

JA Staff Alumni Network New Member Biography

Katherine (Kathie) Blanchette joined the Junior Achievement of the Chisholm Trail, Inc. Ft. Worth, TX in January 2000. Recruited and hired by Bob Blanchette, who was the current President, and father to Tim, both members of Kathie's family church and old friends. Kathie's 1st day on the job was the same 1st day as Randal Mays. Kathie said "I am very grateful that Randal kept me on staff. I was never sure if he knew I was coming but he was gracious about it. I wanted the job and I am very thankful for the opportunities he gave me." During her 5 years at JA Chisholm Trail, Kathie was a Program Manager for middle and high school programs, serving Tarrant County. Kathie participated in the piloting of JA Economics for Success, and lead the Minority Youth Business Retreat, Grapevine – Colleyville ISD JA Job Shadow Day, and the annual JA Volunteer Recognition event.

Kathie recruited both her parents, Joe and Rosemary to teach JA Economics and JA Personal Economics during her time in Ft. Worth. Kathie said *"It was fantastic to watch my parents teach the JA programs at the time to teenagers. My parents were nervous and asked me for additional preparation. One night after dinner, we went into detail about each part of the lesson and had a few practices runs. On the day of their teaching, they both looked their finest and did a wonderful job. Ever since I was 11 years old, I had always worked for my father at his third party administration, so when I moved on to work for JA, I was unsure if my choice would cause a rift between us. Watching my parents actively supporting my career decision, helped me understand that I was in the right place professionally."*

Kathie was also President of the Business and Professional Women's Club – Ridglea Group and was awarded Outstanding Community Liaison for the Grapevine – Colleyville ISD in 2004-05. Kathie and Tim were married July 2002, and honeymooned in California, which laid the foundation for a future career move.

In the summer of 2005, Kathie's sister, Linda Santinoceto, was promoted to President of JA of the Bay Area. Though the support of their families, Kathie and Tim moved to California to support Linda and join the JA office as a District Director for the East Bay. In this role, Kathie managed the fundraising and programs for Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. Over the 10 years, Kathie participated in the consolidation and acquisition of JA – San Joaquin Valley, the Central Valley, and JA – Silicon Valley and Monterrey Bay. Kathie lead the hiring and on boarding of staff and program operational growth within these 14 new Northern California counties. During this time, Kathie had also learned from Bob that his cousin Gary worked for JA. Kathie met Gary at the Tampa Bay NLC and has been connected ever since.

In 2009, Kathie was promoted to VP of Education and lead the Program Team to serving 100,000 students, through the next 11 years. Kathie remained in this position until July 2020, when her position was eliminated due to COVID. Through the years, Kathie lead the piloting of many new local, national, and global programs, including the JA Social Innovation Relay, JA Social Innovation Camp, JA Excellence through Ethics, JA Global Business Ethics, JA Our Region, JA Our City, eBay JA Student Entrepreneurs, the new Blended Learning – JA Company Program, JA Company of the Year Competition, JA SHE Leads, JA Stock Market Challenge, and the JA

Cenntennial Entrepreneur Summit. During Kathie's tenure, five JA Company Program student teams competed in the National Student Leadership Summit, and Joseph Fortuna emerged as the student ambassador on PBS GradNation and JA USA Centennial video. Kathie was also a member of the Field Program Advisory Committee and Education Officers Advisory Council. Kathie lead the the JA NorCal office though the BCRM transformation and also participated in numerous leadership development programs.

In recent years, Kathie stepped more into a major donor cultivation and stewardship role, securing a \$50,000 gift to lead the pilot of JA Finance Park – Mobile operations in Sonoma and Monterey Counties. Because of the success of the pilot, Kathie nominated the donor to the JA Northern California Business Hall of Fame and an additional \$100,000 was raised at the event. When COVID struck in March, Kathie lead her Program Team to adapt and pivot to the realities of the environment by creating the JA Virtual Career Speaker Series and Virtual Take Your Daughter to Work Day, in colloboration with author Diana Kapp, and Wendy Odenbach Lee, and an old JA Chisholm Trail colleague, now with the the Girl Scouts.

Kathie states “I am a risk taker with a focus on future goals. I am more concerned with where I am going, then where I have been. Let's get real, trying to organize 20 years worth of information makes me feel really old. Writing this bio was hard – digging up files, researching the web for names and dates, and buried memories surfacing - forced me to stop and think about all that I have accomplished in JA adventure. In conclusion, my career at JA was amazing.

My husband and I moved to California because we wanted a better life. JA provided the job and our families, especially Bob, Barbara, Linda, and Gary supported us through the career journey. I remain passionate about the work we do and am very happy that I can find a way to be connected to the mission.”

An avid blood donor, Kathie is a Board Member for the California Jump\$tart Coalition and sits on the Donor Choose Committee. In this volunteer role, Kathie allocates funding to K-12 teachers across California who want to bring financial literary programs into their classroom. Kathie is also a Girl Scout Troop Leader and Room Mom for daughter Mia's 5th grade classroom. Kathie said “*Retirement, while not exactly in the plan this early in my life, is surprisingly nice and financially fine. It feels like college with lots of books, new “Plan B” exploration, and weekend road trips, but with an expanded pizza and beer budget.*”

Kathie also spends her time gardening, and has officially secured the roll as Chief Lawn Officer on Ernwood St. Kathie is currently researching her family's Italian genealogy, brushing up on her college French, hosting Saturday Yoga classes with Tim, learning the ways of Mary Kay Ash, enjoying Friday night “Grandpa Johnson” martini's at the Shivitz's lakehouse, and meeting the neighbors for a midweek “Teddy Tai” at Ted's Tiki Bar.