



featuring Christina Harris Schwinn

by Sara Fitzpatrick Comito

When Christina Schwinn met Cecilia St. Arnold upon moving to Lee County in 2004, it represented a homecoming of sorts. The Pavese Law Firm partner is an alumna of Junior Achievement (JA), and St. Arnold is Lee County program director for the Southwest Florida chapter of that organization. According to the national organization, "Junior Achievement is the world's largest organization dedicated to educating students about workforce readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy through experiential, hands-on programs."

Schwinn recalls first becoming involved in JA when she was in high school. "We formed a JA company, produced a product and then sold the product to third parties. The whole experience was life changing for a 14-year-old high school student. I remember the whole experience vividly"

Having been reintroduced to the organization by St. Arnold, Schwinn was able to apply her law expertise to help the next generation of budding professionals learn valuable financial skills. "I began volunteering and have participated in the CEO Academy a number of times."

The one-week business summer camp is conducted in partnership with FGCU. Schwinn taught students basic legal principles, such as how to read a written contract, and introduced them to issues relating to personal liability and the importance of protecting intellectual property. "It is amazing to see these juniors and seniors come together and in one week develop a product idea and a business plan," she remarked. "At the end of the week they give a presentation to a panel of judges. It is very moving and inspiring."

On July 1, Schwinn committed to a three-year term as a member of the board of directors and is pleased with the

organization's direction and the new strategic plan established by the board at its recent retreat. "The strategic plan focuses on developing new funding resources and engaging the stakeholders," she explained.

Recently, JA of Southwest Florida was awarded the Gold Summit Award, one of the highest honors bestowed by the national organization. The award is given to local JA offices that have reached outstanding success in financial health, program quality, management effectiveness, and program growth. The Gold Level refers to the number of consecutive years that a JA operation has received the Summit Award.

"To me, JA is one of the most worthwhile and rewarding volunteer experiences that I have ever had," Schwinn explained. "Helping students by interacting with them to understand basic financial principals and putting them on the road to financial literacy is very rewarding. First of all, the students are learning something that everyone needs to know and understand to be successful in life. Secondly, watching them learn, embrace the information and begin to understand why financial literacy is so important is very uplifting."

Junior Achievement of Southwest Florida serves more than 12,000 students throughout the region, and there is always a need for volunteers to help teach the financial literacy course in classrooms. Training is provided to all volunteers.

To learn more about getting involved, visit www.JASWFL.org or contact Anne Frazier, President/CEO of JASWFL at (239) 225-2590 or info@jaswfl.org. |RG|



Jack E. Kosakowski, president and chief executive officer of Junior Achievement USA, presents the Gold Summit Award to Anne Frazier, president of Junior Achievement Florida and Cecilia St. Arnold, program director, Junior Achievement of Southwest Florida