



# Youth Action News

NEWS & INFORMATION FOR THE YOUNG LEADERS OF TODAY

HOW CAN YOU HELP MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS BECOME...

## Ready for the Real World



By: Rui Bao  
St. Louis, MO

*"I'm sorry, can you give me a minute? I'm in the middle of balancing my checkbook."* A familiar phrase, no doubt—but not coming from a middle schooler. Glancing around Junior Achievement's Enterprise Village, I was struck by not only how adult these kids were behaving, but how naturally everything seemed to come for them.

Enterprise Village, one of the newest programs at the St. Louis branch of Junior Achievement, is a miniature city. Kids of all ages can participate in an after-school or summer-time program where they find jobs, earn wages, and of course—shop. After completing their workday (or, in this miniature version, work hour), the participants reap the fruits of their labor at the toy market.

While for the most part, the lessons learned in this mini city came naturally, I noticed that there were some concepts that took students longer to grasp, such as depositing their neon money in the bank. I heard kids ask, "but why am I giving my money away?" It may not be real, but it was an extraordinarily realistic model.

I turned to one of the supervisors and asked if kids always learned the routine of working, dealing with money, and spending it wisely so quickly. "It's pretty much always like this," she said with a proud smile, telling me how the same phenomenon occurs with elementary and high school kids. "It's not difficult to learn, as long as you have someone there to help you. That's what we do."

Her words struck me as I realized how accurately her comment depicted not only what was happening in front of my eyes, but also my own experience with Junior Achievement as a young person. As a participant of the Junior Achievement *Company Program*, I spent several months each year with a group of 10-20 peers creating a "company" from scratch. Though the agenda was consistent—pick officers, products, and prices—my experience each year differed, from making "Company of the Year," to barely making payroll.

Later, as President, I learned about the intricacies of employee management, financial paperwork, and more. My involvement taught me to think creatively, persist in my endeavors, and be an effective leader. The skills I learned from Junior Achievement have helped me in managing other projects, as well as experience success in my future internships.

Just recently, the America's Promise Alliance announced a new National Action Strategy called *Ready for the Real World*. The goal of Ready for the Real World is to engage more middle school students in high quality service-learning and career opportunities. Engagement in these activities helps kids connect what they learn in school to a positive future and supports academic learning, personal growth and civic responsibility. Quality service-learning and career exploration experiences help youth identify their interests and abilities. These experiences will support their transition into high school and lay a foundation for success.

While not every community has its own Enterprise Village, every community can be doing more to provide kids with these important learning opportunities. Just like the supervisor at Enterprise Village in St. Louis told me, becoming prepared for the Real World is not that difficult, you just need someone there to help you. How can you be helping kids in your community?

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**“Tell me and I’ll forget.  
Show me and I may remember.  
Involve me and I’ll understand.”**  
-Chinese Proverb

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## Help Kids Be Ready for the Real



The America's Promise Alliance needs the help of young leaders in order to prepare middle school students to be Ready for the Real World. There are so many great ways you can help - from organizing job shadowing days and service-learning projects, to hosting college fairs and career exploration events.

### Check out Start Something

Made possible by Target and the Tiger Woods Foundation, the Start Something Curriculum is a free resource that helps teach students about making smart decisions, setting goals, and making a difference in their communities. The curriculum is available for elementary, middle and high school levels. College and high school students can also serve as excellent facilitators! Student leaders are encouraged to organize to implement the curriculum with a classroom of middle school students.

Visit the Start Something website to request a free hardcopy of the curriculum guide. The website also contains downloadable versions of the curriculum guide as well as a variety of other resources for teachers and students.  
[www.tigerwoodsfoundation.org/startsomething/](http://www.tigerwoodsfoundation.org/startsomething/)

*IN MY OPINION:*

## Preventing Dropouts



By: Latasha Kinnard  
Chicago, IL

According to an article in the Washington Post, about 30% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders (and 50% in low income neighborhoods) will never make it to graduation day. With statistics like these, how can we expect today's youth to be ready for the real world? Although this information may be disheartening, the article did not focus on the negative aspects of the current educational system, which I am sure we all know by heart from the numerous articles on the subject. Instead this article focused on ways to increase the number of high school dropouts by implementing methods that have been proven to work. These methods included changes such as decreasing class size, increasing parent involvement, and other elements critical in student development. These suggestions prove that illustrating that the path to success begins long before the first day of high school. I'm happy to see that the America's Promise Alliance is also recognizing the importance of strengthening schools. As young leaders, we can become informed about and involved in the Alliance's dropout prevention efforts. (check out [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org) to learn more.)

