

A Report to the Board of Directors and Council of State Affiliates
August-September 2017

Preparations for October 11 National Thought Leader Event

We are delighted to report that the 2017 JAG *National Thought Leader* Event will feature Governor Phil Bryant, our Chair, and US Secretary of Labor Alex Acosta, as we collaborate in intensive working sessions to develop new policy and programmatic solutions for youth unemployment.

This year we are pleased to be joined by several national organizations who will serve as our Co-Hosts:

The Council of Chief State School Officers
The Society for Human Resource Management
The National Urban League
The Rural Community and School Trust
America's Promise Alliance
The Hispanic Heritage Foundation
The Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund

▶ U.S. Secretary of Labor Alex Acosta



Because the Thought Leader Event is a “working session,” we limit the size of the group to about 100. The small size allows for true interaction in developing specific Recommendations we can present to the private sector and government leaders at every level on sustainably boosting the rate of youth employment.

We are excited to have Secretary Acosta with us, as he is in great demand at many events as the new Secretary of Labor. We anticipate that the Secretary will highlight the Administration’s new apprenticeship strategy and how we might provide our students with more credentials and skills to increase their chances for success in the job market.

As we did last year, this year we will work to develop policy and programmatic solutions for both rural and urban areas. Demonstrating its support of our collective work, for the third consecutive year Gallup will host the event, allowing us to use its Washington headquarters for our event.

The Thought Leader Event will begin promptly at 8:00 AM on October 11 at 901 F Street, NW, Washington, DC and will conclude at about 2:30 PM. We welcome all JAG Board members and State Affiliate leaders to join us, if your schedules permit.

JAG National Headquarters

1729 King Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314-2720
Phone: (703) 684-9479
Fax: (703) 684-9489

- **Kenneth M. Smith**
President
- Katherine Travis
Senior Vice President
- Janelle Duray
Senior Vice President
- Kathleen McDonnell
Program Manager

National Center for Evidence-Based Practices

548 Silicon Drive, Suite 101
Southlake, TX 76092
Phone: (972) 691-4486
Fax: (972) 874-0063

- **Jim Koeninger, Ph.D.**
Executive Vice President
- Karen Koeninger
Corporate Vice President
- Laura Sheppard
Chief of Staff
- Bobby Crandall
Director, Technology
- John McConnell
Director, Technical Assistance
- Jeff Koeninger
Director, Marketing/NSLA
- Jason Koeninger
e-NDMS Designer

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JAG Hurricane Relief Fund

The ferocious hurricanes that have struck the Virgin Islands, Southeast Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico recently have had serious impacts on a number of JAG programs, Specialists, and students.

In the Virgin Islands, our four-school program has been able to restore operations in the two public high schools in St. Croix. Although damaged, they are operational. St. Thomas, however, has been devastated and the most basic infrastructure is not functioning. It is unclear when the schools will be operating again, and when they are, it is unclear what venue they will use.

In Florida, as in the Virgin Islands and Texas, there has been significant damage to the homes of our Specialists and staff. However, all are safe and physically well, though faced with many new challenges to their daily lives.

The JAG Network has responded with great compassion and concern for the distress of our colleagues. JAG has created a fund for those who wish to help both the schools and individual staff members who have been affected: the “JAG Hurricane Relief Fund.” Please assist if you are able. We will use the funds to support the specific projects identified by our organization in the four schools in Texas, 15 schools in Florida, and the four schools in the Virgin Islands.



▶ Aug. 30, 2017 Evacuees sit on a boat after being rescued in Port Arthur. Joe Raedle/Getty Images

Affiliates in trouble

It appears that the four-school JAG-Connecticut program might not survive the current round of budget cuts the State of Connecticut is making. The budget has not yet been resolved for the fiscal year beginning July 1. Meanwhile, we continue to look for every avenue to maintain a presence in Connecticut.

Better news in **Florida**... Through the good work of Jobs for Florida's Graduates CEO, Heather Beaven, and the support of Governor Scott's office, with the aid of our JAG Board Member, former Speaker of the House Will Weatherford, funding has been identified to maintain at least half of our thirty schools in the coming school year.

Jobs for Washington's Graduates will be reduced from nearly forty schools to 10-15 schools this year, as a result of a major budget reduction in the line item for Jobs for America's Graduates. National JAG is working closely with the new Board of Education team brought in under leadership of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Chris Reykdal, to ensure a high level of quality and pursuit of additional funding sources.

As noted elsewhere, JAG will also be experiencing significant growth in several states that will offset these losses and likely result in a **net increase** in the number of schools and students being served in the 2017-2018 school year across our 34 State Affiliates.



JAG classroom visited by Chairman Denault

New investment by Entergy Corporation

We are delighted to announce that JAG has received \$250,000 from Entergy Corporation, which will provide \$75,000 for each of three State Affiliates in its service area – Jobs for Mississippi Graduates, Jobs for Arkansas Graduates, and JAG-Louisiana – to incent new schools in each state to demonstrate and test the JAG program. Remaining funds will be used to support student leadership, development, skills training, and engagement activities in each state, for which using government funding is difficult. Twenty-five thousand has been designated to support National JAG's work.

