



Top Honors for JMG



Katy Foley, third from left, and Criag Larrabee, fifth from left, with their High Performer Awards.



Some of the JMG staffers at the JAG National Training Seminar in Nashville.

Every year, JMG's parent organization, Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG), holds its National Training Seminar (NTS), a professional development, training and celebratory opportunity for affiliates from across the country.

Thirteen representatives from JMG attended this year's NTS in Nashville. Regional Managers Katy Foley and Keith Piehler facilitated a session on best practices in management. Julie Poulin, VP of Institutional Advancement, facilitated a fundraising and development skills/strategies workshop. Additionally, a workshop on project-based community outreach was co-facilitated by Specialists Hauns Bassett, Maria Morris, Kara Boone, Shannon Micklus, Ellen Benson, Matt Reynolds, and Regional Manager Matt St. John.

At the awards presentation, 15 JMG Specialists/programs were honored for achieving 5 of 5 for the Class of 2012. The 5 of 5 Award criteria is set by JAG and it is based on the data that our Specialists collect on their seniors in the 12 months after they graduate from high school. The data includes graduation rates and rates of students going on to college, training programs, the military, full- and part-time employment, or a combination thereof. JMG also earned the 5 of 5 Award as a statewide organization for the 19th consecutive year!

As a testament to their outstanding achievements throughout the year, 15 JMG Specialists/programs were honored for attaining '5 of 5' for the Class of 2012. The '5 of 5 Award' criteria, established by JAG, is based on data for youth who graduated from high school twelve months earlier. In addition to graduation rates, data includes rates for college enrollment, training programs, military enlistments, full- and part-time employment, or a combination thereof. Thirteen Specialists received the 'Outstanding Specialist Award' for achieving BOTH '5 of 5' and had a 100% return to school rate. Notably, 2013 is the 19th consecutive year for which JMG, as a statewide organization, is also distinguished with the '5 of 5 Award.'

JMG President and CEO Craig Larrabee was awarded a High Performer Award for his 20 years of service to JMG, and Regional Manager Katy Foley earned a High Performer Award for innovative leadership.

Congratulations to all who attended, presented, or earned awards! We are proud of you and the work you are doing for your students.

The Right Fit in Retail

Like many high school seniors, 2000 South Portland High School JMG graduate Julie Holbrook felt herself being pulled in a dozen different directions. Thankfully, her JMG Specialist, Janice Johnston, helped to anchor her to the present.

Holbrook calls Johnston “Amazing!,” saying of her, “Looking back, we were a tough crowd to keep focused. Senior year is so overwhelming and exciting, there are so many events, ceremonies and games to look forward to, it becomes really difficult to focus on what’s next, what happens after we graduate. Janice did such a great job reminding each of us what was around the corner.”

Holbrook kept busy throughout high school, playing soccer, cheerleading, volunteering to help teens with disabilities in the school’s Life Skills classroom, and working both in retail and as a babysitter. However, like many teens, she had a hard time juggling everything on her plate.

“The most challenging part for me was definitely balancing my personal life (which often wasn’t so personal) and my school work,” she says. “If I could do it all again, I would do what feels good, not what looks good.”

Fortunately, JMG helped Holbrook find that balance. “It prepared me for the ‘real world,’” Holbrook says. “Life throws you curve balls, but this helped to give me a strong foundation to stand on. If the foundation is cracked or failing, the structure doesn’t stand the test of time. Thank you JMG!”

Another part of the JMG program that gave Holbrook an edge after high school was the job skills training. “We did a lot of mock interviews and job fairs,” she says. “That is what helped me the most. Really gaining confidence in the interview process and knowing what to expect.”



After high school, Holbrook completed the Portland Adult Ed Certified Nursing Assistance program. Then a chance encounter led her to her present job as the Store Director of J. Crew in the Maine Mall in South Portland.

JMG: How did you end up at J. Crew?

JH: My retail management career started when I was approached at church from a store manager who took a liking to my attitude, drive and personality. I interviewed for a co-manager position and accepted in August of 2009. Once I had my foot in the door, opportunities began to arise. My current boss recruited me from my previous employer.

JMG: What do you like about working there?

JH: I absolutely LOVE our customers and our staff. Without customers, we wouldn’t have a store. Our team is so dedicated to providing our customers with an exceptional experience. It inspires me!

JMG: Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

JH: I absolutely LOVE J. Crew and see myself developing into a District Manager with this company.

JMG: What skills do you look for when you hire new workers?

JH: I look for individuals who can self-motivate, have un-coachable characteristics, people who are passionate about our brand and understand how to drive customer loyalty.

JMG: As an employer, what is something that a job applicant could do to impress you in an interview?

JH: Ask questions. Come prepared with two or three questions about the company, the culture, or the customers.

JMG: Anything else you'd like to add?

JH: I was fortunate enough to be asked to speak to the 8th grade class at Memorial Middle School this year. I walked away feeling so good about what JMG promotes for young adults. Ellen Benson [the JMG Specialist at Memorial] is such an amazing role model and leader - every kid counts! I would be honored to stay involved in the program and help students along their journey to a successful future.

My daughter is eleven, and I will be advocating for her school to start the JMG program this year.

Excited for a New School Year



Our annual August staff retreat at Sugarloaf provided a welcome opportunity to meet the new hires, and attend staff-facilitated workshops on topics ranging from best practices, internet technology and classroom management, to extended learning opportunities. Health and wellness was an overarching theme that left us all with new energy and enthusiasm for the upcoming school year.

It is exciting to think that soon a whole new group of students will enter one of the brand-new JMG programs at Bonny Eagle High School, Foxcroft Academy, Richmond High School, Thornton Academy, or Skowhegan Area High School. Second programs have been added to South Portland High School and Windham High School (which already has a MELMAC program). We can't wait to see what exciting possibilities the next school year brings! Stay tuned...

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