



PRESS RELEASE

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JAG CT Essay and Art Contest Winners Highlight First Year Success

STATEWIDE – Jobs for America’s Graduates CT (JAG CT), a new program helping at-risk youth attain high school graduation and career and postsecondary success, has announced the winners of its first annual essay and art contest.

JAG has a national state-based program with a 35-year track record. A JAG Specialist works within a partner high school, teaching JAG skills as an elective credit course, while also serving as a mentor, career counselor and job developer to students. JAG competencies cover areas such as communication, accountability, teamwork and leadership. Students also take part in a student-led group designing and carrying out community service and civic engagement projects and receive 12 months of follow-up services after graduation

“This mix of proven professional skills, along with a caring adult who spends time with the students and the project-based learning – that’s the ‘Secret Sauce’ that makes JAG so effective,” said Dr. Martin Estey, Executive Director of the Hartford Consortium for Higher Education (HCHE), JAG CT’s parent organization.

JAG CT launched in November of 2014, serving high school seniors at the New Britain High School Satellite Career Academy and expanding in January 2015 to five other schools in East Hartford, Manchester, New Britain and New Haven. The program is seeking to expand in the fall of 2015 to four more schools.

This following students won prizes this year, and the winning essays are on the following pages:

- Public Service Announcement: First Place: **Dania Rodriguez**, Hillhouse High School, New Haven
- Essay, First Place (tie): **Tychelle Weaver**, Manchester High School and **Alex Strevel**, East Hartford High School
- Essay, Second Place: **Fabiola Gonzalez**, New Horizons High School, New Haven
- T-Shirt Design, First Place: **Julia Evans**, Manchester High School
- T-Shirt Design, Second Place, **Nathaniel Gonzales**, New Britain High School
- T-Shirt Design, Honorable Mention: **Fabiola Gonzalez**, New Horizons High School, New Haven
- T-Shirt Design, Honorable Mention: **Alex Strevel**, East Hartford High School

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JAG is a national state-based program now serving youth in 35 states and consistently producing compelling results. The program focuses on accountability and requires demanding results for graduation and positive outcomes, and tracks student employment, education and success. Specialists develop an individual plan for each student that identifies career and educational goals and helps eliminate any barriers to success. For more information, visit jagct.org or jag.org.



JAG CT CLASS OF 2015 ESSAY CONTEST
First Place Winner:
Fabiola Gonzalez, New Horizons High School, New Haven

There weren't any opportunities to get ready for jobs and college when my parents were alive, or even for my older brothers. My parents struggled for many years to get where they are today; they live comfortably at home, taking care of me while all my siblings are independent.

For my older siblings, JAG never existed, it was never created. Some people don't benefit from great programs like JAG, and that's a well-known shame. I am certainly one of those students who can connect with themselves and their abilities through a program like JAG. I learned a significant amount of real world skills that I will be able to use in a job or in other places. All of this was gained through my time in the JAG program.

I learned to: write cover letters, how to present yourself and show a great attitude during an interview and a job. I learned how to show my true demeanor in the work force, and how to communicate on a conscious level with other colleagues and students. JAG is a wonderful program, and it's one of the substantial programs needed for the youth of my generation. I'm grateful for having a program that can get you ready for jobs and future careers, and it can make you a better student all around. Some students aren't grateful for the opportunities given to them; I would know, being a student who used to have that attitude.

Once JAG came and I met Ms. Sak, I adapted to the abilities that are required to be an obedient, courteous student who can be able to succeed in my work life. There is more to JAG than just being able to work. You can learn communication skills and how to work with others. This definitely applies to the labor force, but no one said it cannot apply to reality and how you can build relationships with others by having good dialogue and corresponding skills.

I think in due time, JAG will expand to become an international program to help millions of children succeed and will be able to make a difference in the world. My opportunities to have a program like JAG helped me to become a more independent woman to be able to climb the mountain of success. Thank you for having me apart of this wonderful experience.



JAG CT CLASS OF 2015 ESSAY CONTEST

First Place Winner:

Alex Strevel, East Hartford High School

We learned plenty of useful information in JAG this year that will benefit us emphatically. For instance, we learned many approaches to create a resume, why teamwork is beneficial to the work environment, and how to have a competent interview.

JAG has enlightened me on the three types of resumes; chronological, functional, and combination and what each purpose is. We constructed our own resume in class to help us obtain a job in the future, as well as add more to our current resume. I also discovered which kind of resume was right for me. With the skills I learned to write a resume, it will be easier to acquire a job.

JAG gave me the confidence, a better understanding on how to get a job, and information about the work environment. For instance, we arranged practice interviews in class, which allowed me to gain job interview experience. We learned how to read and understand pay stubs, which is crucially important when having a job. My instructor also enlightened us on appropriate attire to wear to a job interview, which is important because you only have one chance to make a first impression.

JAG taught me how important teamwork is in the work environment. For example, we have done activities in the class that needed student cooperation thus, showing that teamwork is a huge role in the success of a business. These activities also helped me cope, accept others opinions, and changed the way I looked at some things. This showed me the importance of cooperation among teammates to get any task completed.

The JAG program has given me important skills not only to obtain a job, but skills I will use for the rest of my life. JAG has given me the ability to construct a flawless resume, feel confident and comfortable in a job interview, and how to use teamwork in the work environment. I would like to give my sincerest gratitude to the JAG community.



JAG CT CLASS OF 2015 ESSAY CONTEST

Second Place Winner:

Tychelle Weaver, Manchester High School

My name is Tychelle Weaver and I am a senior at Manchester High School. I'm a part of the JAG program where I ran for vice president. My high school experience before the JAG program was basically a horrible blur. Before JAG, I didn't care about going to any colleges or working or even completing school work. I felt like I didn't have any motivation from friends, family or teachers with the exception of my mother. One day I went to my guidance counselor to check on my grades and she said I was doing good and bad. It was at this point that my guidance counselor first told me about JAG. She described the purpose of JAG and what it had to offer. I took just a day to consider joining the program. I went back to my guidance counselor and she put it into my schedule.

My experience with JAG was a positive one. When JAG first started, Mrs. Meyer carefully explained what JAG was about because most of the students were confused. Mrs. Meyer helped us out with job applications, job interviews, resumes, job searches, and assisted us with the college process. We had many guest speakers come in to the classroom to talk to us about jobs, job interviews and how to dress for interviews. My favorite guest speaker was Mrs. Meyer's father. Mr. Gasco is the head of human resources for a chain of convenience store and gas stations. He spoke to us about how to speak during an interview and which nonverbal skills to use. He gave us great advice such as always offering a two week notice if we need to quit.

I also feel that my experience in the JAG program changed me a lot. One day my mom asked me what changed my attitude. I told her that the JAG program made me more mature and made me think about things that are more important in life, rather than partying and hanging out with friends all the time. It made me think about the future and how I want to live. Mrs. Meyer helped me find my new job by working on applications and preparing me with mock interviews. It helped me feel more comfortable when talking to the hiring manager at my new job. JAG helps me be positive towards everyone, including other employees and customers. At other jobs I had in the past I wasn't as motivated to keep the job and to actually work. This time around, it is much different and I know it's because of my experience in JAG.

Though graduation is right around the corner, I'm not as worried about the future. I know that I will be able to achieve my goals in life and my future will be bright because of all the hard work I have put in. I would recommend that JAG becomes a requirement for seniors in the future!