Entergy has already donated approximately \$200,000 to launch two in-school programs and two out-of-school JAG programs in Port Arthur and Beaumont, Texas in the southeastern portion of the state. (As these programs have been badly affected by Hurricane Harvey and the flooding that followed, we will be providing whatever technical assistance is needed to ensure the programs are restored as soon as possible.)

Entergy is also engaging with senior state-level leaders who serve on our national and state boards of directors, to explore opportunities for hiring and other potential partnerships. We are grateful and honored to have Leo Denault, CEO of Entergy, serving on the JAG Board of Directors, with his personal enthusiastic commitment and the support from his colleagues at every level.

JAG visibility among key government leaders

Through the good work of JAG Chair, Governor Phil Bryant, Ken Smith has been invited to deliver an in-depth briefing to US Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos and her senior management team in early October. Secretary DeVos has placed a priority on providing a wide range of School Choice options, especially for at-risk and disadvantaged youth. In addition, we anticipate meeting with Secretary of Labor Alex Acosta to brief him and his senior team on JAG, following Governor Bryant's discussion with the Secretary in late August, and support from the White House Policy Director.

In early February, Vice President Pence arranged for Ken to provide a short briefing on JAG to President Trump, Secretary DeVos, senior White House staff members, and him. The Vice President's office has now indicated an interest in meeting with us and his senior policy staff for a follow-up briefing on the work of Jobs for America's Graduates.

We are also working to raise the visibility, recognition, and appreciation of JAG among leaders in the Congress. We recently had an opportunity to provide a briefing to the Chair of the U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce, Representative Virginia Foxx, and we now have a JAG program in her District in North Carolina. In October, we will also meet with several Members of Congress on that same Committee who have JAG programs in their districts, to provide them with information about the value of the program.

The Council of Chief State School Officers has invited JAG to join with the Chiefs in their annual policy conference in early November to highlight the JAG success.

Governor Bryant and Governor Bullock will send a communication to all of the nation's Governors about the success of JAG, including the best results in our history for in-school and out-of-school youth and various minority populations, highlighting our convincing high school graduation and employment rates.

We would gratefully welcome suggestions from anyone who has an idea for presenting information to key decision-makers in the public and private sectors.

News around the Network

The New Hampshire-JAG Board selected **Janet Arnett**, long-standing leader and supervisor on the staff of New Hampshire-JAG, as the new Executive Director of the program. Janet brings in-depth, on-the-ground supervisory and management experience to the organization. We look forward to working with Janet, her board, and Governor Chris Sununu of the National JAG Board to bring the program in New Hampshire to much greater scale in the months and years ahead. Congratulations, Janet!



▶ Janet Arnett,



▶ Stacia Solomon,

It is also our pleasure to announce that **Stacia Solomon** has been hired to manage the Jobs for North Carolina's Graduates program (our newest State Affiliate) through her role as Vice President of Communities in Schools of North Carolina, our partnering organization. Stacia and LaTeesa Allen (Interim Chief Program Officer/Vice President of Embedded Operations at Communities in Schools) have spent three days in training and development with Jobs for Maine's Graduates. They assessed best practice in managing the new non-profit, and various management tools, systems and processes to ensure a high level of consistency and quality in the organization. Congratulations, Stacia!

JAG Board Member **Pat Skorkowsky**, Superintendent of Clark County, Nevada Schools, has announced that he will retire at the end of June 2018 – and he has renewed his commitment to helping Jobs for Nevada's Graduates grow and increase its impact over this school year...

Our warmest congratulations to **Kristin Harrington**, who delivered the newest member of the JAG team in late September. She and her new daughter are doing well. Kristin will be on maternity leave for the next several weeks but receiving emails and letters...

National Training Seminar follow-up

A great deal of effort went into following up on the many details from our National Training Seminar, held July 10-14. This year's event was the largest ever, with over 480 participants.

Participants were offered the opportunity to evaluate the seminar, and their responses reflected their enthusiasm and appreciation for the 61 best practice workshops, company career and employment presentations, and training sessions for Project Based Learning activities. We received the best ratings this year of any National Training Seminar we've conducted.

Notes of appreciation have been sent to the speakers, along with our corporate and other workshop presenters. Invoices are being processed and paid, while we continue to receive registration fees from our Affiliates. We would appreciate all remaining Affiliates paying those registration fees as soon as possible.

We have already begun planning for the 2018 National Training Seminar, to be held in July again. The final location always depends on the right combination of hotel costs and lower-cost airline tickets. We are reaching out to hotels in several cities, and assessing airline costs, and anticipate deciding on the location within the next 30-45 days.

Jobs for North Carolina's Graduates launched in seven schools

For the first time in our history, Jobs for North Carolina's Graduates will be operational this month in seven schools. The state has targeted at least one school per "Prosperity Zone" – areas of higher unemployment and lower high school graduation rates. One of the schools will be in the district of Chairwoman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, Virginia Foxx. Janelle Duray and Ken Smith met with Ms. Foxx in June to provide a personal briefing on JAG and the potential value it has to the program in her district.

Communities in Schools is managing Jobs for North Carolina's Graduates. However, a separate nonprofit corporation has been established and will have a separate board working to help ensure appropriate visibility and recognition of the Jobs for North Carolina's Graduates name.