

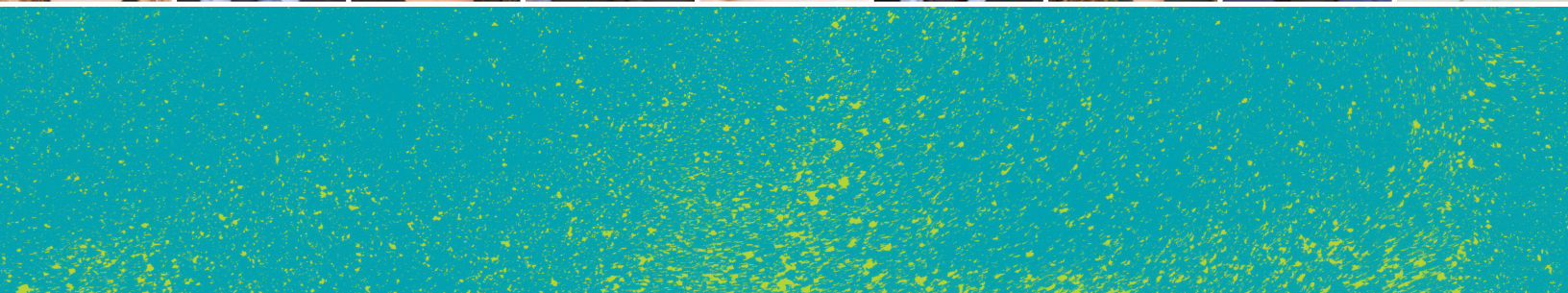
JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT OF ARIZONA

Presents

The Best and The Brightest of 2024



18 UNDER 18





Leadership
Entrepreneurial
Spirit
Making the
Community Better
Extraordinary
Skillset



A Note From the JA President

Creative. Passionate. Driven.

In reading the stories of our 2024 JA 18 Under 18 recipients, I keep coming back to these three words. They are such powerful words that demonstrate what sets this group of students apart from the rest.

Whether it was a creative idea, a passion for helping others, or the ability to find motivation from hardship, the Class of 2024 has used their ingenuity, generosity, and entrepreneurial spirit to make a difference in Arizona and beyond. Each year, I am inspired by what these students have achieved at such a young age. Truly, they spur me and the JA team to continue working towards our mission of helping kids succeed in work and life.

After all, it's about investing in today's generation to yield a brighter future for Arizona. These young people will go on to change the community, the economy, and the world for the better. Being around the JA 18 Under 18 recipients and any of our 170,000+ students across Arizona reinforces that there is nothing more important than investing in the next generation of leaders. It's up to us to help them navigate the complexities of life, support them as they grow, and simply show them that we believe in them.

And the more we nurture their ambitions, it will fuel their drive to make positive change. As you read through their inspiring stories, you will see that these young people have a selfless mentality in which they want to create lasting and systemic change for all. We could not be more proud of who they are as individuals and to hear about their incredible accomplishments — and this is just the beginning for them!

Thank you to this year's JA 18 Under 18 recipients! You represent entrepreneurial spirit, selfless service, belief in your potential and that of others, and determination to achieve new heights – all of the qualities that we try to instill in the students we serve. You inspire me and all of us to do more and be more. You remind us that with hope, energy, and drive, we can strengthen our community.

To your families and friends, you should be incredibly proud. The importance and influence of a supportive network on a young person's success cannot be overstated. And to our Junior Achievement supporters, we could not do this important work without you. Thank you for believing in the boundless potential of Arizona's young people.

With that, we are honored to present to you the 2024 class of JA 18 Under 18 recipients.

Katherine K. Cecala

President, Junior Achievement of Arizona

Thank You!

To our generous sponsors for believing in the next generation of leaders and supporting JA's 18 Under 18.



Heidi Jannenga



They're innovators, philanthropists, artists, athletes, and leaders in their communities — and they're not yet adults.

Meet the Junior Achievement 2024 18 Under 18 recipients. These Arizonans distinguish themselves with their creativity, passion, and drive. What unites the Class of 2024 is their ability to inspire others and make a positive difference in the world. Whether it is through creating solutions to real-world problems or taking initiative to face challenges head on, the Class of 2024 has used their ingenuity, generosity, and entrepreneurial spirit to make a difference in Arizona and beyond.

Read their stories, and don't be surprised if you feel a little inspired yourself.

Meet Arizona's 18 Under 18



Fatimah Amer
Scottsdale



Pravneet Chadha
Phoenix



India Davis-Wiley
Phoenix



Tanish Doshi
Oro Valley



Abhiraj Gedela
Phoenix



Eashani Ghosh
Tempe



Aarvi Goel
Paradise Valley



Ariana Quang
Phoenix



David Guo
Fountain Hills



Tamsin Hurlbut
Tempe



Letom Kpea
Buckeye



Madie Kunisch
Prescott Valley



Sophia Lin
Scottsdale



Drake Maestas
Casa Grande



Finnegan McGill
Tucson



Samhith Padala
Phoenix



Giancarlo Perez
Phoenix



Sascha Reveron
Mesa



Age 16
Year: Junior
BASIS Scottsdale
Scottsdale

"I recognized the need to help those who don't have essential resources, particularly the youth."

Fatimah is CEO of one of the largest youth-led health equity initiatives in Arizona. She founded SPARKHope in 2019 after she had to stop volunteering in person due to the pandemic. She felt compelled to find a way to help the community and people who didn't have access to public health.

"I was a freshman when the pandemic hit and it was very personal for me," said Fatimah. "I witnessed profound disruptions to my community and knew we had a public health crisis. I saw the health disparities and wanted to do something to help."

SPARKHope aims to bridge the large health inequities in Arizona. Over the past three years, the organization has grown to support numerous local food banks that serve underprivileged individuals, in particular, single mothers with children. Fatimah has organized fundraisers, food drives and secured volunteers and corporate sponsors to support her efforts. She has been recognized for her work and was recently the youngest person to win the Stella Kiarie Innovation for Health Equity Award at the annual Arizona Health Equity Conference.

