



Students discover their roles in the economy

Bonneville Power Administration

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GIG HARBOR, Wash.– Fourth Graders at Minter Creek Elementary this week are discovering first-hand how economics and business concepts apply to their daily lives -- today and in the future.

Junior Achievement (JA), an alliance of businesses leaders and educators, brings Kyra Chatfield from Bonneville Power Administration together with teachers Paula Keplar and Judy Greinke to lead lively discussions and activities as the students learn about the roles they play as individuals, consumers and workers in our region.

“We are happy to be working with JA to bring work world and economic experiences to students in the Gig Harbor area,” Chatfield said. “We support JA’s programs and the community-oriented goals they seek to achieve.”

Other Peninsula schools and businesses participating in Junior Achievement this year include: Peninsula High School with Key Bank; Harbor Ridge Middle School with Peninsula Light, Boeing, Radio Shack, Windemere Real Estate, The Business Examiner, Tide Runner, Inc., and US Bank; and, Key Peninsula with Key Bank.

JA is the nation’s oldest and largest economic education program for children. Many people remember the traditional JA Company Program, an after school activity in which high school students form and operate a company under the guidance of volunteer business advisors. The new JA has expanded into the classrooms and covers all grades. In the Greater Puget Sound Area alone, over 1,500 volunteers from area businesses donate their time teaching and inspiring over 48,000 students in grades K-12.

BPA, the largest wholesale power supplier in the region, began participating in Junior Achievement this year.

“Our customer Peninsula Light Company purchases 85% of its power from BPA and arranges 100% of its transmission through BPA contracts, so this community is very important to BPA,” said George Reich, a BPA account executive. BPA community relations coordinator Chatfield is on the lookout for more opportunities for BPA to be involved in the communities it serves.

Chatfield comes into the classroom for an hour of hands-on activities, role playing and games each day

for five sessions, beginning April 23, and culminating in a recognition ceremony on April 29.

One portion of the program features show-n-tell about a local business. Chatfield is featuring Erin Rockery, at 4521 56th Street NW, by bringing in samples of bark and gravel donated by president Richard O'Neill as examples of products made in Washington State. Erin Rockery co-owner Leann O'Neill, a 5th grade teacher at Harbor Heights Elementary, also helped Chatfield prepare for the activity by sharing photographs and stories about how they got into the business.

“We had always been loyal customers to the original owners,” explains O'Neill. Three years after an injury prevented Richard O'Neill from returning to his former profession, the O'Neill family purchased the 24-year old business from Bob and Emer Kocher on April 1, 1997. As new business owners, the O'Neills are learning a new role in the free enterprise system, just as the local students are learning through Junior Achievement.

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