As the standard of education continues to rise, and as the college diploma slowly becomes the equivalent of a high school diploma a few decades ago, it is clear that without a high school education, these youth will barely be able to work at minimum wage jobs. And if, by some stroke of luck, they are able to find a job, surely they will have no chance of maintaining it without the proper preparation. Many of them will mirror the lives of their parents, continuing the legacy of government dependence. Yes, these youth are ready for the "real" world, but unfortunately, without a diploma in hand their "real" world does not look so promising.

*ALLIANCE PARTNER OF THE MONTH*

## Junior Achievement

Junior Achievement is the world's largest organization dedicated to educating students in grades K-12 about entrepreneurship, work readiness, and financial literacy through experiential, hands-on programs.

Reaching 8.3 million students per year in 339,000 classrooms and after-school locations in the United States and more than 100 countries around the world, JA Worldwide programs help prepare young people for the real world by showing them how to generate wealth and effectively manage it, how to create jobs which make their communities more robust, and how to apply entrepreneurial thinking to the workplace.

Students put these lessons into action and learn the value of contributing to their communities. JA's unique approach allows volunteers from the community to deliver the curriculum while sharing their experiences with students. Volunteers come from all walks of life and include business people, college students, parents, and retirees.



### Get Involved:

You can help JA educate and inspire more young people to succeed in a global economy. Visit the Junior Achievement website at [www.ja.org](http://www.ja.org) to find out how you can become a volunteer.

### Check this out...

Visit the **JA Student Center**, an online website geared to help young people become workforce ready. Here you can search for colleges based on your wants and needs, seek out financial aid to help you pay for that higher education, gain knowledge on how to handle your money, explore careers you have always been interested in, get tips on how to start a business of your own, and much more!

<http://studentcenter.ja.org>

PROJECT OF THE MONTH:

# Job Shadow Day

In early February, the National Job Shadow Coalition launched a year long job shadowing initiative called Job Shadow Day. This nationwide initiative invites students across America to “shadow” workplace mentors as they go through a normal day on the job.

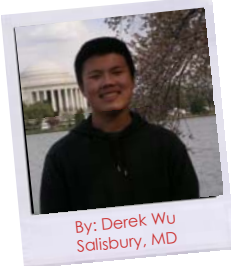
Job Shadow is an academically motivating activity designed to give kids the unique opportunity of an up-close look at the world of work and provide the answer to the commonly asked question, “Why do I have to learn this?” The program invites students to see firsthand how the skills learned in school relate to the workplace. Job Shadow 2008 is led by the National Job Shadow Coalition which is comprised of 4 founders: America’s Promise, Junior Achievement, the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Labor.

## Get Involved!

To help you get started, the Job Shadow Coalition has made available a variety of materials to ensure employers, teachers, and students have a productive and fulfilling experience. Visit the Job Shadow Day Web site ([www.jobshadow.org](http://www.jobshadow.org)) to find additional information and tips about organizing job shadow events in your community.

A GREAT PLACE TO GROW UP:

# Salisbury, Maryland



By: Derek Wu  
Salisbury, MD

As a teenager living in Salisbury, I fully understand what it is like to live in community that embraces youth. Salisbury is unique because of it’s diversity of programs for kids - there so many opportunities for young people to do different things.

For example, music is a part of many students’ lives here.

Every middle and high school in Salisbury puts a high emphasis on its band and chorus programs. This year, all three of Salisbury’s high schools qualified for the

ACC Tournament of Bands Championships (for the top 25 bands in the Atlantic coast area). We also have a youth symphony orchestra, and accomplished musicians can show off their skills at the annual WSCL Classical Music Listener Appreciation Concert. I personally was involved in our school’s Rock and Roll Revival Fundraiser show, where students practice for two months and raise more than \$60,000 for our school in five nights.