Fatimah serves on the sponsorship and marketing committee for the Scottsdale Mayor's Youth Council, is a teen volunteer at Honor Health and interned at Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center. She's also involved in her high school where she serves as president of the Mona' Foundation Club and is an advocate for UNICEF USA. While Fatimah is not busy advocating for health policy, she is conducting groundbreaking biomedical research on state of the art methods and has presented four poster presentations within the last year!

She's an entrepreneur committed to excellence and has learned to balance school work while serving as a CEO! She hopes to grow more SPARKHope chapters across the country and pursue a career in public health, possibly as a researcher.

"It's not work to me, SPARKHope is like a family to me," said Fatimah. "I love the work we're doing and want to help as many people as we can!"



Age 16
Year: Junior
Mountain Ridge
High School
Phoenix

Pravneet Chadha



India Davis-Wiley



Age 16
Year: Junior
North High School,
International
Baccalaureate
Program
Phoenix

"Let's make this world full of smiles through equitable giving."



An entrepreneur at heart, Pravneet takes an active role in his community and school. He's in the Gifted Academy at Mountain Ridge High School, maintaining a weighted GPA of 4.85.

During the pandemic, he began to wonder if social media was impacting his own mental health, and that of other teens. He noticed many of his friends were hooked on TikTok as a way to connect and escape the reality of the world. This discovery inspired him to do a research project called "Social Media: Fire or Trash," to study the effects of social media. He looked at data from 110 participants and found a possible link between increased depression and social media use. He's currently working with the University of Kansas to formalize his research and publish a manuscript.

This work led him to another study on color blindness using a novel technology and LED metamers at the Arizona State University SCENE Research program. The project earned a prestigious award from the Arizona Science and Engineering Fair. In addition to his research, Pravneet is very involved in various organizations and clubs. He serves as the president of the World Language Club, Secretary of the HOSA Club, and treasurer of the Medical Explorer Club. He serves as the Youth Ambassador for "Points of Light" and "Giving Tuesday" Spark Chapter leader, engaging youth globally to find their passion in giving back to the community.

He and his brother founded a nonprofit called Project Smile AZ in 2020. They make handmade cards for hospitalized patients and Title I schools and organize donation drives to benefit children with developmental disabilities, veterans, or special projects like the Maui wildfires. He has led summer internships over the last 2 years to inspire youth to be changemakers, following their talent and time to bring smiles to the world. Through Project Smile AZ, he has shared over 90,000 smiles in the last 4 years through handmade cards, hygiene kits, upcycling gently used books, trail clean-ups, clothing drives, snack kits, art kits, inspirational webinars, and in-person events.

For India Davis-Wiley, running a successful business is a family endeavor. She helped launch and operate Nickel Berry Works; a family company focused on publishing works created by children. The early experience taught her life lessons like finding meaningful connections with others, how to network, and the importance of solid management skills. She built upon those lessons when she developed and launched the company's signature candle line, A Touch of Scented Love.

"I don't believe you're ever too young to make a difference," said India. "Shoot your shot because you miss 100% of the shots you don't take."

In addition to being a successful entrepreneur, India is intimately engaged in her community. She is involved with Jack and Jill of America, an organization of mothers with children ages 2-19 that is dedicated to nurturing future African American leaders. She is a member of the AZ Governor's Youth Commission, National Honor Society, and is an ambassador for Phoenix Sister Cities Youth Ambassador Exchange Program and her school's International Baccalaureate Program.

When she has free time, India pursues her deep love for aviation and Formula 1 racing! She flew her first plane, a Cessna 172, when she was just 11 years old and is working toward her private pilot's license. After high school, she plans to study business with a focus in marketing.

"Any struggle is worth it when the results benefit more people than just you."



Age 16
 Year: Junior
 BASIS Oro Valley
 Oro Valley

Tanish Doshi



Abhiraj Gedela



Age 17
 Year: Senior
 Paradise Valley
 High School
 Phoenix

“You can’t let youth or inexperience stop you from making your voice and opinions heard.”



An Eagle Scout and outdoor enthusiast since he could barely walk, Tanish’s lifelong love for the environment has deep roots. However, it took on even more importance when the Bighorn Fire in 2020 scorched hundreds of thousands of acres in the Santa Catalina Mountains near his home. Those flames sparked a new passion for climate advocacy and public policy.

“I wouldn’t have gotten any opportunities that I have unless someone mentored me,” said Tanish.

Tanish is now the outreach director for the AZ Youth Climate Coalition. Since schools are often the largest public energy users, his team is working with Tucson Unified School District, the third largest district in the state, to implement a full climate action plan that includes solar panels, geothermal energy and green energy. The Coalition was also heavily involved in Tucson’s successfully-passed Climate Action and Adaptation Plan. He is also working on a climate curriculum so that high schoolers and even middle schoolers can learn the science behind the climate crisis.

In addition to his environmental work, Tanish is on his school’s mock trial team. He started a Statistical Analysis Club, and his Banned Book Club is now operating in two schools and two libraries. He is part of the Indian Society of Southern Arizona’s first youth board, the Metropolitan Education Commission Youth Advisory Council, the Oro Valley Youth Advisory Council, and the Governor’s Youth Commission. He also launched Jaguar Tutoring Company to help other students who may be struggling.

“There is never too young of an age,” said Tanish. “The earlier you start thinking about careers and entrepreneurship, and making an impact, the more prepared you are to actually go out and have that impact.”

He’s an entrepreneur and inventor with a mission to positively change the world. Abhiraj eventually hopes to begin work on neural implants to monitor brain activity patterns related to autism, ADHD, and other neurodivergent conditions. His motivation stems from his younger brother who has autism. He’s currently working research and development on medical devices monitoring diabetes with Labelle Labs at Grand Canyon University. The project won first place at the Paradise Valley Science and Engineering Fair, and he will soon be competing at the Arizona Science and Engineering Fair.

