

# 2020-2021 Student Ambassador Reflections

Our 2020-2021 Student of the Year and Student Ambassadors experienced a senior year like no other. They took classes, participated in internships and volunteer opportunities, applied for college, and so much more in a completely virtual environment.

We asked them to reflect on their experience with Junior Achievement of New York, their favorite memories of JA programs, and where they're heading next. Keep reading to learn how Junior Achievement has made an impact on their lives and their plans after graduation!

## **Aya Ibrahim, Student of the Year**

Aya Ibrahim is a senior at the Academy of Finance and Enterprise and Junior Achievement of New York's 2020 Student of the Year. According to Aya, High School Heroes was an unforgettable experience where she learned the significance of giving back to the community and lending a hand to hopeful minds that are looking forward to the future.

She believes JA has prepared her for success by opening her eyes to the future and thinking about who she wants to become, what she wants to pursue, and how to help her community. "Because of JA, I made it my mission to guide first generation students to unlock their potential just as JA transformed my journey," she said.

Aya is a first-generation immigrant who was born and raised in Egypt. This fall, she will attend Northwestern University as a QuestBridge Scholar, and major in Civil Engineering with a minor in Entrepreneurship.



## **Youssf Hegazy, Student Ambassador**

Youssf Hegazy is a senior at the Academy of Finance and Enterprise. He vividly remembers taking a trip to the local elementary school during his junior year to teach younger students important finance concepts as a High School Hero.

He describes his JA experience as "empowering, insightful, and inspiring. These three words adequately explain that all of the opportunities I have been provided gave truly made a difference in building on my past and preparing me for the future."

This fall, Youssf will attend Columbia University where he will major in Neuroscience on the Premed Track.



**Melody Cheng, Student Ambassador**

Melody Cheng is a senior at Hauppauge High School in Hauppauge, Long Island. As a junior, she completed three JA High School Heroes programs. With each program she took part in, Melody gained the self-confidence needed to help young learners find the hero within themselves and foster an entrepreneurial spirit among the students.

"Being a part of JA has given me the chance to work alongside bright young adults who constantly inspire me with their intrinsic motivation and sense of direction. My skills as a leader, a learner, and a communicator have improved tremendously," she said.

Melody loves neuroscience and cognitive behavior, and she hopes to conduct research on the synaptic structure of the brain during her college years.

This fall, she'll attend the University of Pennsylvania, where she will pursue a degree in Biochemistry as well as Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering as a Vagelos Scholar in the Molecular Life Sciences.



**Genesis Perez, Student Ambassador**

Genesis Perez is a senior at Amityville High School. As a High School Hero, she led financial literacy classes for kindergarten and fifth grade students in both English and Spanish.

She dreams of becoming a teacher and says her experience with JA programs has prepared her to succeed in her future career.

This fall, Genesis will attend Long Island University and major in Education. She aspires to one day teach in a diverse community like the one she grew up in.



**Bryanna Leguizamon, Student Ambassador**

Bryanna Leguizamon is a senior at Amityville Memorial High School. She has participated in Finance Park and High School Heroes programs, where she was able to teach younger students money management skills.

Bryanna credits JA with instilling confidence in her as well as valuable skills like how to work in teams and the importance of strong communication skills.

This fall, Bryanna will major in Nursing and her professional goal is to become a pediatric nurse practitioner.





**Melissa Bell, Student Ambassador**

Melissa Bell is a senior at Freeport High School and has participated in Finance Park, High School Heroes, and Job Shadows. One of her favorite JA memories is being asked to create a brand and "sell it" during a job shadow event.

According to Melissa, "JA has helped teach me my definition of success and inspired me to rip off the band aid that is holding in my doubts and use them to my advantage. It has become clear to me through JA that even if you think you know everything about a specific topic, there is always more to learn."

This fall, she will attend Nova Southeastern University and plans to major in psychology with dual admission in clinical psychology.

**Baran Ferahoglu, Student Ambassador**

Baran Ferahoglu is a senior at Lincoln High School. Throughout high school he was very involved with JA programs and participated in Finance Park, Job Shadows, and High School Heroes. As a HSH, he had the opportunity to teach fifth grade students at two schools and discovered a passion for teaching.

"Becoming a teacher, if even for a short time, was one of the most enjoyable and memorable experiences I've had. Formulating my own lesson, explaining that lesson to the students, and then watching them have fun while completing their activities, was one of the most gratifying experiences and opened my eyes to the joys of teaching," he says.

In the fall, Baran will study Political Science at the City College of New York newly opened Colin Powell School of Political Science.



**Helen Chen, Student Ambassador**

Helen Chen is a senior at the High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies. "Through JA programs, I gained a lot of financial knowledge in terms of budgeting, terminologies, and college life. JA has also inspired me to be involved in non-profit organizations in the future," she said.

Helen will attend Columbia University in the fall and will major in Creative Writing & Computer Science. Her goal is to combine her passion for writing while working in software development.



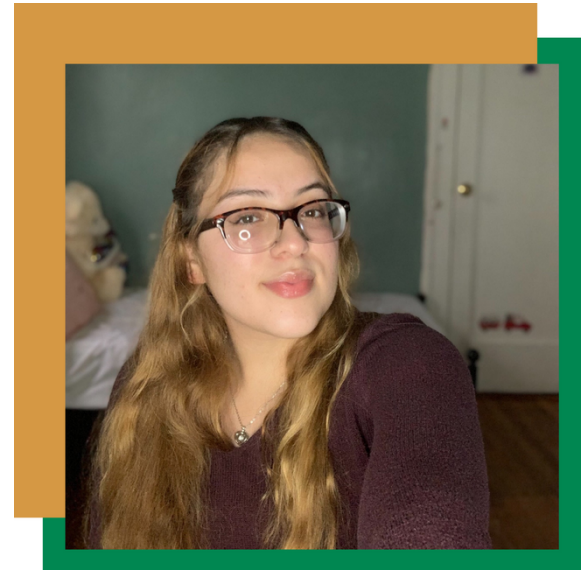


**Marjorie Oporto, Student Ambassador**

Marjorie Oporto is a senior at Lincoln High School. She first participated in JA programs in the second grade and has been heavily involved in JA programs in high school, participating in Finance Park, High School Heroes and Job Shadows at companies like PepsiCo where she learned about career opportunities from professionals. Through HSH, Marjorie taught first grade students about money management.

Speaking of her time with JA, she says that participating in various programs prepared her to succeed in the future by giving her real-world skills and experiences.

Marjorie will be the first in her family to go to college and she plans to study Forensic Psychology.



**Samir Lukolic, Student Ambassador**

Samir Lukolic is a graduating senior from the Academy of Finance and Enterprise who was born and raised in Queens, New York. He is passionate about helping others and giving back to his community.

According to Samir, participating in High School Heroes and the Career Speaker Series helped him build on his professional skills and prepared him for the future.

Samir is driven to make a real impact in the world and will pursue a career in Engineering.

**Naomi Tsang, Student Ambassador**

Naomi Tsang is a senior at the Academy of Finance and Enterprise. She's participated in High School Heroes, Finance Park, the Business Plan Competitions, and Job Shadows.

Inspired by JA programs, Naomi now knows that there are many paths she can take to reach her goals and she feels prepared with the skills and tools she needs to face any future challenges.

Since her freshman year, Naomi has dreamed of pursuing a degree in business. This fall, she will attend SUNY Geneseo with a major of Accounting and plans to complete the 4+1 track to receive her Bachelors and Masters in 5 years. Her goal is to become a Certified Public Accountant and work at a Big Four accounting firm.

