That’s a Wrap — JAG Year in Review

Jobs for America’s Graduates (JAG) is a state-based, national non-profit organization dedicated to keeping young people in school through graduation and providing entry into post-secondary education or employment. This school-to-career program is for high school juniors and seniors and includes one year of follow-up counseling after graduation. As of the end of the 2015–16 school year, the Brightpoint JAG program had 480 active students and 289 students in follow up.

In addition to the classroom work and after-graduation counseling, young people in JAG can participate in work experiences while in the program. This past year, 92 students took advantage of these 12-week work experiences. Students participating in these experiences gain valuable, job related skills that will aid in their future employment.

Xochitl Gonzales, a student at South Side High School, was placed at the Jennings Center through Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation. Xochitl speaks fluent Spanish and put that skill to use with the younger children at the Center. She implemented a Spanish-speaking program that is now being adopted to be used long-term. After completing her work experience hours, Xochitl was asked by the Fort Wayne Jennings Center to stay on to continue the growth of the program.

In December 2015, Lalita Ford from South Side and Brya Stuff-Kelso from New Haven attended the JAG National Student Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. Lalita competed in the public speaking competition while there and both students attended workshops all week. The focus of the week was on learning valuable leadership skills, but the students also got to enjoy some activities while in the city including ice skating for the first time.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7
Summer is an exciting time for many people. Kids are out of school. Vacations are frequent. The weather is nice. But for some families, the summer can be a major struggle — a time of deep stress.

Families, who depend on schools to watch their children during the day so that they can go to work, suddenly face a very difficult challenge in the summer. Where do my kids go? These families are confronted with either a major child care expense (that they likely cannot afford), the prospect of their children going unsupervised, or potentially ending their employment or educational pursuits to care for their children.

Another issue for families with limited incomes is food insecurity. Many children who depend on school for a meal each day suddenly do not have a guaranteed source of nutrition. There are food banks and summer lunch sites available, but these are not adequate to meet all the needs in the community. Too many kids go hungry throughout the year, but especially in the summer.

High temperatures in the summer pose additional problems. The lack of cooling can be every bit as dangerous for some individuals as a lack of heat during the winter. Homelessness can become a bigger issue in the summer as well, as landlords tend to evict families more readily in warmer months. And those housing homeless families may lose patience when children are out of school and home all day.

My point is — while the seasons change, poverty does not go on vacation. Families, who struggle during the rest of the year, find themselves with new and different challenges in the summer.

In your anticipation of summer fun, I ask you to stop for a minute and remember the families who may not have it so easy. If each of us can help someone in some small way, everyone can look forward to a brighter season.
In April of 2012, Leonard and Michelle Wilson decided that their jobs were not maximizing the skills and abilities they had accrued over their lifetime. So, while keeping their full time jobs, they decided to set out and start Elle’s Home Services to do just that.

The venture started out small. Their first jobs consisted of mowing lawns for neighbors and members of their church. Through word of mouth, the demand for their services grew. Soon they were mowing lawns for people they didn’t know. In addition to expanding their customer base, their current customers were asking them to offer a broader range of landscaping services. It started out with laying down mulch and rocks; next they began to plant flowers; and then they began to clean and build ponds. And the services they offer have continued to develop from there.

According to Leonard, it wasn’t until they received their first contract from a property management company that he realized the business could take off. What had started out as a few small jobs was growing into a successful business. All of this growth eventually led them to land their largest landscaping contract to date, the Village of Hanna (the former Eden Green apartment complex.)

But starting a business does not come without challenges. As the size of their jobs got larger, the financial side of their business became more complicated. Working with bigger businesses, they have learned repayment for their services can be a slow process, causing a major tightening of cash flow.

This is where the Brightpoint Development Fund has been able to help. Through the small business loan program, Leonard and Michelle have been able to secure a loan for the working capital needed to meet the demands of their larger contracts.

Another big challenge is having the time to do it all. Leonard and Michelle have continued to work full time jobs so their time is stretched very thin. Like many small business owners, they manage all aspects of their business — from bookkeeping, to bidding new jobs, to maintaining the equipment. And they have been doing all of this while maintaining their other jobs and learning new skills to build on the strengths they already have.

In spite of all of this, their business keeps growing. Leonard and Michelle credit their success to their ability to work together as a husband and wife. They have also surrounded themselves with a strong network of professionals. They are excited to have the opportunity to grow their business and satisfy customers. They are hoping that Elle’s Home Services will continue to change the landscape of Fort Wayne for years to come.

Elle’s Home Services is available in the Fort Wayne area for small and large landscaping needs. They can be reached at 260-515-7635.