Abhiraj is an avid sneakerhead, and in January 2023, he launched a sneaker business called APMsells. Since starting his business, he’s learned and mastered new skills like social media marketing, e-commerce and meetups. His business has generated upwards of \$27,000 in revenue and \$6,000 in profits in the last 13 months, and beyond finding his favorite Jordans, he’s learned the importance of giving back to the community. He often collects shoes and clothing and distributes them to homeless people in Arizona.

“I love seeing the smiles we bring to people’s faces,” said Abhiraj. “It’s made me realize I need to keep my passions and entrepreneurial endeavors aligned and support my community whenever possible.”

In his spare time, he enjoys Karate and basketball. He’s a Karate State champion and earned his 2nd Degree Black Belt. He is also a teacher and loves instructing people of all ages on the physical and mental aspects of Karate. Abhiraj is also captain of the Varsity Basketball Team.

Community service is important to Abhiraj, too. He volunteers monthly with his dad at St. Vincent de Paul packing sandwiches for the less fortunate, something they have done since middle school. He also founded his school’s local Science National Honor Society Chapter.

“I think my brother’s experience with autism has made me more compassionate, empathic, kind and curious,” said Abhiraj. “I help my family with him as much as possible. It’s also motivated me to study biomedical engineering and help people everyday moving forward.”

“Whatever it is, enjoy yourself. Actions mean nothing without a smile.”



Age 17
Year: Junior
McClintock
High School
Tempe

"We are not entitled to much, but we are all owed compassion, empathy, and kindness."



**Eashani
Ghosh**



**Aanvi
Goel**



Age 17
Year: Junior
Xavier College
Preparatory
Paradise Valley

"Be fearless, take the first step, and remember it's never too early to make a change."



Eashani knows firsthand the power of a shared experience. Growing up with Thalassemia, she noticed a lack of organized support for young people living with the genetic blood disorder. The experience was isolating and discouraging. Determined to build a community for others, Eashani began working with Cooley's Anemia Foundation (CAF) as a teen advocate, launching various outreach efforts to engage teens diagnosed with Thalassemia. Through online groups, a podcast, and sharing her story with organizations like Phoenix Children's Hospital and the CDC, her persistence continues to let young people know they're not alone.

"Being able to listen to someone talk about their experience in high school, or going through exactly what I'm going through, it just felt so freeing," she said.

Her work has been so rewarding, Eashani hopes to double major in biochemistry and health policy after high school. She dreams of becoming a hematologist who conducts research to improve treatment and healthcare.

In addition to her advocacy work, Eashani is heavily involved in the McClintock High School Speech and Debate team as the Debate Representative, is President of the Peggy Payne Academy Senate, serves as a Youth Commissioner for the Tempe Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission (MYAC), and mentors young dancers in the classical art from from India (Bharatnatyam).

"We have a voice and even the smallest voice can have a profound impact," she said. "At the end of the day, the most powerful thing we can do is try."

Aanvi knows firsthand how food nourishes the mind, body and soul. As a Varsity athlete since freshman year, her passion for health and fitness started as a way to improve her golf game, but soon developed into much more as she connected with families impacted by food insecurity and inequality. Through her volunteer work with Swift Youth Foundation's Homeward Bound program, an after-school center for children facing near-homelessness, Aanvi saw a need for programming that not only helped provide food and nourishment, but also educated families on the benefits of making healthier dietary choices.

She founded My Tasty Table, and to date the organization has held more than 40 free events throughout the Phoenix metro area, exposing more than 400 young people to healthy food options. During a recent class centered around vegan sushi, one student admitted he had never tried a carrot before.

"I am driven by the laughter of children learning and discovering their potential," said Aanvi. "It is what drives my passion to make my community better, one healthy meal, one new life skill, and one confident smile at a time."

Since launching the organization, My Tasty Table has secured eight community partners, created a Teen Leadership board across multiple high schools and increased its team to 22 volunteers.

"I attribute all my successes to hard work and embracing change, and I've been fortunate to have two amazing co-founders who share the same vision and passion to serve," said Aanvi. "Being open to different perspectives and loving to learn have given me confidence in myself and my ability to help others."

In addition to My Tasty Table, Aanvi was selected as an Intern for the Dragon Kim Foundation helping the next generation of student entrepreneurs launch their community projects. Aanvi volunteers as a golf coach and life mentor for kids at First Tee of Arizona and serves on the Swift Youth Foundation's Teen Leadership Board. Additionally, she tutors students at after-school centers, serves as a student ambassador at Xavier College Preparatory, and was nominated by Xavier's athletic director to serve on the Arizona Interscholastic Association's Student Leadership Advisory Committee.

As the eldest child in a large extended South Asian family, Aanvi works hard to be a positive role model for her younger brother and cousins. One of her biggest inspirations is her great grandmother, who published her first book at the age of 70 and received an Honorary Doctorate in Literature from the University of Miami (OH) at 99 years old.

"My great grandmother taught me that it is never too late to follow your passion. I believe it is never too early either," said Aanvi. "I hope to show others that if you work hard, cultivate genuine intellectual curiosity, and follow your passions, you will lead a rewarding life," she said.

Aanvi hopes to one day go into medicine and work in a field focused on health and nutrition.

Age 18
Year: Senior
Xavier College
Preparatory
Phoenix

*“Don’t let age be a barrier.
No matter how young you
are, you can achieve all
your goals!”*



Asiana Guang



Asiana is the co-founder and president of the Arizona Filipina American Student Union. She created the organization to advocate for disadvantaged Filipino high school students in the Philippines. Last summer, she organized fundraisers and collected over \$2,000 in backpacks and school supplies to send to students in Bacolod, Philippines. She partnered with local businesses and restaurants across Arizona to bolster her fundraising efforts. Additionally, she spearheads monthly events to teach and celebrate Filipino culture in Arizona.

