Letter from the Chair

What a remarkable organization!

I was newly elected Governor when I first met Jobs for America’s Graduates at the national level. I was quickly impressed with the level of commitment and enthusiasm for the work of helping young people achieve both in school and on the job. As a result, I soon joined the Board of Directors and became deeply involved with the work of this remarkable organization. It was an opportunity to learn firsthand about the great success of Jobs for America’s Graduates and to see the impact that it has on the lives of young people.

Under the leadership of Cathy McKee, Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, we are well underway in developing our new Strategic Plan, which will be given further consideration by the National Board of Directors in a special meeting in the fall. The Board’s willingness to gather again solely for the purpose of working on the Strategic Plan reflects the level of interest and commitment that I have found to be a constant throughout this organization.

It has also been a great pleasure to reach out to many of the nation’s Governors on behalf of Jobs for America’s Graduates over the past several months. I believe we will be launching the JAG program in a number of new states beginning as early as the first of January 2005, as well as at the start of the new school year in July 2005.

As I travel around the country this fall, I look forward to opportunities to visit many of the State JAG Organizations, as well as to reach out to potential new prospects that might join us in investing in the work of our organization.

Let me thank each and every one of the staff and the members of the state affiliated Boards for your commitment and belief in our young people—and the remarkable success that you are able to help them achieve both in school and on the job. Please know we will continue to do our best at the national level to ensure that you have every resource we can make available to you and to lay the groundwork for even more success in the future through our Strategic Plan.

I look forward to seeing you at the December National Leadership Awards Event in Washington!

Yours Very Truly,

Janet Napolitano
Governor
Chair, JAG Board of Directors

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Janet Napolitano
Governor
Chair, JAG Board of Directors

21st Annual National Training Seminar

Enthusiasm and Commitment Renewed!

The 21st Annual National Training Seminar of Jobs for America’s Graduates was held in Chicago on July 8 through 10, as were a series of “Pre-NTS” workshops beginning on July 6.

Approximately 300 delegates, national staff and Board members participated in 50-plus best practices workshops delivered by a variety of experts within our organization as well as by outside experts. Skills, experiences and successes in serving the young people of JAG were shared as part of our commitment to continuous improvement.

The training sessions were highlighted by the rolling out of new curriculum modules, which were created with the support of the Allstate Foundation. The new curriculum focuses on three critical insurances (auto, home, and life) and supported by a planned involvement of Allstate agents in presenting the curriculum and answering questions of the JAG State Organization’s staff across the country.

The Council of State Affiliates, comprised of the State Chief Executives, held a series of special meetings and best practices sessions to boost management and organizational skills. One of the presenters at the seminar was Debbie LeHardy with Debbie LeHardy and Associates, a fundraising firm hired by JAG to assist interested state organizations in the design and implementation of their fundraising strategies. Individual reviews were conducted with each of the participating states to determine progress and to identify next steps.

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Governor Mike Huckabee was invited to serve as a member of the JAG National Board of Directors. As he begins his tenure, Governor Huckabee brings bragging rights from his state organization, Jobs for Arkansas’ Graduates; Arkansas received the “5 of 5 Award” from JAG in 2003. In December 2003, John Davidson, Deputy Director of the Department of Education’s Career and Technical Education Section, received the national organization’s “Educational Leadership Award,” for his role in steering the growth of the JAG programs in the state.

The Bald Knob, Batesville and Springdale School Districts were the first to pilot JAG in the 1999-2000 school year. In 2003-04, the Arkansas School for the Blind, Clinton, Greenwood, Hope, Leslie, Little Rock (Central, J.A. Fair, Hall and McClellan High School), Mena, Mountain Home, Newport, Pine Bluff, Pulaski County Special (North Pulaski, Robinson and Sylvan Hills High School), Sheridan, Texarkana and Van Buren have also implemented the JAG program.

Ken Smith, President of JAG, traveled to Arkansas to meet with Governor Huckabee, Dr. Steve Franks, Mr. Davidson, Arkansas JAG Program Manager Teresa Dow, and representatives of the state Workforce Investment Board and the Department of Education. The group discussed ways to grow the Arkansas JAG program to 100 schools over the next two years.

On April 26, Dr. Franks welcomed staff members from the Department of Education, State Chamber of Commerce, local WIB directors and chairs, and school districts to a meeting at the Governor’s Mansion to expand on the earlier discussion between the Governor and Ken Smith.

After a video from the Governor, Dr. Franks introduced Dr. Jim Koeninger, Executive President of JAG, to present a history of JAG, its mission and its standing as of 2004. Teresa Dow, Program Manager, Office of Support for Special Populations, for the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education, spoke about Jobs for Arkansas Graduates and its successes.