The Brightpoint Development Fund is happy to help Elle’s Home Services and many other businesses like it through our Small Business Loan Program. If you have a business that you would like help getting started or taking to the next level, give us a call at (260) 423-3546, ext. 563.
While many students have excelled in the JAG program, one student really stood out this year. Lalita Ford participated in JAG during her junior and senior years at South Side High School earning a 4.0 GPA while being an active service member of the Army National Guard. She competed in the public speaking category at the Career Development Competition at both the state and national levels — placing at the state competition both years.

Lalita will be continuing her education this fall at Manchester University where she has received a full academic scholarship and will study physical therapy.

Also moving on to new adventures is Brightpoint employee, Glynn Hines, who retired July 1st after being with the JAG program since 2007. Glynn started as a JAG Specialist at Paul Harding High School. He later transitioned into the role of JAG Manager where he served for a year before realizing that his passion was in the classroom with the students. He has been a JAG Specialist at New Haven High School since 2012.

One of the things that Glynn has done every year is to provide a free, sit-down dinner for his JAG students and their families at an “Initiation and Installation” banquet. He said that he hopes he has made a positive impact on the lives of many at-risk youth in the nine years he has worked for the program.

“I have had the unique opportunity to work directly with over 300 juniors and seniors at New Haven and Paul Harding high schools. I am most proud of the fact that every year I was able to send at least one student to the National Student Leadership Conference in Washington DC.”

Glynn has been a valuable asset to the Brightpoint JAG team. He has willingly shared his wealth of knowledge with the staff. Glynn brought an energetic spirit to the group. We wish him all the best, but he will be greatly missed.

Glynn is pictured in the photo above (second from right) with his JAG colleagues at a teambuilding activity this past year.

**New Adventures on the Horizon**

**PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: Jobs for America’s Graduates (JAG)**

**WHAT IT IS**
A state-based, national non-profit organization dedicated to keeping young people in school through graduation and providing entry into post-secondary education or employment. Northeast Indiana Works, the region’s nonprofit workforce investment board, provides oversight and funding for Brightpoint’s JAG program.

**WHO IT HELPS**
This school-to-career program is for high school juniors and seniors and includes one year of follow-up counseling after graduation.

**WHERE YOU CAN FIND HELP**
To apply, visit mybrightpoint.org/JAG to download and complete an application, then contact a Brightpoint JAG Specialist at a participating school: DeKalb, East Noble, Garrett, Heritage, Huntington North, Impact Institute (Kendallville), Manchester, Marion, New Haven, Northrop, North Side, Snider, South Side, or Wayne.
An Advocate for Head Start

Sarah Jennings is trying to imagine what life will be like for her in retirement after 35 years in Head Start. “All I’ve done all my life is work.”

Sarah was hired as a substitute teacher assistant in September of 1981 and moved to a teacher assistant position the following year. In 1988 she became a teacher and then moved into her current role as Center Supervisor in September of 1996.

While she has certainly enjoyed the many roles she has had in Head Start, the main reason that Sarah has stayed so long is that she likes being able to make a difference in peoples’ lives. She likes to think of herself as a role model and is an advocate for families. She helps parents when their children need additional assistance and is proud that Brightpoint is often able to provide that assistance or connect families to resources where they can get it.

As Sarah says, “you’re only a child once” so she likes being a part of enhancing children’s lives and hopefully help the whole family at the same time. “If I don’t do nothing, but make you a piece of toast, I would do it right and take pride in it…You are who you are, so take pride in whatever you do.”

With all her years of experience, Sarah has a wealth of knowledge about operations, policies, and procedures. This is a source of pride for her and is something that her supervisor Deanna Backman acknowledges as one of her strong points:

“Sarah is one that if you want to know a policy or procedure — whether it is a Performance Standard, NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) regulation — whatever it may be, Sarah knows it.”

Deanna says that Sarah has always been instrumental in helping implement changes in the program as needed over the years. Her knowledge about early childhood education has been an asset as well. And she can be counted on to tell it like it is. But Deanna adds, “She is able to do it appropriately to benefit children and families.”

“Everybody knows Sarah,” said Head Start Center Supervisor at Hanna Creighton, Annie Henderson. “She is going to be missed.”

Annie and Sarah have formed a special bond over the years. “Because we are opposites, when I first met Sarah, we did not agree on something.” Annie says that there is still a lot that they disagree about, but they enjoy challenging one another. They have a mutual respect for one another and have become “buddies.”