She also holds leadership positions on the Student Council, where she has served for the past four years. She was elected to the Executive Board this year and loves planning school events and interacting with students. She is also managing editor and Journalism Club Vice President, where she leads a team of 14 staff writers, 6 section editors and 20 freelance writers.

“Perseverance is one of the most important skills as a leader,” said Asiana. “You also have to have self confidence and believe you can do it. I have learned a lot of skills by being involved in various clubs at Xavier.”

In her spare time, she enjoys volunteering at St. Benedict parish and St. Vincent de Paul. She has been helping both organizations for over a decade and enjoys helping with canned food drives and food distribution events. She holds the record for the longest tenure as a consistent volunteer. On weekends, she is a volunteer tennis coach for children with special needs.

Asiana has been recognized for her outstanding work in journalism and mock trials. She wants to pursue an undergraduate degree in journalism and then go on to law school.

David Guo



David created a nonprofit organization called Project HeART to promote emotional well-being through art. The idea started as a way to let seniors know people in the community cared about them. David collaborated with Hospice of the Valley to design 750 cards and send them to their patients and volunteers. From there it grew into free public art therapy classes at senior living centers in Fountain Hills, donation drives and more.

“I know many seniors suffer from loneliness and stress, so I wanted to do something to help,” said Guo. “The art therapy classes have been great. It’s not only a way to connect with seniors, but a way to connect with the whole community.”

One of the seniors told David the art classes have helped him connect with his family and grandchildren. They all enjoy taking the classes with him and being able to draw and color with his granddaughter has helped their relationship.

David now has a chapter at his school, BASIS Scottsdale, and about 12 members help him create custom cards every month. The cards are now sent to children’s hospitals, too. He also hosts donation drives with the City of Scottsdale libraries to collect art supplies to donate to Title I schools.

In addition to his nonprofit work, David excels in academics and is involved in many school and community clubs and activities. He holds a VP of Research and Development position at a global student run organization called World Health Institute. He’s also involved in National Art Honor Society, where he served as VP until Feb. 2024. During his time in this role, he launched the Rocks Project, where the students would gather rocks and paint them to leave around the school with uplifting messages. David is also Secretary of the UNICEF club at this school and participates in fundraising events, educating the community about injustices in other countries and helping with donation drives.

He’s also been conducting research and working on a new technology to diagnose fungi in blood. David is an accomplished teen who hopes to be a doctor one day! He also has plans to expand Project HeART to other cities in the near future.

Age 16
Year: Junior
BASIS Scottsdale
Fountain Hills

“Never stop trying.”



Age 17
Year: Senior
Tempe Preparatory
Academy
Tempe

“Genuine social justice means building a society built on community – fellowship, friendship, and loving humanity.”



Tamsin Hurlbut



Tamsin is always looking for ways to help make her community better, but she's found a particular passion for helping those experiencing homelessness. She started volunteering with Aris Foundation, Inc., passing out snacks to the unhoused at a local park. She now serves as a resource officer, distributing much-needed items, educating people on drug dangers, and helping them sign up for medical care. Above all, she's formed genuine friendships with people she never would have met otherwise.

“They truly are amazing human beings even though they're facing these adverse situations,” said Tamsin. “Don't treat them as problems but as human beings we want in our society.”

In addition to her volunteer work, Tamsin is always looking for ways to uplift and support other women. She is the president of HerStory, a women's empowerment club on campus. She's also spearheaded campaigns advocating for reproductive rights, healthcare for mothers in prison, increasing minimum wage and ensuring her fellow students can access menstrual products in the school restrooms.

“Look around and see how amazing our generation already is,” Tamsin said. “Be inspired by the people around you, but also don't discount your own voice.”

In her “free” time, Tamsin enjoys working on the school newspaper, is a member of the Varsity Cross Country Team, works as a camp counselor, and loves to paint.

Tamsin plans to study sociology in college with a focus in poverty, homelessness and racial justice.

Letom Kpea



An advocate for the minority voice and female interest on campus, Letom is an exemplary student. She is on pace to be valedictorian of her school, a position she's held all four years at Buckeye Union High School. Letom is involved in the Buckeye Youth Council, Police Cadets, National Honor Society, FBLA, an officer on Student Council and president of Key Club.

One of the ways she's making an impact on her community is through the Buckeye Youth Council, where she has a student voice in community matters and is able to affect change at the political level where applicable.

“I have been involved in Student Council since middle school and met amazing, goal-driven people who have allowed me to find a voice and speak up for many minority and female students,” said Letom. “These leadership experiences have allowed me to gain public speaking skills and vocalize opinions.”

She loves volunteering in her community. Letom recently helped organize an event that brought 100 local artists to downtown Buckeye.

She's a Questbridge Prep Scholar, one of the high performers in the state, and a Jack Kent Cooke scholarship finalist. She recently had the opportunity to travel to Washington D.C. for the League of Cities meeting.

She plans to study Political Science at the University of Chicago and there's no doubt she'll have a bright future!

Age 17
Year: Senior
Buckeye Union
High School
Buckeye

“Aim for something so big that the dream is bigger than the fear! Always aim high and you just might end up in the stars.”



Age 17
Year: Senior
AZ Agribusiness and
Equine Center
Prescott Valley

Madie Kunisch

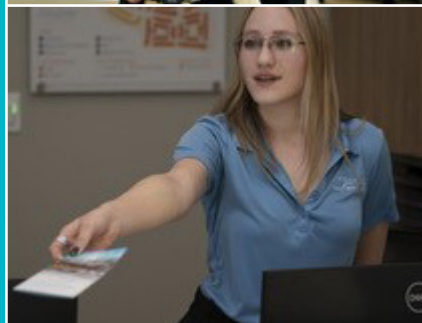
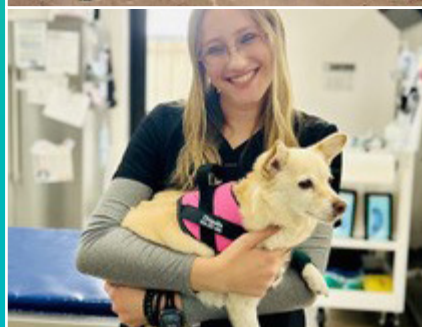
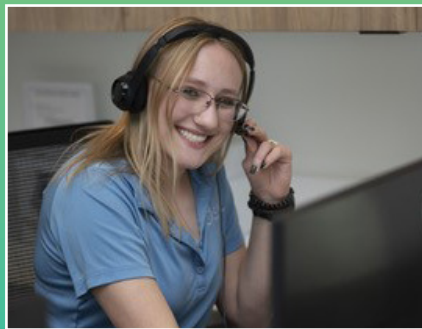


Sophia Lin



Age 16
Year: Junior
BASIS Scottsdale
Scottsdale

"Your life is yours and only yours."



