

May 2009 Edition

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Spotlight on Mahoney

Last week, Project Reach students hosted the annual JMG Student Showcase at Mahoney Middle School. This conference was designed to be an informational session for several foundations who are interested in becoming partners with the Jobs For Maine's Graduates Program. Students worked on transforming the Project Reach classroom into a "marketplace" which featured the program's curriculum. Students set up stations entitled, The Day in the Life of a Reach Student, Community Service, Trips and Excursions, and Group Challenges.

Students dressed in professional attire and one class acted as greeters and escorted the guests into the library for a "Round Table Discussion" which included the principals from Mahoney and Memorial Middle Schools, the Superintendent of South Portland Schools, JMG Board members, executives from Bangor Savings Bank, Unum, and the Unity Foundation. Also in attendance were the President and Vice President from JMG, members from the Nellie Mae Foundation, the John Merek Fund, and the Harold Alfond Foundation. After the discussion, guests listened to presentations from Project Reach students from Mahoney, Memorial, and high school students from the JMG program. Students described The community service projects they performed this year, field trips they had experienced, and how the classroom functions from day to day. They were fantastic!



CDC 2009 – A Time to Celebrate Career Readiness

JMG's 17th annual Career Development Conference (CDC) was held on April 29 at the Augusta Civic Center. Students in JMG programs from Sanford to St. John Valley came together to compete in career-related events like Employment Interview (mock interviews conducted by staff from Bangor Savings Bank), Public Speaking, Employment Triathlon, Career Association Marketplace, etc. They also had a chance to meet potential employers in the Career Expo, to view equipment provided by the Maine State Police, Maine Air National Guard, and U.S. Air Force, to participate in workshops with topics ranging from stress management, to drawing, to self defense. They also viewed a K-9 demonstration by the Maine Warden Service. Other highlights of this year's CDC were a talk by guest speaker and Survivor: Gabon winner Bob Crowley and a visit by Miss Maine

International 2008 Kimberly Cyrway, who also helped judge the Marketplace competition.



At left: Survivor: Gabon winner Bob Crowley and Miss Maine International 2008 Kimberly Cyrway exchange photos. At right: Portland High School students show off a winning combination; professional attire and bright smiles.



Project Reach students take on Portland!

On April 3, 161 Project Reach students from all over Maine converged on the Portland headquarters of Unum, which sponsored and hosted JMG's annual Urban Adventure event. The day started off with the students learning the art of drawing with a workshop led by Jay Piscopo, the author and illustrator of *The Undersea Adventures of Capt'n Eli*, an all-ages graphic novel series. After being treated to lunch by Unum, the students broke into small groups and headed into the Old Port, where half began their scavenger hunt, seeking out such items as a policeman's signature, business cards and job applications, while the other half of the groups performed community service at Preble Street Resource Center, Ruth's Recyclables, Goodwill, and the Salvation Army. In the evening students returned to Unum where they had dinner, wrote reflection letters, learned how to dress for success, participated in some fun social activities and had a sleepover in the company's cafeteria. The next morning the students took part in mock interviews, workshops, and team building activities before heading back home.

Student response to the event was great. One student said, "I worked two years to get here and feel so proud of myself. I loved this trip."



Above, graphic artist Jay Piscopo shows students how drawing can be easy *and* fun.

JMG and Project Reach Specialists Awarded

JMG Specialist Chris Poulin (Carrabec High School, North Anson) was inducted into the "Maine Educators' Hall of Fame Starting 6" on December 18, 2008. This award was given out by Unum and the Portland Pirates in partnership with the Maine Coalition for Excellence in Education.

Project Reach Specialist Keith Piehler (Warsaw Middle School, Pittsfield) received the MSAD #53 Board of Education Faculty Award on December 23, 2008 in recognition of his commitment to his students.

JMG Specialist Ed Leeman (Calais Area High School, Calais) was selected to be the 2009 recipient of the Michael McPherson Volunteer Award on February 15, 2009. This award was given by the Calais Recreation Department.

JMG Success Story



Maria Castenada
2008 JMG Graduate
Deering High School

Maria was a member of JMG Specialist Robyn Fink's class her senior year at Deering High School. "She started out her senior year EXTREMELY quiet and had no idea if she would graduate," says Robyn. However, over the course of the year, Maria came out of her shell and began to flourish.

Maria admits that although she enjoyed attending classes and understood the material her teachers were presenting, there was something keeping her from succeeding academically. "I would have those hard times where I wanted to excel, become overwhelmed, and let a small failure ruin my entire day until it ate at me," she says. "I struggled with showing up to school everyday...I hated humiliation and being late; so if I were lectured, it was as if I was struck to the heart with the sharpest arrow."

However, Maria says Robyn provided her students with a "stress-free" learning environment, and to her students she was the equal balance of understanding and motivation that they needed to succeed.

"She showed us what paths would lead to our goals and dreams and helped us find those paths," Maria says. "She inspired me to be better and to continue to work hard, even if I slipped here or there."

Her senior year, Maria maintained an average of 93 or above in all her classes and earned high honors for three consecutive quarters. After graduation she joined the Navy and became a Flag Mess Culinary Specialist for Rear Admiral Lower Half Richard B. Landolt, commander of Commander Task Force 76.

