



NEWS RELEASE

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JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT OF EASTERN IOWA LAUNCHES JA 18 UNDER 18 TO RECOGNIZE OUTSTANDING YOUTH LEADERS

Nominations are now open for students in Iowa and Johnson Counties

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa — October 5, 2026 — Junior Achievement of Eastern Iowa (JAEI) is proud to announce the launch of **JA 18 Under 18**, a new recognition program celebrating outstanding young people who are already making an impact in their schools and communities.

For its inaugural year, JA 18 Under 18 is open exclusively to eligible students who **live in or attend school in Iowa or Johnson counties**. Nominations are now open and will be accepted through **5:00 p.m. on December 20, 2026**.

JA 18 Under 18 will recognize 18 young people for their leadership, entrepreneurship, innovation, service, dedication and character. The program is designed to shine a spotlight on students who are taking initiative, pursuing their ideas, demonstrating compassion and a strong work ethic, and making a difference—whether that impact is happening in the classroom, through a business or entrepreneurial venture, on a team, through volunteer service, or within their community.

"We see firsthand through Junior Achievement that young people don't have to wait until adulthood to make an impact," said Julie Parisi, Vice-President-Development of Junior Achievement of Eastern Iowa. "JA 18 Under 18 gives us an opportunity to celebrate students who are already demonstrating leadership, creativity and innovation while inspiring other young people to recognize what they are capable of achieving."

Community members, educators, coaches, employers, mentors and others who know an exceptional young person are encouraged to submit a nomination.

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To be eligible, nominees must:

- Be at least 12 years old and under age 18, OR be 18 years old and currently enrolled in high school.
- Have participated in at least one Junior Achievement experience during their school years.
- Live in or attend school in Iowa or Johnson counties.

Nominators do not need to know every detail about a student's accomplishments or background. JAEI encourages nominations from anyone who can share why a young person stands out and a story that demonstrates the student's leadership, initiative, character, or impact.

Following the close of nominations, members of Junior Achievement of Eastern Iowa's Iowa City Area Board of Directors will review eligible nominations and select the inaugural JA 18 Under 18 honorees. The review process will consider each nominee's accomplishments, leadership, initiative, character and impact on their school, organization or community. Eighteen young people will be selected for recognition and honored at a special event in spring 2027.

Nominations close at 5:00 p.m. on December 20, 2026.

To nominate a student for JA 18 Under 18, complete the online JA 18 Under 18 Nomination Form:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScCn9XV0MFiiXUrWpaSgnz7rMQVtmoYRYRnVtVUeeuoP4vQWA/viewform>

Questions about JA 18 Under 18 may be directed to Emma Disterhoft at edisterhoft@jaeasterniowa.org or 319-862-1100.

About Junior Achievement of Eastern Iowa (JAEI)

Junior Achievement of Eastern Iowa envisions a world in which young people have the skillset and mindset to build thriving communities. By advocating for experiential learning in every school in the world, and by nurturing partnerships with schools and other like-minded organizations, we envision a world in which no young person is left behind.

JAEI is dedicated to inspiring and preparing young people to succeed in the global economy through work readiness, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy educational programs. JAEI's programs are delivered by 1,758 local volunteers that can provide students with real-world examples of how obstacles can be overcome, and success achieved. Junior Achievement of Eastern Iowa celebrated its 60th anniversary during the 2025–26 school year and reached a historic milestone of more than one million students served since its founding.

JAEI provides its programs to 53,307 students throughout Eastern Iowa which includes Benton, Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Cerro Gordo, Chickasaw, Delaware, Fayette, Floyd, Franklin, Grundy, Hancock, Howard, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Kossuth, Linn, Mitchell, Tama, Winnebago, Winneshiek, Worth, and Wright counties. For more information, visit www.JAEasternIowa.org.

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