A lifelong animal lover, Madie has thrived in her high school's Veterinarian Science program throughout the last four years. This unique elective program has helped her learn all about biology, chemistry, animal anatomy and physiology, animal diseases, and clinical veterinary techniques. She received hands-on experience at a local pet emergency hospital and used her unique expertise to launch a successful pet-sitting business, providing high-caliber care to animals in her neighborhood. Her experience with entrepreneurship has taught her many lessons, including compassion and compromise.

"Not everyone is as fortunate to have a great financial situation," said Madie. "It's important to compromise when you need to."

Madie is also a long-standing FFA member and competitor, becoming Arizona State Champion in 2022 in the Entomology division as a sophomore. She then discovered Agronomy, the science of soil management and crop production, and founded a team at her high school. Madie's team won first place in the district competition and she placed first overall in the state competition. The team is now competing for recognition at the state level.

"STEM is important because it propels people into a new kind of world," said Madie. "Absolutely anything is possible. If you want to do something, you just do it, no matter who you are or your background, it doesn't matter. You can be whatever you want to be."

In addition to school and FFA, Madie is a dedicated volunteer with Big Brothers Big Sisters. She served as a teacher's aide in agriscience classes her junior year, tutors students in math and science, is vice president of her high school's National Honor Society, as well as a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society at Yavapai College.

"Giving back shows that teens want to make this world a better place than when we were put into it," said Madie.

Madie will graduate with both her high school diploma and an Associate's of Science degree thanks to a dual enrollment opportunity with Yavapai College. She is the first from her high school to complete such rigorous coursework in several years. Madie will attend NAU to study chemistry with plans to go into the medical field as a way of helping others.

Sophia Lin has always had a passion for equity and education, but during the COVID-19 pandemic she took action to support students across Arizona. As cofounder of the youth education service nonprofit iReach, Sophia has grown the organization to 450 members, providing programming opportunities like summer camps and more than 5,000 hours of tutoring for underserved students across our state.

"My parents, when they first came to America, they really struggled with the funding aspect of education," said Sophia. "Seeing them work so hard to get to where they are now really made me want to fight for other students who may not have access to opportunities."

Sophia's advocacy doesn't stop there. She is working with the AZ Governor's Youth Commission (GYC) to bridge education gaps, particularly in rural counties. She has hosted dance, art, and speech camps, and assisted with STEM, civics and financial literacy camps. She works closely with the AZ Board of Regents, ASU, UofA and NAU's financial aid offices to help students find the right postsecondary education options.

Sophia is also heavily involved with Speech and Debate, and showcased those skills when she gave a Tedx Talk in 2022 that focused on racial stereotypes. She is a peer advocate on campus, and is dedicated to finding data-driven solutions to social issues. She recently worked with a Harvard professor to study suicide prevention, and is currently researching machine-learning simulations and data analysis to improve high-school students' engagement and prevent high-school dropouts. In collaboration with an ASU professor through the SCIENCE and ENgineering Experience (SCENE) program, her goal is to influence education policy and build long-term solutions.

"I truly believe youth voices are some of the most influential voices we can have in our society," she said.

Sophia plans to pursue higher education after high school and eventually work in public policy.

"Every child deserves a chance to learn; that's why I strive to advance education equality."



Age 18
Year: Senior
Casa Grande Union
High School
Casa Grande

*“If you have a voice,
preach. If you have
strength, protect. And
if you have both, be a
leader.”*



Drake Maestas



Drake Maestas knows what it means to work hard and strive for excellence. He always enjoyed working on cars, but launched a detailing business with his dad in 2014 as a way to honor his late grandfather and carry on the Maestas name. The duo started RPM Detailing out of their own garage but quickly ran out of space. In 2018, they opened their own facility in Casa Grande, attracting dedicated clients from across Arizona and neighboring states. Plans for expansion into the Tucson, Phoenix and Scottsdale areas are now in the works.

“Our certifications and degrees set us apart,” said Drake. “Most carry one certification in polishing or ceramic coatings. I carry five certifications.”

High school has been a chapter of change for Drake as he adapts to exploring so many opportunities. He served as Vice President of AZ DECA, a Career and Technical Student Organization chartered by the Arizona Department of Education. He will attend ASU’s W.P. Carey School of Business and Barrett Honors College after graduation, and plans to pour that knowledge into expanding RPM detailing.

He credits Career Technical Education (CTE) for opening his eyes to entrepreneurship and future career opportunities.

“I’m a big fan of CTE and encourage everyone to try and explore it,” he said.

When he is not in school or working at his shop 25-30 hours a week, Drake mentors young entrepreneurs and marketing students. He volunteers as a youth leader at his church, is involved with SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions), the National Honor Society, and has served a two-year term on the Casa Grande Youth Commission.

He has this advice for other young people looking to make an impact: “Don’t let fear hold you back.”

Finnegan McGill



Finnegan is a researcher and environmental conservationist who cares about the declining bird population. He got the idea to study bird migration patterns in Southern Arizona from his grandfather who participates in citizen-sourced bird data collections in Germany.

In 2022, he developed A-BiRD, an innovative engineering device to collect accurate and unbiased data crucial for understanding bird behaviors, migration patterns, and habitat preferences. It incorporates Cornell University’s BirdNET-Analyzer for species identification and Finnegan’s own algorithms for direction finding and cueing.

