Lake Crystal and Minnesota Lake. She worked with teachers, recruiting and training volunteers - many of them business professionals - for each classroom. She increased the number of volunteers and added 1,000 students to the number of those receiving JA opportunities.

Mons’ new responsibilities as the District Manager include leading JA’s efforts to secure funding for programs and services, as well as focusing on deepening and expanding partnerships and relationships with current and prospective donors. Financial support comes from donors, grants and fund-raising events, such as JA Big Bowl and

From kindergarten onward, Junior Achievement prepares students for **Success**



Katie (Fogal) Mons

JA Golf Marathon. Mons now reports to a board of 20 volunteers, most of whom have a business background.

Mons graduated Magna Cum Laude from Minnesota State University, Mankato, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mass Communications, with a focus on public relations. Before becoming involved with JA, she spent several years at Rasmussen College in Mankato, providing career services and as an adjunct instructor.

“This deepened my conviction that education is crucial to every person’s life and future. I know how important the Junior Achievement program is to students,” she said.

Although Mons learned much from the stories and anecdotes told by her JA colleagues over the past two years, the most important affirmation came inadvertently from her son, who was in the third-grade JA program at the time.

“He had saved ten dollars, and as we walked up and down the toy aisles of a store, he said he knew he couldn’t spend it all

because he had to pay tax,” she said. “I asked where he had learned about sales tax, and he told me ‘Junior Achievement.’ As a parent, my son’s answer took this job to another

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level for me, and I knew I had to work very hard to get Junior Achievement into as many classrooms and communities as possible.

"Junior Achievement teaches students in grades K-12 about money management, how to prepare for college and a career, and how to start businesses that create jobs and strengthen our economy," Mons said. "Each year Junior Achievement partners locally with nearly 600 volunteers to teach its experiential and fun programs to students. Our volunteers inspire and prepare students to succeed in school and in life by serving as role models and by sharing their personal and professional experiences."

JA volunteers are provided with a training session and all materials. The classroom teacher and the volunteer decide together on the best time for the volunteer to come in.

"It's a very flexible schedule," Mons said. "I'm a volunteer myself, and I now help in my sons' classrooms, in kindergarten, second and fifth grades."

Area JA statistics reflect Mons' passion for her work. This school year, more than 10,000 students will have participated in JA programs in nearly 30 public and private schools throughout the Greater Mankato area. Elementary students are learning how they can impact the world around them as individuals, workers and consumers. Middle school students focus on areas of financial literacy, entrepreneurship and career and work readiness. High school programs provide students with opportunities to form a start-up business with the intention of solving a community problem or filling a need in their community.

"It takes a village to support local Junior Achievement students," Mons said. "There are many ways to support your local Junior Achievement organization, from volunteering, to participating in a fundraising event, such as JA Big Bowl or JA Golf Marathon, or with donations."

Junior Achievement of Greater Mankato is a part of Junior Achievement of the Upper Midwest, which originated in 1949 with two Twin Cities chapters, which merged in 1982. It now serves students in Minnesota, North Dakota and western Wisconsin, with more than 10,000 volunteers benefiting students with more than one million program hours.

Mankato writer and editor Carlienne Frisch enjoys hearing and telling other peoples' stories.

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