

Brief History and Recent Activities of JA Pioneers/ JA Staff Alumni Network July 2019

The JA Pioneer organization began in 1991. Membership was open to professionals who were Chief Staff Officers and retired from JA.

The original mission was to provide opportunities for fellowship for members, to support JA retirees, to mentor current JA professionals, to support JA USA, JA Worldwide and local areas when requested, and to ensure the preservation of the history of JA. Over the years the goals of the JA Pioneers have remained true to this mission.

Supporting JA USA

Memorandums of Understanding were signed with JA USA in 2013, 2016 and 2018. They were designed to codify the role and purpose of the Pioneers and outline the support that could be expected from JA USA and the Pioneers. In 2018 a separate MOU was signed to clarify the roles and commitments to the retention of JA History

There was no formal fund-raising campaign until 1994 following the death of Karl Flemke. Ten thousand dollars were raised to establish the Karl Flemke memorial fund and to fund the Flemke Award which is given to a JA executive who had served in their position less than four years. Later the Francomano Award and Sweeny Scholarship given to a high school student in the JA Company Program were added. Going forward the JA Staff Alumni Network will award two scholarship; The Flemke Award and the Sweeny Scholarship. This plan will be regularly reviewed as we work closely with JA USA staff to update the awards program.

In 2019, to support the Centennial Celebration, The JA Staff Alumni Network gave ten, \$1000 scholarships to defray the cost of attending the National Staff Training Conference to ten field staff members selected by JA USA. In addition, we sponsored the Centennial luncheon and a Centennial Celebration party for all attendees.

In 2018-19 The Pioneer JA Alumni Connect worked with JA USA to develop a robust, web-based and social media driven campaign to identify and reconnect with former program participants.

Preserving JA History

In 1999, the Pioneers Archival Committee was formed and \$350,000 was raised to establish the JA Archives and Museum. This fund drive was significantly helped by a \$100,000 gift from Jim and Pat Hemak and a \$50,00 Lilly Endowment grant coordinated by Pam Hicks. The Junior Achievement Archives were established in 2002 with the signing of a Gift of Deed with Indiana University/Purdue University in Indianapolis where the records are catalogued and retained. A new Deed of Gift was signed in 2014. In 2004, the JA Museum was dedicated in the lobby of the JA USA headquarters. In 2002, an oral history project began to capture the reflections of some of JA's most distinguished professionals and board members. Those interviews are being edited and will be added to the archives.

Supporting our members

In 1999, it was decided not to charge membership dues until a need was apparent. Currently, the operating expenses of the JA Staff Alumni Network are sustained through an annual fund drive

Each year we hold our Annual Meeting in conjunction with the JA USA Leadership Conference. A fall conference was added in 2011 and repeated in 2013 and 2017 for strategic planning. The work of the committees is generally handled through conference calls.

A survey of members was conducted to determine activities desired by members. Meeting with and communicating with fellow members was the number one result. A similar survey of members was done in 2017 that confirmed this desire and also indicated that members wanted to be involved in meaningful activities to support JA.

A new strategic plan was instituted at an Executive Committee retreat held in 2016 that included refreshing the mission and purpose of the Pioneers, evaluating our awards programs and developing a brand strategy.

The mission was restated to: ***The mission of the JA Pioneers (now JA Staff Alumni Network) is to provide a network for staff alumni and to further the mission of JA USA.***

In recent years the organization has focused on becoming more robust and responsive.

- The by-laws were changed to welcome a wider number of prior professionals. Membership is now open to anyone who worked at JA for four or more years and is 40 years old. In 2018-19 the organization grew to over 250 members.
- New committees were created to engage more members, provide a diversity of ideas and to identify future leaders.
- Communications were enhanced with newsletters, an updated website, a Facebook page, and all-member conference calls to discuss important decisions. Hiring a part-time administrative assistant made this possible.

In 2019 after a diligent and rigorous process, with opportunities for input from all of our members, the name was changed to “JA Staff Alumni Network... a Pioneer Legacy”. This new name reflects the diversity of our members while honoring our past.