

## Company Spotlight: Matrix Imaging Solutions



When John Hartwell, CEO of Matrix Imaging ([www.matriximaging.com](http://www.matriximaging.com)), joined the JAWNY Board of Directors in the spring of 2019, he would quickly become involved with JA in a variety of different ways, including everything from participation in special events and of course, classroom volunteering. During the 2019-2020 school year, John encouraged his Matrix team to get involved as well. We spoke to John and four members of the Matrix team about their first experience with JA.

### Q. Why/How did you encourage your team at Matrix to also get involved with JA?

**John Hartwell:** We have a strong 'giving culture' at Matrix. I let everyone know they were welcome to participate (we would pay them as if they were on the job as well). I further encouraged all that the only qualification they needed was to have a willingness to work with kids and approximately 2 hours per week over the course of the volunteer effort (one hour of prep and one hour of classroom leadership). Further, I have a strong belief that if I am going to ask people to participate/donate, I put my time and money where my mouth is....I volunteered and will continue to do so going forward. I loved my time working with the kids at NFHS!

### Q. Why did you decide to get involved with Junior Achievement?

**John Hartwell:** JA was a part of my early years in grade school in NY. The exposure to an adult (other than my teacher) was very important in helping me to understand what it meant to be in business and equally, to volunteer. My wife and I have historically supported several charities focused on children and education. JA of WNY provides many services to the community. I wish more people would consider volunteering. Our kids and future generations need us in so many ways. JA is an investment in our future generations.

**Katie Thompson:** It was a good, low commitment opportunity to volunteer locally. My initial concerns were primarily regarding the timing of the class during the middle of my workday. It was a bit of a challenge to accommodate each week, but the fact that the course only ran for 5-6 weeks helped to balance things out.

**Rich Profeta:** Being a Lew Port grad, I thought my real-life experiences would be a great example of what "anyone" can achieve with a lot of hard work.

**Colin Dentino:** I had a friend at my previous company who was involved and after hearing John was offering it at Matrix, I was interested in learning more about it. I thought it might be fun to teach business skills to my son's class.

**Trish McAndrew:** I had an excellent experience in school and wanted to give back. I was a little concerned about my ability to "teach" the program.

### Q. What was your first volunteer experience like? Was there any particular moment that stood out?

**John Hartwell:** I volunteered at Niagara Falls High School and worked with juniors and seniors in a business class. I enjoyed the challenge of engaging the students and sharing my life experience in addition to the important 'life material' I delivered over 7-8 weeks. It was a very inspiring one-hour weekly challenge that allowed me to help guide some kids

and in turn, they inspired me. The best part of the experience is watching the kids 'wake up' and participate over the course of the experience. I found their cell phones went down, their participation went up and I hope they left with the inspiration that wherever their life takes them, they are in control and have limitless opportunities to succeed!

**Katie Thompson:** Part of the Our Families program focuses on explaining the difference between "needs" and "wants". Going into this session, I expected this to be a difficult concept for 1<sup>st</sup> grade students to understand, but I was very wrong in that thought and was very impressed with how quickly the students picked up the topic.

**Colin Dentino:** There wasn't a standout moment but a bunch of smaller ones along the way. Needs and wants came up in the car the other day and my son made a small connection. Based on the kid's responses, I could tell they were processing the material.

**Trish McAndrew:** We divided the class into two teams and played a game about interviews, etc. It was a lot of fun and the students loved it. Also, after the last class they asked if I could call their names and have them come up one at a time to shake my hand and get their certificate. I was touched by that!

#### **Q. Why do you think it's important for students to have JA?**

**Colin Dentino:** It's important for people to learn about how money works. Where it comes from, where it goes, and how it interacts with everyone along the way. JA focuses on that awareness and the skills necessary to influence how money flows.

**Katie Thompson:** I think it is a good opportunity for students to be exposed to basic business/economic concepts in a fun and engaging way.

#### **Q. What advice would you give to a new JA volunteer?**

**Trish McAndrew:** I would tell a new volunteer to not be nervous. The material is very relatable and there is a lot of it! Go through the material and pick out the most important things that you think would be most relevant to your class. Let the teacher help you with the computer portion of the lessons. I learned quickly not to be afraid to ask them to be quiet and pay attention.

**Rich Profeta:** Be prepared.

**Colin Dentino:** Watch the videos and bring Smarties – so long as the teacher says it's okay. Smarties at the end can make even the roughest days all good.

**Katie Thompson:** I would encourage new volunteers to take things as they come and go with the flow. Sometimes the students will take things in a direction that you hadn't planned, but just use that as an opportunity to enforce the message differently.

#### **Q. What are any "side benefits" of participation in JA that you might see- either for yourself as a volunteer, or the students or teachers that you have worked with**

**Rich Profeta:** The teachers of today have their hands full and I have a great appreciation of the job they do.

**Trish McAndrew:** For me, the side benefit was building confidence in public speaking. I also enjoyed sharing my experiences in the workforce. I hope the class I taught moves forward and someday they say, "hey Mrs. McAndrew showed us that." If I reached ONE student, then I was successful. I think about my class and how they are doing during this pandemic!