In a field study conducted in Tucson from September 2023 to January 2024, two A-BiRD devices successfully identified 98 bird species, recording over 21,000 corroborated birdsong events. The study’s findings illustrate changing migration patterns, peak activity periods, and shifts in daily birdy species dominance.

“I am concerned with the declining bird population because we’re dependent on them for pollination, seed dispersal, agriculture, and food production,” said Finnegan. “We need quality data to make smart decisions for the protection of birds, so they can in turn protect us.”

Finnegan has won several awards for his research work, including two 1st and one 3rd Place Grand Awards at SARSEF and AZSEF, sponsored recognitions from the Arizona Public Service Foundation and Texas Instruments, UofA scholarships, and the Broadcom Foundation “Coding With Commitment” Award. He’s also a finalist for the National Junior Science and Humanities Symposium, sponsored by the Department of Defense, ISEF, and the National STEM Challenge, co-presented by the US Department of Education and EXPLR.

He’s a black belt in Korean Martial Arts and involved in Mock Trial, Student Council, Theatre and several other clubs at school. He also finds time to volunteer in the community with his therapy dog, Saya. At age 14, he became Tucson’s first certified Junior Therapy Dog Handler with the Alliance of Therapy Dogs. He makes frequent visits to local senior facilities to bring joy to the residents.

“These visits are a source of happiness for seniors struggling with isolation, depression and memory loss,” said Finnegan. “It warms my heart to see the smiles on their faces when we walk in.”

Age 16
Year: Sophomore
Tanque Verde High
School
Tucson

*“All you have to do is
believe in yourself and
kindly give back to others.”*



Age 18
Year: Senior
University High
School
Phoenix

Samhith Padala



Giancarlo Perez



Age 18
Year: Senior
NFL YET College Prep
Academy
Phoenix

“Embrace curiosity – let it lead you to your greatest discoveries.”

Samhith has been a Junior Achievement of Arizona student since Kindergarten and credits their programming for teaching him many basic business, entrepreneurial and financial principles from a young age. He started his own photography business at age 12! What started as a passion has grown into an international company with over 130 content creators across more than 30 countries.

Sync Visual Media had six employees prior to the pandemic and when the world shut down, he had to find innovative ways to continue doing business. Without any in-person weddings or events, Samhith decided to begin offering services such as live streaming, graphic design, videography and web design. Today, it's a multimedia company with clients all over the world. He oversees day-to-day operations and has expanded to India and the United Kingdom.

He tells young entrepreneurs, “Don't hold back, just because of your age. Time is very valuable and you have to go after what you want to achieve. It's also important to find mentors to help guide you in the right direction.”

As if running his own business isn't enough, Samhith is also ranked the highest in the class and is involved in DECA, FBLA and the Phoenix Tee Party nonprofit. He's also on a 10-member student advisory board for the Arizona Board of Education. He also partnered with the Lions Club and launched the “Lens for Lens Program,” a way to reflect on the impact they've made in the world through Sync Visual Media. To date, Sync Visual Media has been able to donate more than 2,000 glasses and over 7,000 hours in direct services to those in need.



Giancarlo Perez knows the value of hard work and believing in a dream. Working alongside his parents for the family construction company since he was just 11 years old, Giancarlo is passionate about entrepreneurship. He's now a co-owner of the company and has big plans for expanding and scaling the business.

“I believe it all comes down to wanting to do it and I believe if there's something that you really like and you really want, there's no better option than to just do it,” he said.

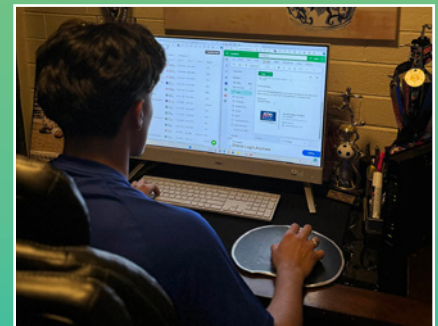
Giancarlo's motivation to ensure other teens have access to opportunities led him to start a nonprofit. Dream Project aims to inspire and encourage young people to overcome external challenges and set their sights on ventures beyond their comfort zones. The organization has created various clubs at Giancarlo's school and is working on a Male Empowerment Project to help teach young men how to carry themselves. He credits his school principal for planting seeds of greatness within him.

“He's like a father figure,” said Giancarlo. “He's always trying to help and he's always trying to make sure you're in the best situation to succeed.”

In addition to co-owning a company and founding a nonprofit, Giancarlo is captain of the Varsity Soccer Team and a Student Ambassador for his school. He will attend ASU's W.P. Carey School of Business and plans to major in entrepreneurship. He is also working toward obtaining licenses in plastering and drywall.

“Seeing that I have the capacity to help people and to help them learn and improve and just better themselves all around, that's what really keeps me going,” he said.

“Whatever you do, do it with passion and excellence in mind.”



Age 16
Year: Sophomore
BASIS Mesa
Mesa

Sascha Reveron



“Don’t be afraid to be a system disruptor, be the change you want to see.”



Sascha is a trailblazer who demonstrates initiative and is committed to sparking positive change. This year, she created a Multicultural Coalition at BASIS Mesa to celebrate rich cultural backgrounds and foster unity. She has eight board members and they are planning their first Multicultural Celebration in April to bring the school and community together. Through their events, she has been able to amplify diverse voices, promote empathy, and encourage cross-cultural understanding.

She was selected as “Miss Juneteenth Arizona 2023”, an experience she treasures. Her mother saw the opportunity and encouraged her to apply.

“I would have never considered applying for it,” said Sascha. “But, I am so glad I did. It’s opened so many doors for me. It increased my confidence, public speaking skills and made me realize we need a greater representation of young women of color in politics.”

Sascha also started TEENgage, a youth summit for political engagement. It serves as a platform to empower and educate youth, equipping them with the tools and knowledge needed to become future leaders and change-makers in their communities.

