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JA JobSpark to ‘ignite’ career interest in 11,000 Indiana eighth graders for sixth year

Junior Achievement’s largest career expo expands virtual experience, connecting students to high-demand industries

INDIANAPOLIS – Junior Achievement of Central Indiana (JACI) announced today that one of its largest student programs, JA JobSpark presented by Eli Lilly and Company, will be completely virtual for the second year running. JA JobSpark 2021 will utilize an expanded custom-created interactive platform that includes brand-new virtual experiences and learning opportunities for more than 11,000 eighth-grade participants.

Over the past year, JACI has enhanced the interactive platform used for JA JobSpark 2020 to include new features and activities while maintaining the individualized experience that is unique to this virtual event. The 2021 platform features engaging navigation and a 3D feel with interactive career pathway rooms. Videos, live interactions with volunteers and additional resources organized by eight in-demand career clusters will be available to students.

“We are thrilled to continue providing exceptional educational experiences to JA JobSpark students for the sixth year in a row,” said Jennifer Burk, JACI’s President and CEO. “While we look forward to having the same great in-person experience again soon, one of the reasons we continued with the virtual platform was because of the success we saw in 2020. Student engagement dramatically increased because the virtual platform allowed volunteers to work directly with students without distractions or pressure from peers. We took these learnings and expanded upon them to create an even better learning experience for eighth graders.”

One of the most significant additions to JA JobSpark 2021 include 3D tours of various Indianapolis-based businesses. Participants can virtually explore 3D renderings of Eskenazi Health’s Radiology Department, an Indianapolis Fire Department fire truck and more. Additionally, new companies will be joining the JA JobSpark experience this year. Paul Mitchell will share how students can join cosmetology school, the Broad Ripple Animal clinic will conduct a demonstration on animal care, cleanings and hygiene and CH Robinson will teach participants about importing and exporting. Paul Mitchell and Broad Ripple Animal clinic will also have 3D tour experiences.

“Indianapolis Public Schools is committed to ensuring that when our students complete their Pre-K – 12th grade experience, they are leaving us either enrolled, enlisted, or employed,” said Dr. Aleesia Johnson, superintendent of Indianapolis Public Schools. “JA JobSpark is an amazing opportunity to support that goal and for our students to begin envisioning their future and learning how to turn their dreams into reality.”

While enhancing the JA JobSpark virtual experience and curriculum for this school year, JACI remained cognizant of the educator experience. Teachers have been dealing with immense pressure over the past year to adapt their curriculums in response to the pandemic. Junior Achievement aims to ease this burden by creating a seamless and consistent experience for educators as they lead their students on a virtual platform for the second year.

JA JobSpark programming includes teacher-led coursework and a two-day online career expo. JA JobSpark will connect over 11,000 eighth graders in central Indiana with area professionals from eight different career clusters. The expo informs students of the necessary skills and personal attributes for careers that are forecasted to be in high demand and readily available upon graduation. The eight different industry clusters are:

- Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering and Logistics
- Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources
- Architecture, Engineering and Construction
- Business and Finance
- Government, Law and Public Service
- Health and Life Sciences
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Technology

For more information or to get involved, please visit www.jajobspark.org or contact Kacy Wendling at kacy@jaindy.org.

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About JA JobSpark

JA JobSpark, now in its sixth year, is designed to help students by using JA's in-class curriculum to "spark" interest in different careers, then provide students with an understanding of the classes they will need to take in high school, a plan for post-secondary education or training and a clear path toward that career. The culmination of the classroom curriculum is the JA JobSpark event, where students learn about skills and equipment used daily in industries of their interests at the guidance of Hoosier professionals from local companies and corporations, including Eli Lilly and Company, Ed Martin Automotive, IU Health, OneAmerica, Republic Airways and many more.

About Junior Achievement of Central Indiana

Junior Achievement of Central Indiana, Inc. (JACI), in partnership with the business and education communities, empowers young people to own their future success. JA educates and inspires young people in the areas of career exploration, employability/life skills, entrepreneurship, financial literacy and philanthropy through hands-on, experiential learning opportunities for children in preschool through high school.

Media Contact:

Kacy Wendling
Junior Achievement of Central Indiana, Inc.
kacy@jaindy.org
(765) 376-9761