



Inspiring Tomorrows™

Terri Johnson is the Director of Employment and Community Based Services at The Resource Center. Terri has spent most of her 20 years there either doing or building teams that support and teach employment skills to people with disabilities.

Q: How did you become involved with JA?

A: I first became involved with Junior Achievement when another organization that I work with was looking for volunteers. They called and asked me if I would be interested in a high school class at JHS. I thought it was a perfect fit for what I do every day.

Q: Why did you decide to get involved? Stay involved with JA?

A: When I first learned about JA it was in such alignment with my regular job that I knew I would love it. I started with a 9th grade class. Then an opportunity came to work with a 2nd grade class and although the lesson was much different than why I started I thought it would be a great way to get involved in the schools since I work with a variety of schools in my area for work. Once I did that, I have been asked to do a 5th grade class as well. Each class brings a different experience and it's so fun to see the kids in the community a year later and they still remember me. I have since done 9 JA classes at a couple of different school districts.

Q: What are you nervous about before teaching? How do you overcome it?

A: At first, I was nervous about going into a school where I didn't know anybody and how it would be received. Once the first class was done it gets much easier. As you start to build a rapport with the kids. You start to learn with they like and don't like, and you can use that information to tie it into the lesson. After the first class it is always so much more of a comfortable environment. The teachers also are a great support and help with the various dynamic with the students.

Q: Do you have a JA memory that stands out?

A: My favorite JA memory was last year. I had the opportunity to teach JA in my son's class. I knew all the kids going in and it was a relaxed and comfortable setting to be in. I loved being able to share some of my work experiences with my son.

Q: What advice would you give to a new JA volunteer?

A: Stick with it. You will meet some great teachers and you may help a kid find a career path. It is fun to break away from the everyday work and get to do something different.

Q: Why do you think it's important for students to have JA?

A: I think it is important for students to hear the message from someone other than their teacher. And they like to hear real life experiences. The more of that you can incorporate into a lesson the more engaged they are.

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 ?

A: I have met some great teachers that I see outside of the school environment. I also have met a network of other JA volunteers which is a nice common ground. I think being “out there” in other settings outside of your typical work setting helps build relationship. I have been able to use those relationships to help build some other programs for some students that attend the schools.