

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Media Contacts

Erika O'Shea  
[eoshea@jagkc.org](mailto:eoshea@jagkc.org) | 816-561-3558 x21

Megan Sturges Stanfield  
[msturges@jagkc.org](mailto:msturges@jagkc.org) | 816-456-3458

Junior Achievement of Greater Kansas City  
[JAGKC.org](http://JAGKC.org)  
2842 W 47th Avenue  
Kansas City, KS 66103

## Junior Achievement BizTown: Bringing Partnership and Possibility to KCK

KANSAS CITY, KS (June 10, 2021) – Starting this summer, Kansas City kids will be able to practice “adulting” at **JA BizTown presented by CommunityAmerica Credit Union**. The opening of Junior Achievement of Greater Kansas City’s long anticipated new facility is the culmination of a hands-on initiative that connects local students with mentors who model what it means to have a positive impact on their community. JA BizTown is located within the **JAKC Youth Learning Lab presented by the Mallouk Family Foundation** and is the next step in bringing innovative, experiential learning to students across the metro area.

JA BizTown immerses students grades fourth through sixth in a simulated economy where they practice crucial real-world skills. Research during the early stages of the project revealed Kansas City has a “programming desert” for pre-teens. Existing programs and opportunities often focus either on high school career activities or foundational early elementary offerings. “JA BizTown will be a memorable milestone for kids just starting to explore what it means to be an adult. We wanted to provide a capstone experience for JA kids in the under-resourced late elementary and early middle school age group,” CEO & President Megan Sturges Stanfield shared. “During their time as JA BizTown citizens, kids practice financial decision making, build entrepreneurial abilities and internalize their role in building a thriving community.”

JA BizTown is the featured program within the JAKC Youth Learning Lab. The space occupies 14,000 square feet to house 16 different “businesses” where kids will earn a paycheck, participate in collaborative projects and learn the value of community. “JA BizTown will give kids room to think up big ideas, explore careers they have only dreamed of and practice crucial life-skills outside of the classroom,” Stanfield explained. Centrally located in the Northwood Shopping Center near 47th Avenue and Mission Road, the new space will also house an Innovation Center, Career Center, JA Business Hall of Fame and Junior Achievement of Greater Kansas City offices.

From the outset, incorporating strong local ties and raising the visibility of homegrown companies in kids’ minds was priority number one for the project. “We’ve all heard the saying ‘You can’t be what you can’t see,’” Kathy Rhodes, JAKC Board Chair and CBIZ Lead Managing Director, shared. “We wanted JA BizTown to be a project rooted in Kansas City in every way possible. It shows young people the power of community collaboration. They’ll learn first-hand how partnership fosters possibility.”

One of JA BizTown’s strongest supporters throughout the capital campaign and construction process is presenting sponsor CommunityAmerica Credit Union. Lisa Ginter, CEO of CommunityAmerica Credit

Union, shared her organization's motivation for backing the project. "JA BizTown gives young people the opportunity, through experiential learning, to learn what it's like to be adults. What better way to find a path to thrive than gaining hands-on experience in an interactive environment like this one? We are excited to play such a significant role in helping shape the futures of so many young people's lives."

As the official financial institution of JA BizTown, CommunityAmerica Credit Union will offer students working at their "Branch of the Future" five career options to choose from. Career titles include Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Data Scientist, Member Service Coach and Financial Wellbeing Coach. JA BizTown citizens will visit the "branch" to set up paycheck mobile deposits, make transactions, develop savings plans and goals and more.

JA BizTown also hosts storefronts from other hometown favorites. Children's Mercy Hospital, Price Chopper, JE Dunn Construction, Evergy, KC PBS, Creative Planning, Hallmark, SelectQuote, Honeywell, Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas and Barkley are all represented within the simulated community. Each partner has worked throughout the development of JA BizTown to create career roles that reflect actual positions and responsibilities within their organizations.

Curriculum for the experience is designed to foster collaboration between storefronts and demonstrate the connectedness vital to building a successful community. Jennie Masuch, JAKC Capstone Program Manager, gave an example of how JA BizTown will help visitors understand the impact of their choices. "Kids will have the option to purchase health insurance from the SelectQuote store. If they get coverage, when they visit the Children's Mercy store later for their wellness visit, they don't have to pay for the visit. If they must pick up a "prescription" from the Price Chopper pharmacy shop, it will be discounted."

Another key feature of the JA BizTown experience is the presence of community volunteers. It takes at least twenty adults to run the engaging real-world simulation. Parents and teachers will fill some of this need, but there will be ample opportunity for individuals to offer their knowledge and insights to kids ready to learn. "We need people who will model success, determination and teamwork for JA kids. Their wisdom will give children a look at what their future could be like. Volunteering at JA BizTown is a chance to have a tangible impact on the direction of Kansas City and the futures of its next leaders, thinkers and doers," Kate Hood, JAKC Director of Programs and Experiences, explained.

JA BizTown, located within the JAKC Youth Learning Lab, is coming to fruition after years of collaboration between the JAKC board of directors, staff and many community champions including CommunityAmerica Credit Union, The Mallouk Family Foundation, The Sunderland Foundation, The Hall Family Foundation and financing partners Wells Fargo and Central Bank of KC. The team dreamed of creating an opportunity for young minds to think critically and strategically. JA BizTown's success will result in engaged citizens who will choose to live, work and play in Kansas City when they grow up.

JA BizTown will host its first young guests in summer 2021. There are many opportunities to get involved as a partner, volunteer or participant. Visit the JAKC website at [JAGKC.org](http://JAGKC.org) or reach out to Megan Sturges Stanfield, JAKC President & CEO, to learn more!

#### **JA BizTown at JAKC Youth Learning Lab Takeaways:**

- **Where:** 2842 W. 47th Avenue, Kansas City, KS 66103
- **What:** A 14,000 sq. ft. immersive simulated city where kids get to practice important real-world skills.

- **Who:** Highlighting the power of LOCAL with KC-focused partnerships. JA BizTown is presented by CommunityAmerica Credit Union. Storefronts include CommunityAmerica Credit Union, Creative Planning, Evergy, Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas, Children's Mercy Hospital, Hallmark, Kansas City PBS, JE Dunn Construction, Price Chopper, SelectQuote, Barkley and Honeywell.
- **How:** The JAKC Youth Learning Lab officially opens in June. JA BizTown will welcome its first student-citizens this summer.
- **Next Steps:** Tours of the new facility are available upon request for community partners, local educators & administrators and other interested groups. Contact [Erika O'Shea](#) to set up an interview with Megan Sturges Stanfield, JAKC President & CEO.

### **About Junior Achievement of Greater Kansas City**

Junior Achievement of Greater Kansas City connects students to inspiring mentors and programs which build financial decision-making skills, inspire entrepreneurial thinking, and prepare students (K-12) for a choice-filled future. By providing young people with business and community role-models who guide them through real-world learning experiences, we show kids what is possible. For them. For their city.

### **Connect with us!**

Facebook – @JAKansasCity | Instagram – @JA.KansasCity | LinkedIn – Junior Achievement of Greater Kansas City

###