When asked what it will mean for Annie now that Sarah is retiring, Annie said with a laugh, “Nothing. Because we are still going to be buddies.” She said she could see Sarah coming back to volunteer in the classroom because she always loved playing with the children. “I don’t ever see Sarah not being a part of Head Start, but what that will look like in the future, I really don’t know,” said Deanna. “She will always be an advocate for Head Start. There is no doubt in my mind about that.”

---

Head Start has CLASS!

Brightpoint Head Start uses the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) as a monitoring tool to assess positive adult/child interactions. During the federal program monitoring review this year, Brightpoint Head Start received high program scores in CLASS.

Congratulations to our Brightpoint Head Start classrooms for being recognized for providing interactions and experiences to children that will help prepare them and their families for kindergarten and success as life-long learners!

During the 2015-16 school year, Head Start served 682 families and 767 children. Applications are now being accepted for the 2016-17 school year.
MISSION MOMENT
Mary Neher
*Family Development Services Worker*

LENGTH OF TIME AT BRIGHTPOINT
Five years in current position

MISSION MOMENT
Receiving gratitude from a veteran

I have worn many different hats at Brightpoint over the years, but currently work in the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program. This program helps homeless veterans get into housing. I enjoy my work because I believe that veterans definitely deserve a brighter future. After all, they have served our country and dedicated a part of their lives to keeping us safe.

Shortly after starting to work in the program, I was at a meeting and heard someone say to a veteran, “Thank you for your service.” The veteran smiled and was very appreciative. I always say that now when I greet a veteran because it is important to let those who serve know they are valued, given respect, and treated with dignity.

I recently had a call from a veteran, and he said, “Do you know who this is?” I knew right away even though it had been several months since I had last seen him. He said, “I want you to know that I have been in my apartment for exactly one year, and I have paid my rent on time every month by myself. My rent comes first because I never want to be homeless again. I just had to let you know how much I appreciated your help and say thank you for everything you did to help me.”

Brightpoint Golf Outing Round-up

Thank you to the 88 golfers who participated on June 9 in our 14th annual golf outing. It was an overcast day, but the rain held off at Noble Hawk Golf Links in Kendallville. Special thanks to event sponsors Do it Best Corp. and STAR Financial Bank.

**Corporate sponsors:** Frontier Communications and Keller Development

**Major sponsors:** Barret McNagny, Brady Benefits & Associates, First Federal Bank, Fort Wayne Housing Authority, Fort Wayne Mad Ants, Hylant, Meijer, and Old National Bank

** Contributing sponsor:** The Nichols Company


Because of your support, we are creating brighter futures for individuals and families in northeast Indiana!

Brady Benefits & Associates were sponsors and their team placed first in the golf outing.
The State Career Development Competition (CDC) was held in Indianapolis on March 11. Participants in the competition previously took part in regional conferences for a chance to earn monetary awards and the opportunity to compete at the state level. The competition enables students to demonstrate their employability skills in nine categories. Brightpoint JAG students brought home the following awards:

**Entrepreneurship, 1st place**  
Logan Dewitt, Jonas Urban, Dakota Kneubuhler, DeKalb High School

**Career Presentation, 1st place**  
Tyler McNall, Manchester High School

**Financial Literacy, 1st place**  
Sabrina Porter, Marion High School

**Chapter Commercial, 1st place**  
Marion High School

**Outstanding Senior, Honorable Mention**  
Kortney Peer, Huntington North High School

**Cover Design, 2nd place**  
Morgan Carrico, Marion High School

**Public Speaking, 2nd place**  
Lalita Ford, South Side High School

**Critical Thinking, 3rd place**  
Darice Upchurch, Marion High School

**Creative Solutions, 3rd place**  
Dominic Gill, Huntington North High School

Brightpoint’s JAG program ended the school year on a very positive note, meeting both State and National 5/5 performance standards for the second consecutive year. While meeting the overall standards for the program as a whole, we had a record high 10 individual schools meeting the 5/5 performance as well. Those schools were: DeKalb, East Noble, Huntington North, Impact Institute, Manchester, Marion, New Haven, Northrop, North Side, and South Side.

We are currently enrolling juniors and seniors for the 2016–17 school-year at participating schools. For more information about JAG, see the article on page 4.

Want more photos? Be sure you’re in the know! Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

Facebook.com/mybrightpoint
@MyBrightpoint
MAKE BRIGHTPOINT YOUR CHARITY PARTNER.

Brightpoint is proud to be a Charity Partner of Fort4Fitness! We’re honored to “run” with you in promoting healthy lifestyles and improving the level of fitness in Northeast Indiana!

When completing registration for this year’s Fort4Fitness race, **be sure to select Brightpoint to show your support!**