She is a servant leader and inspires everyone around her to get involved. Sascha volunteers weekly at her church as a service leader helping younger students. At school, she’s also president of the Model United Nations Club, Secretary of the National Honor Society, and Public Relations officer of the Student Ambassador’s program.

“More teens should get engaged in their community,” said Sascha. “It doesn’t cost anything to do and what you gain in skills and experience is invaluable. It betters your life and others!”

Skills +
Knowledge +
Potential =
Dreams



This is JA

How does JA shape the future of Arizona? By preparing today’s students to be successful in their tomorrow.

For the last 70 years, Junior Achievement of Arizona has been empowering the futures of millions of students by giving them the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in work and life, no matter the challenges they’ll face.

And, we will be here for the next 70 years, meeting students wherever they are learning and ensuring they receive JA’s critical education so they are prepared to manage their money, succeed in their future careers and to think innovatively.

We will continue to launch high-impact programs that directly meet the needs of students, educators and businesses in Arizona. We will focus on having students graduate with a vision and pathway for their future, and with the knowledge of how navigate important complexities of adulthood.

Junior Achievement is an important part of our community and economy’s future. The students we reach today will go on to fuel our future workforce and build thriving communities for decades.

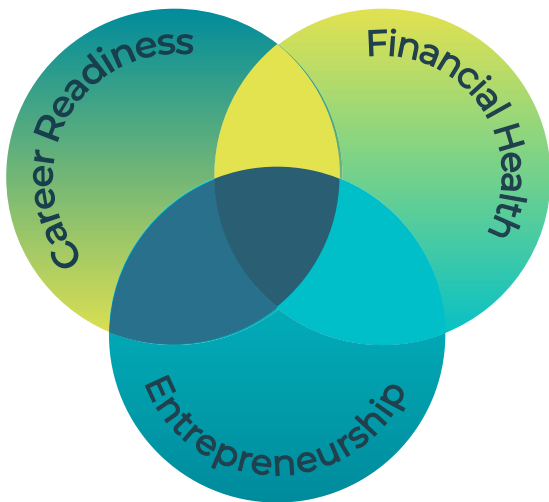
Our Mission

To inspire and prepare
AZ young people to
succeed in work and life.

JA Impact



JA is shaping the college- and career-readiness conversation, and we play an important role in Arizona's workforce and economic development.



JA students are **30% more likely to get a Bachelor's and 67% more likely to get a Master's.**

JA students demonstrate, on average **26.5%** A knowledge gain of

JA Students, as Compared to Non-JA Students

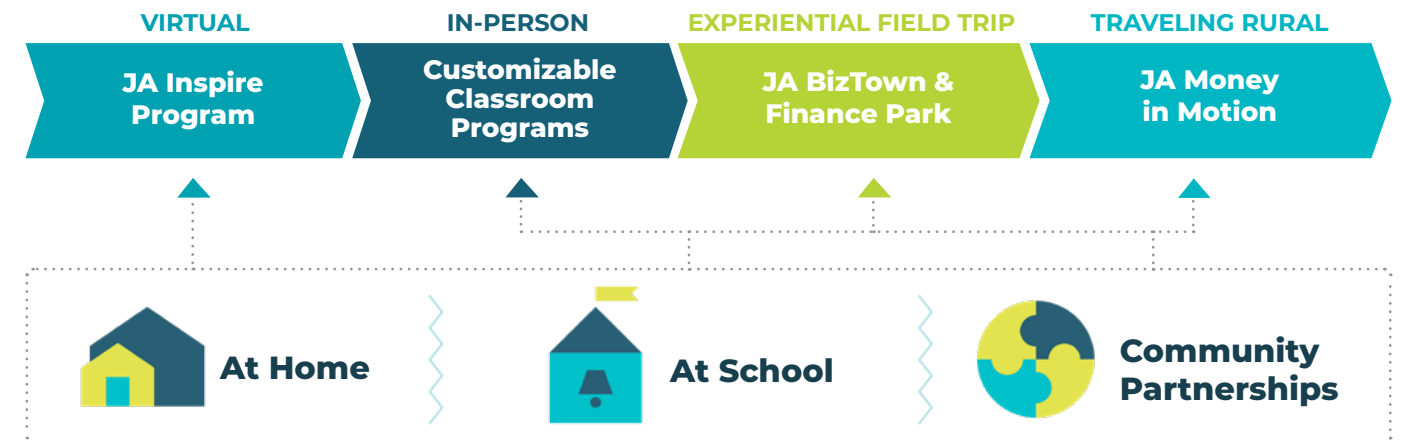
34% **HAVE** higher critical thinking skills

20% **EARN** more in the workforce

143% **ARE** more likely to start a business

99% of teachers would recommend our JA programs to a fellow teacher.

Reaching Kids Wherever They Are Learning



Graduation

93% JA ALUMNI **vs. 88%** AVERAGE

93% of JA Alumni have graduated with a High School Diploma or have a GED, compared to the national average of 88% according to the U.S. Census data.

Career

51%

of Alumni will work in the same career field as their JA classroom volunteer.

4 in 5

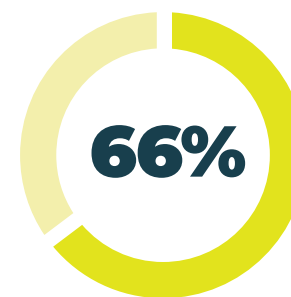
Alumni credit JA for influencing their career path

53%

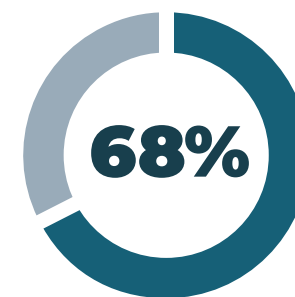
of JA Alumni have started their own business



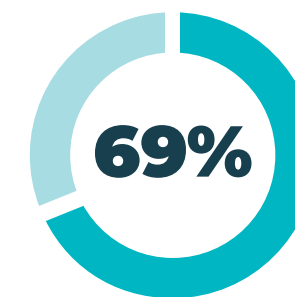
JA students now see their future potential and are equipped with the critical skills needed to achieve it.



of the students we serve are from low-income households



JA alumni are financially independent from their parents (age 18-29)



of JA alumni have their dream job and career satisfaction



of JA alumni say JA influenced the belief they could achieve their goals

Support AZ's Youth

Impact Today



Sponsor a Classroom \$1k
Goal: 1,000 Classrooms/year



Sponsor a School \$10k
Goal: 300 Schools/year

Impact Tomorrow

Volunteer For JA

Give your time and change the life of a JA student. We have virtual and in-person opportunities year-round.

