

# Program dedicated to help Hoosier students celebrates 10th anniversary

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By Ashley Steeb, [TheStatehouseFile.com](http://TheStatehouseFile.com)

INDIANAPOLIS — Sixty junior and senior high school students wearing blue shirts gathered at the Statehouse in honor of the 10th anniversary of Indiana's Jobs for America Graduates program.

"JAG, paired with the best specialists in the world, make children feel that they mean something in this world and that there is a place for them," said Elijah Tribbett, a JAG Indiana alumnus. "JAG, to so many students, is more than just a class, it's more like a family."

The program aims to prevent high school students from dropping out of high school and also offers them opportunities to learn job skills, pursue higher education or advance their career goals. Most students come from low-income families or backgrounds where their parents never graduated high school or never attended college.

Tribbett said the program became like a family for him. He bought his first car because of the job skills he learned through the program and participated in numerous extracurricular activities. He is studying Culinary Arts at Ivy Tech Community College and will work at a camp during the summer.

Desiree Steinkamp, a JAG Indiana alumna, said the ability to overcome obstacles is vital to being successful in the workforce.

"Every day we move forward we're all going to experience a different hand of cards and the ability to play those well based upon previous experience and learning is crucial," Steinkamp said.

Gov. Eric Holcomb attended the event and said Indiana needs to continue its support of the program because it strengthens the state's workforce. He also spoke directly to the students in attendance and said they can't let their setbacks discourage them from being successful.

"Selfishly speaking, we not only want you to be educated here and to train here in the state of Indiana," Holcomb said. "But we want you to work here and we want you to stay here and we ultimately want you to retire here and play here."

Since 2006, more than 17,000 students have participated in the program and 94 percent of participants have graduated from high school. There are 90 schools in the program and 110 JAG programs serving 5,800 students across the state. JAG is funded through grants from the Indiana Department of Workforce Development.

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