Our community also prides itself on academics. Both local universities in our area, Salisbury University and Wor-Wic Community College, allow high school students to take their classes. In addition, my high school, James M. Bennett High School, offers more than 15 AP classes, more than double the amount in many other communities. Because of this, kids are given the chance to broaden their academic horizons. We also have very committed teachers in our local high schools. Last year, 70% of the students who took the AP Calculus test received a score of “5”. Also, in a math competition featuring 24 high schools from around the eastern shore of Maryland, Bennett High School placed first in both the team and individual rounds.

Most importantly, Salisbury stresses the importance of leadership and community service for its students. Kids are encouraged to join various extracurricular programs and committees like the Youth Foundation and the Youth Leadership Academy. YLA is sponsored by Salisbury’s Promise, a subgroup of America’s Promise, and it helps reach out to many kids of different backgrounds. Salisbury also offers youth involvement in Rotary Clubs, Toastmasters, and the Optimist Oratorical Contest. Personally, I am the student member and education committee co-chair in the Salisbury/Wicomico County Sister Cities program, which emphasizes business, cultural, and education exchanges between different cities. Salisbury has supported me and given me the chance to recently bring a group of high-schoolers on a study-abroad and sister city collaboration trip to China. There is no doubt, in my mind, that Salisbury deserves to be recognized as the top 100 communities for kids in America.



START PLANNING NOW:

# Semester of Service



By: Megan Millard  
Greer, SC

In partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service, YSA is proud to launch an ambitious new

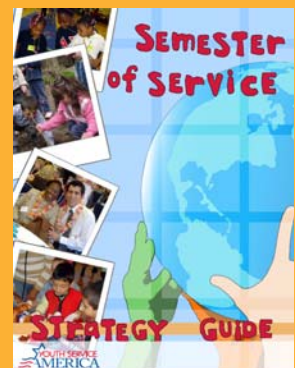
program called the **Semester of Service**. This program challenges students and schools to develop a semester long service-learning projects that launch on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in January and culminate on Global Youth Service Day in April. Semester of Service Projects can take place during class time as well as during extracurricular activities.

During the 14 weeks between the two days of service, teachers and students will work together to identify a problem in their community and address it through a project they organize that spans the three months.

I think it is a very innovative approach to involving students in service. It is just what our nation, as well as our world, needs right now. Young people go to school everyday and learn subjects such as Math, and English, and even Art and Physical Education, but there are rarely any courses on the most important subject of all: serving our communities. I really hope that schools choose to implement the Semester of Service program.

Learn more about the Semester of Service by visiting Youth Service America’s website: [www.ysa.org](http://www.ysa.org),

Download a free copy of the Semester of Service Strategy Guide by visiting the YSA Website.



MEET A YOUNG LEADER!

# Dallas Jessup - Empowering Girls



**1 in 4 girls** will be date raped before college. **140,000 abductions** will be attempted this year. **What can girls do** to stop these statistics from becoming fact? Dallas Jessup had a plan. What she didn't realize was that her plan would turn into a program that would help girls all over the world.

**Q. What school do you attend and what are your college plans?**

**A.** I'm junior in high school at St. Mary's Academy in Portland, and reside in Vancouver, Washington. In college I hope to pursue a dual degree in Law and Communications. I hope to one day be involved in Politics.

**Q. How did you get involved in community service?**

**A.** When I was ten years old I asked if I could go on a date. I know... you wouldn't think a ten year old would think about dating. My parents wouldn't let me go because of the risks getting hurt. My mission started then. I got my black belt at 13 years old and became a Filipino Street Fighting Instructor. During my freshman year of high school we had several attempted abductions in the city of Portland, Oregon. At school we heard on the news about a girl lured away in the Florida area and found dead four days later. I wondered if that girl knew how to defend herself. I knew that it was time for me to try and put an end to predators.

