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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Students Step into the Real World at JA Finance Park®** *Junior Achievement financial literacy program*

*Moline, IL* – A math and career class from Geneseo High School stepped outside the classroom Friday, March 11, to visit Junior Achievement’s Finance Park. Students had the opportunity to think economically as they developed a personal budget. JA Finance Park is a month-long economics education program that introduces personal financial planning and career exploration to high school students. The program is offered in one of JA’s 10,000 square foot learning labs called JA World. Students visit JA Finance Park at the conclusion of the Junior Achievement program to put their classroom studies to work. Upon visiting Finance Park, students are given life scenarios (including age, career, income, marital status, number of children) which they must plan a functioning budget for. Students take out appropriate loans to buy affordable housing and transportation. As they work to pay off their loan, the students must also budget their money to keep up with ongoing expenses, such as water/electric, health insurance, monthly food and clothing expenses, furniture, entertainment, and several other living expenses.

JA Finance Park enhances Junior Achievement’s overall mission to empower young people to own their future economic success by teaching work readiness, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy. JA of the Heartland reaches more than 1,400 Geneseo students every year.

Geneseo Sophomore Devin Snyder was given the life scenario of a 26-year-old single electrician (with no kids) making about \$53,000 a year. Devin said he was “just trying to make (my) budget and pay all of my bills.” Devin offered that he was splurging on a sports car since he had no kids. Devin realized that visiting JA Finance Park would enable him to “figure his budget out” in the future.

Student Chris Hogue was given a life scenario with a tight budget. Chris became creative with how to combat his lackluster income by joining another student





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roommate to cut living costs. “These students are applying what we’ve been learning in the classroom,” said Geneseo High School educator Michelle Ganson. “They are working together to remind each other not to overspend.”

Ganson prepared her Geneseo class for nine weeks, about 3-4 hours per day. Though the curriculum is time consuming, Ganson raves about its importance for student’s success. “Many of the student’s are realizing they need higher education because they won’t be able to support a family on just a minimum wage job. They are realizing that in order to support a family and afford the things they need, they need to be specialized.” This important connection between the students realizing they can own their economic success is what Junior Achievement is all about. JA Finance Park is important to all students because it “encourages higher level thinking and a comprehension beyond the classroom.”

Ganson noted that some of her current students could personally testify to the importance of understanding loans, savings, and budgeting from personal experience. Ganson said her Geneseo students were apprehensive about taking on the task of life budgeting, but excited to get acquainted with the responsibility they will feel as adults.

When asked what they would take away from the Junior Achievement Finance Park experience, many students identified that the importance of savings was a key aspect they would take with them into the real world. As many of the Geneseo students were seniors, the ‘real world’ isn’t far off.

### Photo Caption:



Geneseo Sophomore Devin Snyder helps fellow student with budgeting



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JA instructor Wilma Deal helps student Jordan Reschke learn the importance of saving money