

# Thank you Volunteers!



We have the best volunteers! You are bringing essential skills to our students that will set them up for a brighter future. Huge thanks to all of you for everything you do!

Here are few Volunteers from this year, sharing their JA experience...

## **KEITH OOSTHOEK**

JA Volunteer since 1971

*"Giving back  
is a way of  
life for me."*



### **About Keith**

Keith is a Retired Senior Executive with RBC Financial Group. He had a successful career with RBC for 38 years, in 17 cities, in 3 countries and retired as Senior Vice President and Ombudsman.

Keith is married to Joanne and they have two adult children and one grand daughter. He started volunteering with JA in 1971 (Company program in Hamilton Ontario) and has spent the last 18 years teaching JA programs in the schools.

### **Why did you want to volunteer with JA?**

Love sharing my business experience with the students. Enjoy keeping in touch with reality by being in the classroom with the students.

### **What motivates you to volunteer with JA?**

The real reward for me is seeing the students really grasp the very practical knowledge that is taught in the programs.

### **What is the most memorable accomplishment of your volunteer experience?**

A memorable accomplishment would be seeing these student's success or having a parent tell me their child had readily learned a lot by participating in the class.

### **How has volunteering with JA impacted your life?**

Volunteering has helped keep me busy and give back to the community in a meaningful way.

The most notable thing I hear from teachers is "Why was JA not there in the classroom when I was a student..."

Giving back is a way of life for me.

## HAILE KIFLAI

New JA Volunteer in 2023

*"I am always  
happy to share  
my life experience  
with the next  
generation"*



### **Why did you want to volunteer with JA?**

I am always happy to share my life experience with the next Generation. I really don't want the young generation repeating the stupid mistakes I have been doing in my time. At the same time, I also want the young generation to maintain to good things that are sense of my pride in my time. Fortunately, I found one organization which is in the right track of my long time dream and I tried my best to have a successful connection with this inspiring organization and wanted to do my volunteering through their assistance and guidance.

### **What's a highlight of your time with JA?**

Very interesting, so attractive and motivating to do the volunteering again and again. JA understood my special needs and accommodated me with a Braille Material. In addition, JA also provided me with two eyes for free for that day to make volunteering time so effective and productive. The support I was having from Sheena was marvelous!!!

### **What advice would you give to someone considering volunteering with JA?**

It is so excellent to contribute your time, energy and life as well as educational experience with the next generation and JA is a wonderful organization to volunteer with. Therefore, I would like to encourage people with experience to working in producing the most successful future generations. JA is very accommodating for all volunteers even if they need adaptive technology in making the learning and teaching process so accessible for them.

### **My Name is Haile Kiflai**

I was born in the late 1960s in Asmara, Eritrea. My family was poor, and unfortunately, the lack of access to medication and early immunization resulted in me losing my sight due to measles. It was a difficult time, and many children, including my younger sister, were dying from preventable diseases.

At the age of 12, I started attending the AbraHa Bahta School for the Blind, where I began my journey towards education and personal growth. After completing my undergraduate degree in language and literature at Asmara University, I became the first General Manager of the Eritrean National Association of the Blind.

Unfortunately, political turmoil in my homeland forced me to flee to Canada as a refugee. It was a challenging time, but I remained determined to pursue my dreams. I volunteered at the CNIB to gain Canadian work experience and was eventually offered an internship at BMO Bank of Montreal Online Banking in 2003, where I have been serving in various roles ever since.

Beyond my professional career, I have also been an active member of my community. I served as a board member for BALANCE, a blind organization for adults in Toronto, and the Eritrean Canadian Community Center. I have also been a vocal advocate for the rights of Eritreans living under the country's dictatorial regime.

My story is a testament to the power of determination and resilience in the face of adversity. Despite the challenges I have faced, I have continued to pursue my dreams and make a positive impact in my community.