**Q. How did you get started with your project?**

**A.** I created a presentation the girls at my school and showed them that out of the 600 girls, 150 of them would probably be date-raped before college. They were shocked and surprised. They immediately wanted to help. My idea was to do a film that shows girls self-defense moves that could help them get away from predators. A group of us took a script writing class and got to work. When we had the final script we had gained so much publicity that this little project was becoming huge. With community support we gained over 100 extras for the film, a camera crew, and two celebrities to do cameos for the film, Josh Holloway and Evangeline Lilly, most widely known from the TV Series "Lost". We called the Film "Just Yell Fire." The reason for this name is that so many times people yell "help" but people think that they're joking. When you yell "fire" it gets people's attention. In the end we produced a \$6,000 film. It was truly amazing.

**Q. How many people has this project affected?**

**A.** After creating our website, [www.justyellfire.com](http://www.justyellfire.com), we've had over 4 million hits since 2006. Over 325,000 videos have been given away, and the video is now available in over 39 countries. What I find very interesting is that 8% of the video downloads have been from Iran. I am glad that we are helping women everywhere.

**Q. What honors and awards have you received for your work?**

**A.** I've received numerous awards. The main ones include the Prudential Community Service Award- State Winner in 2007, a DO Something BRICK Award Finalist for 2008, and one of five people in the United States to receive a Caring Award. Additionally, I was selected out of 7,000 people as a Young Hero Award CNN Finalist in 2007.

**Q. What is the most important aspect of service to you?**

**A.** By giving yourself you can change your world. Serving shows other people that they can do it too. I have always wanted to help the world in so many ways, but the thing is you can't do everything. You have to focus on one project and go for it. I am focused on putting the predators that hurt girls out of business.

**Q. Did you have any obstacles or challenges you had to face?**

**A.** We had financial problems at first, but that soon came together with community support. The script was hard at to write, but with the help of people that knew how to write scripts, it eventually came together.

**Q. Did you ever think that this could happen or be achieved?**

**A.** I had hopes that it would go world-wide, but once it happened it was a shocker. What I learned was that you cannot let anyone put limits on anything you want to achieve in life. You just have to go for it and make it happen. I was grateful that I had a community to come together and help support my efforts.

**Q. Any other big projects you are working on?**

**A.** Right now I'm raising money for my foundation and getting a training program started. With this training program, I hope to help train PE instructors in the school system to teach self-defense to their students. Essentially this could become part of the school curriculum. In addition, I recently had the opportunity to be the Keynote Speaker for the FBI Annual Conference in Oregon.

**Q. Do you have any comments you could share to youth that want to make a difference?**

**A.** When people come together it's a wonderful thing. First it starts out as a cause. Then it turns into a movement and then it becomes an action. But then turns into a miracle. If people come together and see you are making a difference, other people will want to help.

To learn more about Dallas' project, or to download her video, visit her website at: [www.justyellfire.com](http://www.justyellfire.com).



By: Glenn Means  
Mt. Sterling, KY

## Mark Your Calendar!

### FEBRUARY

- Children's Dental Health Month
- 2 Groundhog Job Shadow Day
- 9-15 Random Acts of Kindness Week

### MARCH

- American Red Cross Month
- National Nutrition Month
- Youth Art Month
- 3 Read Across America Day
- 3-6 Newspapers in Education Week
- 9-15 Girl Scout Week
- 20 Absolutely Incredible Kid Day
- 30-5 National Boys & Girls Club Week
- 31 Caesar Chavez Day of Service and Learning

### APRIL

- Keep America Beautiful Month
- 7 World Health Day
- 9-12 National Service-Learning Conference
- 13-19 National Library Week
- 12 YMCA's Healthy Kids Day
- 22 Earth Day
- 25 Take Your Son or Daughter to Work Day
- 25-27 Global Youth Service Day
- 27-3 National Volunteer Week

### MAY

- Youth Traffic Safety Month
- 2 Join Hands Day
- 6-12 Reading is Fundamental Week
- 5-9 Teacher Appreciation Week

### JUNE

- 5 World Environment Day
- 7-14 National NeighborWorks Week
- 11 World Population Day
- 12 World Day Against Child Labor

## ADD TO OUR CALENDAR!

If you know of an interesting national event or day to celebrate, we'd love to learn about it! Send an email with your suggestion to:

[YouthPromise@americaspromise.org](mailto:YouthPromise@americaspromise.org)