IRA Charitable Distributions

Make a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA and reduce your taxable IRA balance!

Donor-Advised Funds

Make a gift to JA directly from your donor-advised fund.

Impact Forever

Leave a legacy gift that will impact youth and our community forever.



You are inspiring students for the careers of the future and unleashing their potential.

Donate Today:
jaaz.org/support

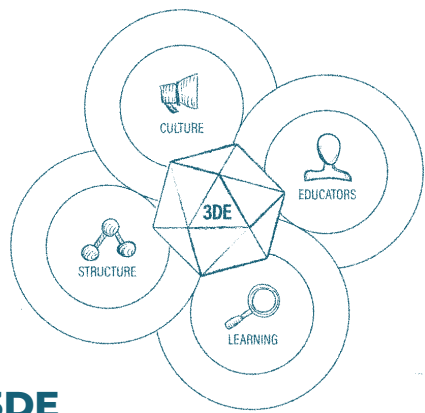


Partner on Innovation



JA Money in Motion

This new program allows JA to reach students who otherwise may not get our critical learning experiences. JA Money in Motion is designed to equip K-12th grade students with essential skills to own their financial success. This mobile program extends its reach to rural and under-served communities, ensuring that all students have access to vital financial education. By empowering students with the tools to plan for their financial futures, we're not only shaping a more financially responsible generation but also fostering a culture where economic success is within everyone's reach.



3DE

We are proud to say we are doing our part to change the high school learning landscape through 3DE, our nationally proven instructional model that changes the way our teens learn. Launching Fall 2025, 3DE re-engineers the high school learning experience to be relevant, experiential, and authentically connected to the real world. 3DE aims to make high-quality education accessible to all students. Through exposure to a breadth of industries and professions, 3DE cultivates a deeper understanding of the complexities of adult life.



2024 Recipients



Past Recipients

2023 Recipients

Ronak Bhatia
Molly Budhiraja
Georgia Bukata
Damian Carrizosa
Sthuthi Das
Nathaniel George
Harper Hipps
Nikhil Johnson
Daniel Jung
Alexis Li
Lily Messing
Zack Okun
Abby Pearson
Isabella Serrano
Sandeep Sethuraman
Saba Shakir
Sanya Somani
Jennifer Vo

2021 Recipients

Mostafa Afr
T.J. Borowski
Katelyn Cai
Ximena Camacho
Reva Chaudhry
Loralei Cook
Joshua Fink
Ella Hamer
Arin Khanna
Bhavya Makkar
Aryan Mathur
Viraj Mehta
Clara Moffitt
Ayden Schure
Riti Singh
Josephine Taylor
Steven Ugol
Audrey Wood

2022 Recipients

Jessica Burke
Hurshneet Chadha
Claira Chong
Sonya Colattur
Karasi Colter
Charlotte Gould
Mihira Karnik
Jenna Lee
Arun Moorthy
Ashley Nevison
Theresa O'Connor
Eduardo Rangel
Eden Sapien
Prisha Shroff
Sripriya Srinivas
Mallika Sunder
Ivanna Vilorio Enciso
Radia Wong

2020 Recipients

Elaina Ashton
Kayli Battel
Alexander Burt
Viveka Chinnasamy
Jordan Davis-Wiley
Cameron Deal
Laura Dunham
Heather Jensen
Leila Khan
Dominique Luna
Jonathan Martinez
Hannah Mason
Arjun Moorthy
Chandler Plante
Suraj Puvvadi
Ethan Scher
Grace Schlenker
Ryan Vakil

2019 Recipients

Addie Daniels
Alexis Hatch
Anissa Ferris
Caillou Pena
Catherine Broski
Colton Cagle
Dash McDonald
Dylan Baca
Elisa McRae
Emma Suttell
Fatima Bitheri
Grace Dietz
Jackson Bukata
James Daniel Lacno
Jordan Young
Marcus Chavez
Nadira Mitchell
Priscila Romero Guevara

2018 Recipients

Aleena Valdez
Anthony (AJ) Aguilar
Charles W. Hall
Christopher Whitmeyer
Joseph Ross
Karlina Riggs
Kellen Vu
Kira Householder
Kylie Hunts-in-Winter
Maximus Smith
Nikhil Dave
Prateek Piniseti
Rocco Gump
Saul Ontiveros
Tatum L. Stolworthy
Taylor Veschio
Trinity E. L. Peters
Vanessa Strait

AZ Charitable Tax Credit

It's not too early to donate and apply against your 2024 AZ taxes!

Donations to Junior Achievement of Arizona qualify for a dollar-for-dollar AZ charitable tax credit, up to \$938!

And, it's stackable with school tax credits, too!

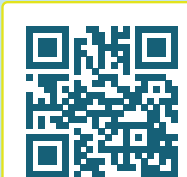


How It Works

- 1 Donate to JA to help students succeed
- 2 File your taxes and claim the credit
- 3 Receive the tax credit in the form of less taxes owed or bigger refund in 2025

Donate Today

jaaz.org/support





18 UNDER 18

Get notified when the next JA 18 Under 18 nominations open.

Sign-up for email at **18under18.org**.

2025 nominations will open in November 2024.

jaaz.org | 18under18.org

480.377.8500 | 520.792.2000