Sandra Winston, Executive Director of the State Workforce Investment Board made a brief presentation followed by a local WIB director and JAG Specialist. The meeting closed with a Q and A session. Following the meeting, to promote dialog between the school districts and the WIBs, local WIB directors and chairs, State Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Education, welcomed staff members from using the JAG website at www.jag.org, sending updates to keep current students are encouraged to verify participation in a JAG Membership Card.

JAG Graduates receive a Career Association Life Membership Card to provide a 1-800 telephone number for alumni to notify JAG of their personal career and family achievements.

JAG Graduates receive a Career Association Life Membership Card to verify participation in a JAG Model program. Graduates and current students are encouraged to maintain contact with JAG using the JAG website at www.jag.org, sending updates to the JAG address on the reverse side of the membership card.

Beginning in 2005, JAG will provide a 1-800 telephone number for alumni to notify JAG of their personal career and family achievements.

We are hopeful the JAG Lifetime Membership Card will be a reminder to stay in contact with JAG to update their file.

• Send written updates to: 6021 Morriss Road, Suite 111 Flower Mound, TX 75028
• Post updates on the JAG website at www.jag.org
• In 2005, a 1-800 number will allow alumni to leave a message.

Passing the Baton

The Seventeenth Annual Jobs for Georgia Graduates State Career Association Conference and Awards Luncheon were held on March 11, 2004 at the Macon Centreplex in Macon, Georgia. Approximately 800 seniors were in attendance representing thirty-four high schools from across the state. The one-day conference included an Opening Session in which all of the career association chapters were introduced. The highlight of the Opening Session was the “passing of the baton ceremony” which gave special recognition to the 2004 Charter Graduates of the Multi-Year Program. These students joined JGG in the fall of 2000 as freshman and have remained in the program during all four years in high school. They were recognized for their participation, dedication and commitment to the program.

At the close of the Opening Session, eligible regional winners advanced to state level competition. Five state level competitive events were judged on-site: Public Speaking, Creative Problem Solving, Decision-Making, Employability Skills and Outstanding Leadership. The state judging for the Outstanding Chapter Manual competition was held prior to the start of the conference. The remaining students attended two of six workshops that were offered at the conference.

The culminating activity was the Annual Awards Luncheon, which began at 12:00 noon. Approximately 1,000 guests attended the luncheon, which was the largest crowd in the history of the program. Mrs. Margarethia Ellis, The First Lady of Macon, brought warm greetings and welcomed the delegates. Keynote speaker Ms. Ellen Hester’s message was “Your Undeniable Purpose.” Entertainment included soloist Brandi Smith from Paulding County High School and the Southwest High School Jazz Band and Chorus. Deputy Commissioner Milton Martin gave the closing remarks. The students thoroughly enjoyed themselves and regarded the day as a very worthwhile and memorable occasion.

JAG’s Membership Card

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The Best Lesson I Ever Learned

Student from Leland High School (Mississippi) was chosen for a 2004 ESF (Education Services Foundation) Scholarship in the amount of $1,000. This is her winning essay.

When a person mentions life’s lessons, many people think of moral values, friendship and respect. Although I have only lived eighteen years, I can honestly say that I have learned many of these worthwhile lessons. While I agree with the life lessons that society treasures the most, I consider the act of forgiving to be more significant than others.

When I was in the fifth grade, my mother made an earth-shattering decision. She decided to pack up all our belongings and move to Atlanta, Georgia. However, I was not included in her “baggage”. This strong-willed woman and mother of three chose to take two of her children and left me at home with my grandparents.

When we were informed of my mother’s departure, my immediate emotions were anger, betrayal and devastation. After I got over the initial shock, I realized that the last time I saw my mother and siblings were that Saturday, a day usually spent shopping with my grandmother. I began to envy my younger siblings, whom she took with her. I felt neglected by the one person who I thought loved me the most. It felt as if it wasn’t my grandparents’ responsibility to take care of me, and she should have been able to fulfill her motherly duties. To make matters even worse, she never gave me the option of deciding whether or not to move.

Now that I’m a young adult, I am able to forgive my mother, a process that has taken numerous years. I have come to realize that even though she hurt me, she is still my mother, the woman who carried me in her womb; and I must respect her. Although I may never know or understand her reasons for leaving me, I do know that she did what she thought was best for me at the time. I guess I now comprehend the saying, “Mama knows best.” The act of forgiving has allowed me to bridge the gap between us. The pent-up anger and rage that I once felt towards her sent me in search of a better relationship with God, and as I endeavor towards having this, I am more able to understand that forgiving is the Christian approach.

Today, my mother and I have a better and unique mother-daughter relationship. Instead of resenting and holding a grudge against my mother, I had to learn to forgive her. Forgiving has allowed me to forget about that moment and has helped me to rediscover the strongest bond two people can share: the bond between a mother and child. This is why the act of forgiving has been the best lesson I ever learned, and I will cherish it forever. My mother has stood by my side when I needed her most, and I will forever be grateful for this. Although I may not have the best ways of expressing my emotions I hope she knows and remembers that I do and will always love her!