

May 2012 Edition

In This Issue:

Page One

- Local news
- An OP Success Story

Page Two

- Passport to Opportunity
- JMG's Career Development Conference Turns 20

JMG Students & Supporters: Believers in a Brighter Future

That is the slogan students used for our Career Development Conference banner, and what this picture represents. Denise Smith is a Youth Services Coordinator assigned to Penquis Valley High School's JMG students for Eastern Maine Development Corporation. She is one of the many volunteers who helps CDC run smoothly, and who believes strongly in the JMG program. Want to learn more about CDC? See page 2 of this newsletter. Pictured below, 2nd row: Denise Smith, Seth Winslow, MacKenzie Morel, Chris Glidden, Job Specialist Shannon Bishop. 1st row: Taylor Lyford & Colby Robinson



Want more JMG news?

Join our monthly e-newsletter by going to

<http://www.jmg.org/news-events/newsletters/>

and typing your e-mail address in the box.

An Opportunity Passport™ Success Story

Devan is a 19 year old, trying to find his way as he transitions from being a child and dependent on the state's foster care system to independent adulthood. Starting at a very young age, Devan was moved from one foster home to another, and he eventually found himself homeless as a young teenager.

A few years later, when he was 17, Devan signed up for the Opportunity Passport™ program. At the time, he was living in a group home and was trapped in a financial cycle many foster youth find themselves in. Devan was working at a Kmart within walking distance of the group home. He wanted to buy a car so he could find a better job, enroll in a college course for paramedics, and get his life on a successful path. However, he couldn't afford a car on his part-time wages. Without a car he was limited to the scarce, low-paying jobs available near the group home.



Devan, a participant in JMG's Opportunity Passport™ program.

After enrolling in Opportunity Passport and opening an account, Devan was able to save enough money that, when matched, was enough for him to buy his first used car. Now able to drive, Devan found a full-time job further from the home, and in January he started taking college courses toward an associate degree in paramedicine.

Devan says the car he bought also enabled him to become a volunteer firefighter, which he finds rewarding, and which offers valuable experience as he pursues a career as a paramedic. Devan says there is no question JMG's financial literacy program, and the Opportunity Passport™ match account, has provided valuable help to him as he transitions from foster care to life as an independent adult.

What is the Opportunity Passport™ program? Turn to page 2 to find out.

Passport to Opportunity...

What is Opportunity Passport™?

The Opportunity Passport™ program, or OP as we call it, may well be the best kept secret at JMG. What is the Opportunity Passport™ program, you ask? It is a financial literacy and matched savings program that helps Maine youth develop a general understanding about personal finances and goal setting. The program is available at no cost to the participants, and youth in good standing may remain in the program until their 24th birthday.

Who is eligible for the OP program?

The OP program is available for youth who:

- Are between the ages of 14 and 23.
- Are currently or have been in the Maine foster care system for at least one day since the age of 14.
- Participate in a day-long financial literacy training by Debbie Bechard, JMG's Financial Literacy and Mentoring Manager.
- Have an ongoing, reliable source of income.
- Are willing and committed to saving money.
- Have a valid, government-issued identification (driver's license, state ID or passport).



What is the referral process?

Youth are referred to the OP program through Debbie by caseworkers, foster parents, educators, support staff, JMG Specialists, and the youth themselves. Currently there are nearly 180 youth from all over Maine enrolled in the OP program. Since the program began in 2003, a total of 443 youth have been served.

What are the participants saving for?

Program youth have saved a combine \$300,514 that was matched dollar for dollar to purchase approved assets. Each youth can be matched for up to \$1,000 per year toward assets, including college tuition, computers, first month's rent and security deposit for a new apartment or the purchase of a home, a vehicle, certificates of deposit, a retirement account, or medical expenses.

Other benefits of the program:

In addition to receiving education in financial literacy, learning to save and budget, and receiving match money to purchase assets, the participants in the OP program receive guidance through the actual process of making a purchase. During the purchase process, Debbie acts as a mentor, supporting comparison shopping for the best deal on a laptop, researching interest rates on CDs, budgeting for additional expenses (auto insurance to go with a car purchase), comparing auto values on KellyBlueBook.com, completing purchase paperwork and follow through with purchases (making phone calls, faxing and filing documents). These are skills that are valuable even after the participant's 24th birthday – skills that can help the youth make a successful transition into adulthood.

To learn more about the Opportunity Passport™ program, please go to www.jmg.org/programs/opportunity-passport/.

JMG's Career Development Conference turns 20!

JMG held its 20th Annual Career Development Conference (CDC) on Friday, April 27 at the Augusta Civic Center, and a record 38 schools participated in the competitions. JMG students from North Berwick to Fort Kent competed in events such as Public Speaking, Employment Interview, Decision Making, and Group Challenge, where teams of 3-5 students were tasked with building a car out of paper, tape, and recycled CDs that would hold two erasers.

Governor Paul R. LePage was in attendance, speaking to the assembled students at the Opening Ceremonies. His visit kicked off the event, which also included the awarding of three scholarships and numerous trophies and raffle prizes, a speech by a JMG alumnus, workshops on topics from self-defense to drawing to the duties of the Maine Warden Service's K9 units, and a Career and College Expo where students were able to hone their networking skills, learn about postsecondary education opportunities, and possibly apply for a job.

It takes the entire JMG staff, more than 80 volunteers, and nearly 700 students to make this event possible. Thanks to all who participated and made the 20th year of this event a great one!

Thanks also go out to the sponsors for this event: General Dynamics/Bath Iron Works, L.L. Bean, MyJobWave, and TD Bank.



A team of JMG students tests their paper car during the Group Challenge event at CDC on April 27 while event proctor Bill Freudenberger (far left) looks on.