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Nonprofit's \$10M campaign underway with big-ticket donations for facility upgrades and expansion




Image: Junior Achievement of Central Ohio

The K-12 financial literacy and career readiness nonprofit's campaign will help it renovate its existing facility and open a new one.

JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT OF CENTRAL OHIO



By [Zachary Jarrell](#) – Data Reporter, Columbus Business First
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The local chapter of a national nonprofit is kicking off its new \$10 million campaign to renovate its existing facility and open a new one with a handful of \$1 million donations from some major Columbus companies.

Junior Achievement of Central Ohio is publicly launching its “Achieve More Campaign” with \$5.8 million raised, which includes \$3 million in donations from Bread Financial, the Nationwide Foundation and the American Electric Power Foundation – all for \$1 million each.

The campaign will fund the K-12 financial literacy and career readiness nonprofit’s upgrades at its current facility at 68 E. 2nd Ave. in Italian Village. Over half of the campaign’s goal, \$5.5 million, is going toward the renovations to the building, according to the organization.

Interior improvements are done – including upgrades to its Main Street-esque section where students get experience doing tasks in company-branded shops, BizTown, and a new section that houses its personal financial planning and career exploration program, Finance Park. Exterior renovations should be done in 12-18 months, said Aislinn Kloserman, the nonprofit’s communications officer.



Image: Junior Achievement of Central Ohio

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JA also plans to launch a new learning center in a 17,000-square-foot school building at 1440 Granville Road in Newark, which the nonprofit says will expand its offerings to more Ohioans. Construction will begin this month, with a plan to complete the \$2 million facility in fall 2024. Students will begin participating in programs at in late 2024 or early 2025, Kloserman said.

The other \$2.5 million is for fueling growth, organizational capacity and a \$1 million contingency.

As of the last week of April, JA has spent about \$4.2 million. It's working with Pepper Construction and pH7 Architects, in addition to Newark City Schools.

“These programs, including JA Finance Park, not only provide students with essential financial literacy skills but also foster daily engagement with local businesses, giving students real insight into various jobs and career paths,” Kloserman said in an email. “... Ultimately, Junior Achievement's expansion bridges the skills development gap by aligning employers' talent needs with the successful and sustained employment of Ohio's youth, benefiting both students and the business community as a whole.”



The new learning center will be located in a 17,000-square-foot school building at 1440 Granville Road in Newark.

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Other donors include:

- Worthington Companies Foundation
- Huntington
- Martyn and Lynne Redgrave
- Installed Building Products
- John and Emily Ness Family
- Pepper Family Foundation
- Reinberger Foundation
- The Doyle Foundation
- Ingram White Castle Foundation
- The Columbus Foundation
- Mark and Karen Koenig
- United Way of Central Ohio

Why Central Ohio companies are investing in Junior Achievement

Bread's \$1 million gift was credited with getting the campaign off the ground.

“When we were having conversations with Junior Achievement of Central Ohio about their growth strategy, they really painted a picture to help us see the need which we knew was there and how they were going to forge that path forward to serve exponentially more students across Central Ohio and beyond,” said Vanessa Yahner, Bread’s senior manager of sustainability and community relations.

Yahner also pointed out that the donation was more than a gift – it was an investment.

“It’s not just a nice thing to do, but it makes really good business sense for Bread Financial,” she said. “We are focused on empowering those customers, our associates and our communities with financial education, job readiness and training, and the access they need to build a solid financial future for themselves.”

“We know that when we invest in (JA), that's exactly what's happening.”



At BizTown, students get experience doing tasks in company-branded shops.

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Sue Zazon, Central Ohio regional president for Huntington National Bank, said the company views "financial literacy as one of the most important life skills students can begin to learn at an early age, and we're thrilled to be able to continue supporting these efforts through a comprehensive partnership with Junior Achievement.”

Over at Nationwide, Chad Jester – the company’s vice president of corporate citizenship and president of the Nationwide Foundation – said financial literacy is “really important in our industry.”

“When the kids go to BizTown, it's fun to watch,” he said.

Jester also noted the potential workforce pipeline advantages of JA’s programming.

“It's definitely a workforce initiative,” he said. “We actually view everything that happens in our K-12 school systems, and even early childhood, as being for the workforce pipeline – and the ultimate goal is career readiness.”