

NCHS JAG Program Gets a Boost with NCCFF Grant

Nancy Feeney
NCCFF Communications Director

Seeing an opportunity to invest in the future of Nebraska City High School students, Nebraska City Community Foundation Fund (NCCFF) gave the school a \$10,000 grant to assist funding its Jobs for America's Graduates Nebraska (JAG) Program.

"JAG's goals are to help young people achieve the skills and support they need to succeed in education, employment and life," according to NCHS Principal Brian Hoover. "The JAG Nebraska program has empowered students at NCHS with opportunities of exploration, knowledge, teamwork, leadership and technical skill-building." JAG helps students achieve high school graduation, participate in civic engagement and possibly obtain post-secondary education/credentials and employment, Hoover added.

The JAG program is totally funded by outside sources, mainly United Way of the Midlands. "Extra funding must be generated locally from private sources," Hoover said. "NCCFF's \$10,000 grant will assist with student project resources, employer engagement visits, community outreach field trips and student leadership development."

JAG is in its second year at NCHS and Aaron Ammon is the current JAG Career Specialist. After its first year, the NCHS JAG program was awarded 'The Most Professional School for JAG Nebraska' as it exceeded state and national performance outcomes. This school year, Ammon has 37 JAG students filling four, one-hour daily classes. Seventeen NCHS graduates from the prior program year are also receiving follow-up services from Ammon.

JAG Career Specialists provide individual attention and support to students in overcoming challenges that may hinder their high school education or graduation as well as employment attainment or post-secondary education.

JAG Nebraska also provides leadership development experiences through extracurricular JAG Career Association chapters, which include student-led planning and engagement for public service, career exploration and preparation and social awareness projects and activities. Ammon said research shows students who are involved in extracurricular activities are more likely to graduate and work successfully together through demonstrated teamwork and collaborative skills.

NCHS Senior Shelby Todd is this year's Career Association president. "JAG brought me out of my comfort zone and opened me up to many new interests," she said. Through Career Association, JAG students take field trips to Nebraska City businesses as well as the State Capitol in Lincoln. Several Nebraska City business community members and Mayor Bryan Bequette have made presentations to the students at Career Association meetings.

Through the JAG curriculum, Ammon teaches Personal, Life and Workplace Skills. Ammon also helps students increase their communication skills by creating real world scenarios. For instance, students participate in mock job interviews, sometimes conducted by local business owners. He believes all these skills combine to increase a student's self-worth and confidence throughout life as well as in today's workforce. Ammon works at creating relationships with businesspeople and is always seeking internship opportunities for JAG students.

"Students will leave JAG possessing those 'soft skills' employers so desperately need and create a stronger workforce for Nebraska City," Hoover said. "This generous gift (from NCCFF) will contribute directly to our local community by empowering our young adults in achieving realistic skills for a successful future."

The Nebraska City Community Foundation Fund is a local, non-profit organization focused on investing in the people of Nebraska City and inspiring a culture of giving by developing knowledge, skills, leadership and the commitment necessary for community engagement. Since its founding in 2000, NCCFF has invested over \$6 million in the people of Nebraska City. The Nebraska City Community Foundation Fund is an affiliated fund of the Nebraska Community Foundation.

Learn more at www.NebraskaCityCommunityFoundation.org
or www.facebook.com/NCCFF .