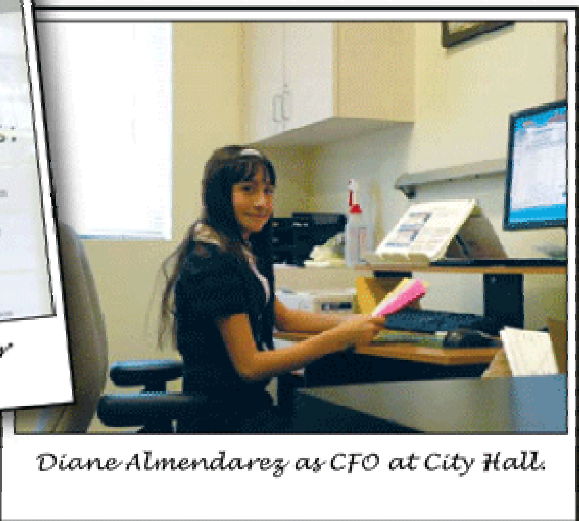


Biz-ness Basics



Joyce Richards, president of Junior Achievement of Arizona Inc.

JA BizTown teaches students the "economics of life."



Diane Almendarez as CFO at City Hall.

By Eya Wolford

Students from Tempe's Royal Elementary School really got down to business last month at JA BizTown — and they're not the only ones taking advantage of this tremendous Tempe resource! A 7,000-square-foot replica of a bustling American town, JA BizTown is winning over Valley schools, students and business personalities alike with its one-of-a-kind opportunity for 5th and 6th graders to experience and learn about the free enterprise system via its fully interactive, true-to-life simulated city.

"Why bring your 5th graders to JA BizTown?" asks Marlen Shumate, teacher and coordinator for the Royal Elementary class. "Arizona 5th-grade standards require economic reading, business basics, etc., and JA BizTown fits well into curriculum meeting these standards," she explains.

The exposure of Junior Achievement (JA) of Arizona's elementary education program, JA BizTown was created in 2000 in response to concerns voiced by local businesses that workers were not prepared when entering

the workforce. Its mission is to prepare youth for success through workforce readiness.

According to Joyce Richards, president of Junior Achievement of Arizona Inc., "JA BizTown originated from the business community expressing that workers were coming to them unprepared to be successful in the workforce — so there was a great need for well-developed skill sets and the overall attitude required for ultimate success on the job!" JA BizTown provides both, empowering kids with commerce skills, knowledge and experience at an early age.

Before BizTown

Before embarking on their daylong adventure, students spend time in the classroom reviewing material to prepare them for their hands-on trial run. JA works with local schools and teachers to tailor classroom theory to the applicable skills students will practice during their visit to BizTown.

Accordingly, students learn about consumer economics, money management and budgeting, and receive an

overview of government and civic responsibilities. Students even have the opportunity to apply and interview for jobs of their choosing, which they will perform when they report for work at BizTown.

Day in the Life

Armed with the fundamentals of commerce, finances and workforce responsibilities, kids then spend an entire day at the BizTown facility, where they get a chance to apply the theories they have explored in the classroom setting. This union of theory and application really seems to bolster students as they move through a lifelike day of work—banking, shopping, investing, saving, etc. They even receive zero-paychecks to save or spend as they see fit! And each has a simulated Wells Fargo checking account to manage.

"Money doesn't grow on trees!" shares a student Madison Berens, who "worked" as a negotiator during her recent visit to BizTown with her River Life mortgage 5th-grade class. "And you must save money and pay off your bills! I learned this at BizTown."

TEMPE FOCUS *your community connection*

Student Madison Paschke, also of the River Elementary 5th-grade class, echoes these sentiments, adding, "I have enjoyed meeting and 'working' with people, taking charge and making my own business decisions!"

Based on her workday at BizTown, student Diane Almirandez has decided that she might like to be an accountant. "I have found that I like inputting bills and checks!" she enthuses.

It seems that, across the board, students enjoy assuming the role of functional businessmen and -women as they proceed through a day-in-the-life at BizTown, and they "show up for work" fully prepared with information gleaned from their 20 hours of classroom preparation.

"Walking around JA BizTown writing checks, applying for bank loans and assuming the role of a CEO, CFO or radio station disc jockey may feel like fun and games to the students," says Richards, "but the fact is, JA BizTown puts the game of life into a comprehensible context for kids, helping them see the link between what they learn in school and how financial literacy, workforce readiness and entrepreneurship (the economics of life) play out in the real world."

"Finalhand experience is invaluable," adds Madeline Cole, another teacher with the River Elementary class. "Providing a simulation phase after the classroom material really drives home and illustrates the concepts we are trying to teach the students."

Via the lessons, hands-on activities and active participation in the simulated BizTown community, students develop a strong understanding of the relationship between what they learn in the classroom and their own successful participation in a local economy. And these lessons continue: BizTown prepares kids for a lifetime of learning, academic achievement and success in the workforce.

The popularity and effective-

ness of the JA BizTown program is evidenced by the endorsements from students, educators and the business community as a whole. 98 percent of participating schools return year after year and nearly 5,000 professionals from the business community serve as volunteers and mentors to youth through JA classroom and BizTown programs.

Operating at full capacity and housing more than 13,000 students per year, JA BizTown has just completed an array of exciting renovations (expanding from 14 to 24 businesses) to provide youth with a broader range of careers to explore during their visits. And Junior Achievement of Arizona will open a second BizTown this fall to accommodate 150 more school-

Through a dedicated volunteer network and funding derived from private contributions,

the business community, individuals and foundations, Junior Achievement provides in-school and after-school programs for students in grade K through 12, just one of which is the BizTown simulation.

Having just celebrated its 50th anniversary in Arizona and also having served its one-millionth child, Junior Achievement of Arizona Inc. believes every child deserves an education in economics and finances in order to inspire and prepare them for success in a global economy. Through a variety of classroom and applied programs, Junior Achievement does just this—educating and inspiring young people to value free enterprise, understand business and economics and improve the quality of their lives.

In assist in this effort to support Arizona's business and commercial community by grooming savvy students, we encourage potential donors and volunteers to share your valuable resources to help prepare our next generation of workers and consumers! Visit www.jaac.org or call 480-377-8588 for information.

"Walking around JA BizTown writing checks, applying for bank loans and assuming professional roles ... prepares kids for success in the real world."



Mason Paschke helps a customer at his business.



Madison Berens, as a news anchor, interviews Sam Mace.