

Junior Achievement program wraps up

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BAYSIDE -- Jacoby Creek School recently concluded its first Junior Achievement program, an international educational program that focuses on work readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy. Junior Achievement had its introduction in Humboldt County last spring with two pilot programs at McKinleyville and Fortuna middle schools.

Junior Achievement offers several programs targeted toward middle school students, including those that focus on the global market place, economic history and entrepreneurship. According to Eric Grantz, principal/superintendent of Jacoby Creek School, the school's junior high school teachers chose to present the six-session "It's My Business!" curriculum, which introduces and reinforces fundamental concepts of business ownership.

"Our service-learning program emphasizes student connections with the community, as well as practical skills like financial literacy," Grantz said. "We hope exposure to this type of program and the volunteer business owners will help focus students, and allow them to see school as more relevant."

Susan Seaman, Junior Achievement coordinator for Humboldt County, said the economic development community -- especially Arcata Economic Development Corporation, Economic Fuel, the Headwaters Fund and the North Coast Small Business Resource Center -- worked with the Humboldt County Office of Education Regional Opportunity Program to introduce Junior Achievement into the schools. Bringing it from the business community to the schools also brings with it access to entrepreneur and business volunteers.

"Junior Achievement is a great opportunity for students to recognize the business successes in their own neighborhoods, by meeting local business professionals and learning that the corner market is as much a business as a large corporation in a big city," Seaman said. "After that recognition, we hope that they can begin to see themselves as young entrepreneurs, keeping their talent and enthusiasm in Humboldt County."

Three people -- Seaman, Taffy Stockton, owner of S&S Events and Consulting, and Paul Christen, a project estimator for Webcor Builders -- volunteered for the Jacoby Creek Junior Achievement Program. Christen also volunteered for the initial pilot at McKinleyville Middle School and said he remained involved because of the positive response he received from the McKinleyville students.

"The Junior Achievement program allows students to hear real-world company examples that can help to open their eyes to bigger possibilities beyond what they may have thought available for their future," Christen said.

Introducing Junior Achievement to Humboldt County students was made possible through a collaborative effort that included the Headwaters Fund, Small Business Resource Center and the Arcata Economic Development Corporation, agencies that are all interested in developing small businesses, and job opportunities, in Humboldt County.

"Headwaters' mission is to improve the economy of Humboldt County," said Dawn Elsbree, Headwaters Fund coordinator for the county's Economic Development Division. "We realized we need to start with young people. We don't want to keep exporting our best and brightest to other communities when they could create and benefit from the same opportunities we could have right here."

The Small Business Resource Center chose to support the program because of its proven track record in other communities.

"The economy of the North Coast rises and falls based on the quality of our small business entrepreneurs," said Michael Kraft, executive director of the North Coast Small Business Resource Center.

"Junior Achievement shows kids that path -- making your way in the world, providing your own job, providing jobs for others, managing money and being a responsible, contributing citizen."

For more information about how to volunteer, or get Junior Achievement in your school, visit www.ja.org or call Susan Seaman at 822-4616, ext. 12.