

PRESS RELEASE — FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Junior Achievement of Greater St. Louis Celebrates 2026 JA Business Hall of Fame Honorees at Annual Gala

St. Louis, MO - May 22, 2026 - Junior Achievement of Greater St. Louis (JA) proudly celebrated the induction of its **2026 JA Business Hall of Fame Honorees** last night at the Ritz-Carlton, St. Louis. Business leaders, educators, and community partners gathered to honor individuals and organizations whose leadership, innovation, and civic commitment reflect the values at the heart of JA's mission.

The evening recognized two distinguished leaders from Central Bank, **Bryan Cook**, Executive Chairman, and **Sam Cook**, former Chairman (honored posthumously). Both were celebrated for their decades of leadership, their dedication to strengthening Missouri's economic landscape, and their commitment to community investment. Central Bank supports local students through JA BizTown, JA Finance Park and through volunteering.

JA also inducted **Mastercard** into the JA Business Hall of Fame, recognizing the technology company in the global payments industry and for its ongoing partnership ~~in advancing financial literacy and career readiness for young people across the~~ in local youth education initiatives region. In addition to support for JA BizTown and JA's Annual Bowl-A-Thon fundraising, nearly 7,000 Mastercard employees have volunteered through JA in a Day bring financial literacy and career readiness education to more than 77,000 student across the region over the last two decades.

A Night Celebrating Leadership and the Next Generation

The program featured remarks from JA students who shared how JA's hands-on learning experiences have shaped their confidence, career aspirations, and financial understanding. Their stories underscored the impact of JA's work, which reached more than **177,000 students** during the 2024–2025 school year.

Guests enjoyed a reception, dinner, and a tribute program highlighting the honorees' achievements, followed by a dessert reception that brought together leaders from across the St. Louis business community.

Supporting JA's Mission

Proceeds from the event support JA's mission to prepare young people for success through programs in **financial literacy, career readiness, and entrepreneurship**. Funds raised will directly expand JA's ability to serve more students. To contribute towards the mission visit www.jastl.org.

About Junior Achievement of Greater St. Louis

Junior Achievement of Greater St. Louis is a nonprofit organization dedicated to inspiring and preparing young people for what's next. Through experiential learning and community partnerships, JA equips students with the skills and confidence to build thriving futures.

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Attached photos

Bryan Cook and Bob Robuck: (from left to right) students **Vera Pantazis** and **Teddy Waldman**, **Bryan Cook**, Executive Chair of Central Bank, **Lori Jacob**, President & CEO of JA of Greater St. Louis, **Chuck Kim**, Chairman JA Board of Directors and Executive VP of Commerce Bank, **Bob Robuck** trusted advisor to Sam Cook, former Chair at Central Bank.

Ed McLaughlin-MC: (from left to right) **Chuck Kim**, Chairman JA Board of Directors and Executive VP of Commerce Bank, **Ed McLaughlin**, CTO Mastercard, students **Tejas Marathe** and **Susanna Carrier**, **Lori Jacob**, President & CEO of JA of Greater St. Louis

JA Students: JA students from across the area shared what they have learned through JA programs and inspired all of us to continue JA's mission!