

March 18, 2015

Vol. 25, No. 10

Aerostructures volunteers bring a dose of the real world to the next generation of business leaders

The experience lasted less than five hours. But the lessons 100 fifth-graders learned during the recent "McGrath Family Junior Achievement (JA) "BizTown" event in San Diego will linger considerably longer... maybe even over a lifetime. So says Chula Vista Financial Analyst Adriana Castaneda. Adriana was one of several Aerostructures employees that volunteered their time to teach financial literacy skills and bring a dose of the real world to a few members of the next generation of business leaders at the Feb. 25 activity.

"Exposure to running a business in an environment like JA BizTown plants the seed in the students that participate to unlock their potential in life... and appreciate future opportunities," Castaneda said.

Just how exactly does BizTown do that?

Adults for a day

First the Otay and Elevate Elementary School fifth grade students were exposed to four weeks of curriculum in the classroom on how to be a citizen, how a city's economy works, how to apply for a job and how to run a



At Junior Achievement (JA) of San Diego County's Feb.25 "McGrath Family BizTown" experience, 100 local fifth grade students were given a job at one of 21 life-sized San Diego businesses – from the San Diego International Airport to Kaiser Health Care to Jack in the Box. The students also earned paychecks, opened bank accounts, paid taxes, voted in an election and much more. They were assisted in the half-day financial literacy lesson by several Aerostructures Finance employees. "The students leave with a greater understanding of the value of a dollar, the

importance of teamwork and how to be a contributing citizen in the community," according to Katie Easton, education manager at Junior Achievement of San Diego County.



In the photo above, Chula Vista employee volunteers Katie Zimmennan (far left) and Adriana Castaneda (second from right) -along with Joanne Pastula, president and CEO Of JA Of San Diego (far right) -assist fifth-graders operating the Kaiser "business" in administering medical checkups at "BizTown," a simulated work day experience. Said Castaneda of the experience: "This is my second year volunteering at BizTown and I can't wait till next year to do it again!"

successful business. They then put their knowledge into practice by visiting JA BizTown, a 10,000 square-foot mini-city located at the Capdevilla Gillespie Center for Junior Achievement in San Diego, for a simulated work day experience.

At the BizTown site, the students assumed adult roles, becoming "JA BizTown citizens" for the day. Each student was given a job at one of 21 life-sized San Diego businesses-from the San Diego International Airport to Kaiser Health Care to Jack in the Box. The students also earned paychecks, opened bank accounts, paid taxes, voted in an election and much more.

"The students leave with a greater understanding of the value of a dollar, the importance of teamwork and how to be a contributing citizen in the community," according to Katie Easton, education manager at Junior Achievement of San Diego County.

But the Aerostructures employees who volunteered to assist and guide the students in becoming adults for a day and ensure they are prepared to succeed in the workplace took home some lessons of their own.

"A very empowering opportunity"

"We can all learn a lesson or two from the kids while volunteering at JA BizTown!" said Senior Financial Analyst Angelica Ortiz, "I worked in the San Diego International Airport with four very energetic kids. It was a very rewarding experience to have the opportunity to help younger kids get an understanding of real-life work and



Senior Financial Analyst Angelica Ortiz worked in the San Diego International Airport "business" with four very energetic students during the recent JA BizTown event in San Diego. "We can all learn a lesson or two from the kids while volunteering at JA BizTown!" she said afterward. Noted Kristi Zimsky, Public Relations, Marketing and Social Media manager for Junior Achievement of San Diego County: "Your employees created such rewarding experiences for our students and we appreciate their time and dedication."

how we can all contribute to our society and economy through our efforts and commitment to excel I believe that giving kids a hands-on experience is a very empowering opportunity."

She continued: "I was very impressed with how the kids took the initiative to meet as a team to define an action plan. At some point our business was running a little slow, so one of the kids took the initiative to go over to the radio station to advertise the business. At the same time, the CEO/ CFO went straight to the 'NBC News' studio to spread the word about the business, as well. They did an amazing job overall and won the Customer Service Award."

Finance Senior Coordinator Adrian Talamantes also found the BizTown experience informative and rewarding. "My son attended JA BizTown seven years ago, when he was in elementary school!" said Talamantes. "I remember him trying to explain what BizTown was to me, but I just didn't get it. The concept of an entire functioning town with commerce and government run by children- all located inside one building- was more than my adult brain could understand. This was my second time volunteering at JA BizTown. And when I walked in last year for the first time and laid eyes on the town, I finally got it. It really is a city, inside a building, run by kids!"
