

The Alternative Press – South Plainfield



Junior Achievement of New Jersey Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony Welcomes First Students to JA BizTown

Monday, June 9, 2014 • 12:00am

BRIDGEWATER, NJ - Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno celebrated the official ribbon-cutting ceremony of JA BizTown, the newest initiative of Junior Achievement of New Jersey in partnership with MetLife Foundation, designed to help fifth- and sixth-grade students meet state standards in social studies, mathematics and English.

Guadagno was joined by Catherine Milone, president of the Junior Achievement of New Jersey (JANJ); Bellaria Jimenez, managing director of MetLife Solutions Group; April Hawkins, program director of the MetLife Foundation; Kurt R. Padavano, chief operating officer, Advance Realty; Bridgewater Mayor Daniel J. Hayes, Jr, North District JANJ Board Member and South Plainfield Resident, Angelica Hughes, and Councilman Derryck White of South Plainfield.

Made possible through a \$1 million grant from MetLife Foundation — a longtime supporter of JA at the local and national level — the initiative is unique to New Jersey and combines an extensive in-classroom curriculum with the simulated community of JA BizTown, where students practice their newly acquired entrepreneurial, business management and budgeting skills.

“Part of our duty in educating our students is to ensure they have a foundation that equips them with the skills they’ll need to succeed in adulthood and become active, contributing members of society,” said JANJ’s Milone. “JA BizTown introduces students to the roles of workers and consumers and demonstrates the role of government, private enterprise, and non-profits in creating vibrant economies, allowing students to practice what they’ve learned in a real-world setting — and perhaps igniting their passion for a particular career or industry.”

“The lessons and experiences students gain through JA BizTown are going to stick with them for a long time. They can share what they learn with their parents and spark ongoing

conversations about how to manage money – an important skill everyone should learn,” said Dennis White, president and chief executive officer of MetLife Foundation.

Students in Newark, Orange and Plainfield who spent the 2013-2014 school year undergoing in-class lessons supporting the JA BizTown curriculum are the first to visit JA BizTown at its temporary home in Bridgewater. Through this experience, they will gain hands-on experience running businesses such as banks, newspapers, radio stations and restaurants. They also will make laws; become philanthropists; learn how to balance a checkbook, pay taxes, and even elect a mayor — all parts of building a successful economy.

“JA BizTown utilizes corporate and community volunteers to help these storefronts work and to guide students through the simulated experience. As this premier program grows, we’ll continue to seek partnerships with sponsors who want to host events and employee engagement sessions in JA BizTown®,” added Milone.

“One of the many benefits of owning this property is our ability to open it for creative and benevolent causes such as JA BizTown,” said Peter Coccoziello, president and CEO of Advance Realty, a redeveloper of the New Jersey Center of Excellence at Bridgewater, where the program will be held. “It’s a privilege to be able to play a part in such a great community service even while our redevelopment project is in its early stages.”

Currently, JA BizTown’s® 14 storefronts include: MetLife, U-Design-It, Healthy Hut Café, City Hall, Wellness Center, Bank of New Jersey, BizBee News, BiZNJ Radio, Delivery & Supply Center, JA BizTown Bank, JA BizTown Labs, Utility World, Community Assistance Center, and Trend Shoppe.

Junior Achievement of New Jersey began its mission in the 1950s and continues to empower young people to own their future economic success. For no cost, Junior Achievement professionals train educators and provide the curriculum and necessary programming for JA BizTown®.

For more information on Junior Achievement of New Jersey or the JA BizTown® program, please visit janj.org.

About Junior Achievement of New Jersey

Junior Achievement of New Jersey (JANJ) is dedicated to giving young people the knowledge and skills they need to own their economic success, plan for their future, and make smart academic and economic choices. JA programs are delivered by corporate and community volunteers. They provide relevant, hands-on experiences that give students from kindergarten through high school knowledge and skills in financial literacy, work readiness and entrepreneurship. During the 2013-14 school year, JANJ will reach nearly 48,000 students in more than 71 school districts across the New Jersey. For more information visit us at www.janj.org. Follow us on [Twitter](#) and like us on [Facebook](#).

About MetLife Foundation

MetLife Foundation was created in 1976 to continue MetLife's long tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. Today, the Foundation is dedicated to advancing financial inclusion, committing \$200 million over the next five years to help build a secure future for individuals and communities around the world. MetLife Foundation is affiliated to MetLife, Inc. To learn more about MetLife Foundation, visit www.metlife.org.