## **BRAD GEDDES**

JA Volunteer  
Director Emeritus

*"JA receives full credit for sparking my desire to build businesses."*



### **About Brad**

Brad is the President and CEO of Zucora Home and has been involved with JA London and District (now JA South Western Ontario) for more than 10 years. He has held several positions on the Board of Directors including Chair and Past Chair. In recognition of his significant contributions to the organization, the board created a special category of board member called Director Emeritus. The role of Director Emeritus is reserved for an individual who has served on the board of directors with distinction for at least two terms and whom the board wishes to retain at its table after the director has stepped down to retain access to his/her experience, skill, dedication, and wisdom. A Director Emeritus will have given generously of his/her "time, talent, and treasure" during his/her board tenure and will be willing to continue to do so during his/her tenure as a Director Emeritus.

### **His support of JA South Western Ontario**

During his tenure on the JA London and District board of directors, Brad provided significant leadership to the organization including during a period of financial challenge. He has also had significant involvement and engagement outside of board activities. He, his organization and his family are annual financial supporters of JA South Western Ontario. He regularly sponsors and attends fundraising events. Currently, he chairs the JA South Western Sustainability (fundraising) committee. In addition, he provides an annual scholarship to a graduating Company Program participant.

### **JA in his past, present, future**

Brad's passion for JA stems from his first-hand experience as a student in Company Program. This experience led him to become a volunteer mentor with Company Program during his early days as a board member. He continues to demonstrate his commitment to JA's mission and students by participating as a judge for Company Program Dragon's Lair and Company of the Year. Brad was a member of the Next Generation Leaders Forum (NGL) host/planning committee for NGL 2017 and 2018. His support enabled these events to take place for students across Canada and around the world. During the pandemic, Brad provided leadership to the charter by acting as a sounding board for the President & CEO, and helping to ensure financial sustainability.

Brad was a key mentor for Bev Robinson, the previous President & CEO of JA London and District who said he was "always just a call away" and has been a mentor for current President & CEO Karen Gallant during her 8-year tenure at JA. Brad has also served as a Member of JA Worldwide Global Council since 2017. Asheesh Advani, CEO of JA Worldwide said of Brad: "He brings passion and commitment to his role in a way that lifts other members of the Global Council. Brad is innovative and is constantly seeking ways to help our organization."

According to Brad, "JA receives full credit for sparking my desire to build businesses from the first time I participated in the JA Company Program more than 50 years ago. As a member of the JA Worldwide Global Council, I'm even more excited today to be leading a special project that will offer JA students a unique opportunity to become global citizens. Anyone who becomes a JA volunteer can witness first-hand how students become enlightened with new financial knowledge; develop into tomorrow's confident leaders; or see how their entrepreneurial passion becomes ignited. Help JA make a lasting impact - both locally and around the world."

## **GIULIANO PARETE**

Workplace-connected  
JA Volunteer

*"The students  
motivate me to  
continue  
volunteering  
with JA!"*



### **About Me**

I was born and raised in Sarnia Lambton. My career started in the Food and Beverage Industry as I was the General Manager for a local Banquet Hall for seven years. In 2022, I made a career change to Banking with RBC.

### **Why did you want to volunteer with JA?**

I wanted to volunteer with JA to help students gain a better understanding of basic economics & finances. I often hear about students having many questions about money and I thought volunteering with JA would be an excellent way for me to help students learn.

### **How did you get connected with JA?**

I was connected with JA through my employer, RBC.

### **What motivates you to volunteer with JA?**

The students motivate me to continue volunteering with JA! I enjoy helping students learn about real-life situations and grow their knowledge of what to expect when beginning their working careers. It's always a rewarding experience when students are so appreciative of the knowledge they learn throughout the day

### **What is a highlight of your time with JA?**

One of my highlights with JA is the creating a budget activity through the Economics for Success program. It's always an enjoyable experience when students create their "dream lifestyle" before being given an example job and paystub. Seeing students re-visit their budgets based on their mock pay cheques is a fun way to see the material they are learning come to life.

### **What is your most memorable accomplishment of your volunteer experience?**

Each time the students thank you at the end of the session is my most memorable accomplishment. You can tell the students are genuine and appreciate the session based on their upbeat attitude at the end of the day.

### **How has your volunteering with JA impacted your life?**

Volunteering with JA has impacted my life by helping me realize how impactful a few short hours of volunteering in your local community can be.

### **What advice would you give to someone considering volunteering?**

Volunteering is a rewarding experience! Seeing the students engaged in the interactive sessions and games we play throughout the day is an awesome experience. Knowing you are helping a group of students eager to learn is very rewarding.