Maria attended basic training and A school in Great Lakes, Ill., has been stationed in Okinawa, Japan at White Beach Naval Base, and was most recently deployed to Thailand aboard the USS Harpers Ferry. She says she loves "the chance to explore new places and to meet and work with new people."

JMG on the move... Here is what JMG has been up to since our last newsletter edition.

New sites: Shead High School, Eastport



JMG opened new programs at Shead High School in September 2008 and at Beatrice Rafferty in January 2009. Ben Brigham was hired to be the Job Specialist and work with students in grades 9-12. Ben and his students attended their first Career Development Conference (CDC) on April 29. JMG alumnus Lisa Cushing was hired to be the Project Reach

Specialist at Beatrice Rafferty, and in April her students attended their first ever Urban Adventure. Welcome Shead and Beatrice Rafferty students!

Beatrice Rafferty School, Pleasant Point



Maine Marine Trades Day

On November 13, 2008, JMG partnered with the Maine Marine Trades Association to host a marine career day at the Maine Advanced Technology Center in Brunswick. Over 100 students (both JMG and non-JMG) from Deering High School, Morse High School, Lewiston Regional Technical Center, and Portland High School, attended the event, which included a lecture on composites, computer software demonstrations, a marine terminology game, a Compass Project wood planning competition, interactive electrical, welding and knot tying demonstrations, and a mini career fair. Pictured at right, students get a welding demonstration from a Bath Iron Works employee.



Downeast Energy Career Day

Also on November 13, 2008, but this time in Freeport, students from Freeport High School visited Downeast Energy and Building Supply. There they met employees and learned about the training required for jobs in sales, delivery, technical services, design, information technology and marketing. Downeast Energy has held similar Career Days for JMG classes at Lincoln Academy and Mt. Ararat High School over the past few years.



Morse High School and the Compass Project

On March 3, 2009, Morse High School JMG students and the Compass Project hosted an open house for the new Youth Apprenticeship Program in Composites at the Maine Advanced Technology Center in Brunswick. The event was co-hosted by Sabre Yachts, and Governor John Baldacci made a special appearance at the event. The JMG program at Morse High School started up in September 2008 and is supported by a grant from Bath Iron Works.



Mission: Uganda

In March, Nokomis Regional High School (Newport, ME) Job Specialist Melissa Coppa and one of her JMG students, Shylo Lesperance, were able to participate in a once-in-a-lifetime mission trip with seven other participants across the globe to Uganda, Africa. Uganda is a country in mid-eastern Africa, bordering Lake Victoria, and lying directly on the Equator. Shylo had always wanted to have a career in service work, preferably the Peace Corps, so when she heard about this opportunity, she knew it was something she had to do.

The team of nine spent most of their trip in a village called Kabala. During this time in the village they helped build a school, treat 400-500 people in the small clinic that they set up, brought blankets, clothes and mosquito netting to AIDS-affected families, and enjoyed playing and laughing with the children of the village. Shylo wrote, "It was like swimming through a National Geographic magazine. Everything I saw or did was something completely new." Shylo is unsure if this is the line of work she wishes to continue pursuing because, as she puts it, "It makes you feel really good to help people, but it's very heart-wrenching seeing the famine and disease."

Melissa said of the trip, "What an amazingly humbling experience. I learned so much and have been able to incorporate these things into my classroom and enrich my teaching." Shylo said, "I was happy to come home because I missed almost everything about it, but looking back at the pictures, it makes me homesick to go back." When asked if they would go back, both Melissa and Shylo said yes.

Melissa and Shylo would love to tell you more. You can e-mail questions to Melissa at mcoppa@msad48.org.

Pictured at right: There may be a language barrier between Maine and Uganda, but love transcends all. Shylo Lesperance Makes friends with a child in Kabala village.



AT&T Recognized for Commitment to Philanthropy in Maine and Beyond

AT&T Inc. has been honored with the 2009 Freeman Philanthropic Services Award for Outstanding Corporation, presented by the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

The award honors a corporation that demonstrates outstanding commitment through financial support and through encouragement of others to take leadership roles toward philanthropy and community involvement. Just last fall, AT&T awarded Jobs for Maine's Graduates (JMG) a \$300,000 award to expand its programs to serve more students who face barriers to education. Craig Larrabee, President and CEO of JMG says, "AT&T is the kind of community partner that is committed to helping us level the playing field to ensure that all Maine youth get the chance to reach their potential and contribute to the health of Maine's economy."

Since 2000, AT&T has given more than \$800 million to organizations that work to enhance education, support community vitality and meet the critical needs of underserved and diverse communities. "The sheer volume of AT&T's giving is inspiring enough, but the company's strategic approach to philanthropy is what truly makes it stand out above others," said Gail Freeman, President and CEO of Freeman Philanthropic Services.

One of AT&T's most significant initiatives is AT&T Aspire, launched in 2008 with \$100 million to help strengthen student success and workforce readiness here in Maine and across the country. The program, one of the largest of its kind in the nation, provides grants to help students stay in school and prepare for the workforce, and supports major research examining school dropout rates and solutions. "The work of the Association of Fundraising Professionals enhances the achievements and establishes the standards of the philanthropic community throughout our country," said Laura Sanford, President of the AT&T Foundation. "We are truly honored to be recognized by an organization whose membership sustains the all-important nonprofit sector, especially during this economic climate. Working with our local communities, we are committed to continuing to invest in the communities where we live and work to support underserved populations and promote programs that create economic opportunity."