

# Junior Achievement influences SW Florida students

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*Junior Achievement of Southwest Florida will induct Norman Love and Mark Loren into its Business Hall of Fame for Lee County on Thursday*



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Rex Rogers was waiting for his aha moment.

He wanted a spark, some excitement, a sign that would illuminate his path after high school.

And that first glint came last summer with a crash course in business.

"I was kind of just waiting until I was inspired, and that was a pretty good turning point for me," he said.

Rogers is one of many students inspired by Junior Achievement of Southwest Florida. The organization has a variety of programs designed to help students succeed in the global economy, and along the way it has persuaded several to pursue business schooling and careers here in Southwest Florida.

But on Thursday, it's the business leaders who will be honored. Junior Achievement of Southwest Florida will induct two businessmen into its Business Hall of Fame for Lee County.

"We hold the Hall of Fame to really help honor entrepreneurs in our community," said Anne Frazier, president and CEO of Junior Achievement of Southwest Florida.

It's also an opportunity for between 60 and 80 students to attend the event, listen to laureates' speeches and network with business leaders.

Yet for Rogers, now a senior at Cypress Lake High School, it was the CEO Academy that impacted him. This weeklong summer camp, co-presented with the Lutgert College of Business at FGCU, teaches students the basics of starting and operating a successful business.

It helped inspire Rogers to attend the FGCU business college this fall. Originally, he wanted to go to the University of South Florida.

And Frazier said inspiring students is part of Junior Achievement's mission.

"When we do that for young people," she said, "we create a better employee, a better future employer, someone who can help give back and strengthen our local economy."

## J.A. history

Junior Achievement of Southwest Florida was officially incorporated in June 1994, but its founders began inspiring students in 1975 under a different Junior Achievement chapter. Each year, it influences students through programs such as CEO Academy, K-12 classes and job shadowing experiences.

One of its signature events is the Business Hall of Fame, which is in the spring for Lee County and the fall for Collier County.

On Thursday, Norman Love and Mark Loren will be inducted into the Business Hall of Fame for Lee County during a dinner banquet at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort & Spa.

"Both these gentlemen truly are champions for our community," Frazier said. The Business Hall of Fame for Lee County will have inducted 30 laureates after Thursday, and the Business Hall of Fame for Collier County has inducted 62 laureates.

Frazier said laureates are chosen based on characteristics such as their entrepreneurial spirit, longstanding and contemporary accomplishments, business success, high moral and ethical principles, and ability to be a role model for the Junior Achievement students.

And last year, Jared Frantz was one of the student emcees during the Business Hall of Fame for Lee County banquet. He said it was great to speak in front of the community's business leaders.

"That was one of the best things I could have ever done," he said.

Frantz, now a freshman majoring in entrepreneurship at Lynn University in Boca Raton, attended CEO Academy two summers ago. Frantz said he'd always wondered what a CEO actually does and how his schooling would apply in the real world. CEO Academy helped answer those questions.

It also taught him the value of being himself. It's important, he said, to take what he's learned and apply it in a way that best suits his personality and outlook on life.

And Frantz said he's always wanted to be an entrepreneur. "I see the money part of business as a byproduct to actually helping people," he said.

### **Student speaker**

Komola Razzakberdieva, a senior at Coronado High School, will be speaking at this year's Business Hall of Fame for Lee County.

Razzakberdieva said she will talk about the Junior Achievement classes she attended at Coronado High School and the impact these had on her. She learned about spending money wisely, banking and starting a business.

And through these classes, her career path has broadened. She still wants to become a pediatrician, but Razzakberdieva said she's also interested in banking or some other type of business career. Maybe she'll become a pediatrician first and pursue a second career later in life.

"I had no interest in it (business)," she said, "but that class actually made me realize that it is interesting and I am interested in it." She is planning to start her higher education at Edison State College.

Sara Campbell, a senior at Coronado High School, will also be speaking at the Business Hall of Fame. She attended the Junior Achievement classes at Coronado.

Her goal is to one day open her own fishery. She had always wanted a career with animals, and Junior Achievement helped make that desire more specific. It also persuaded her to apply to FGCU instead of going to USF or the University of Tampa. She submitted a late application to FGCU, because she previously hadn't considered applying there, and hopes to be accepted to start this fall.

Overall, Campbell said Junior Achievement gave her a better understanding of how to achieve her goals.

"I knew what I wanted to do, but I didn't know how to get there," she said.

### **The mission**

Junior Achievement of Southwest Florida focuses on three main pillars: work readiness, financial literacy and entrepreneurship. It also teaches ethics and character, economics, business and citizenship.

Frazier said the programs empower students to make a connection between their schooling and the real world – and a large part of its success comes from the corporate and community volunteers who go into K-12 classrooms to work with the students.

"The volunteers bring with them their real-world experience," Frazier said.

And for Daniel Fortner, a senior at Coronado High School, he said the business professionals at CEO Academy gave him a lot of insight into how business works.

He attended the camp two summers ago and said it involved a lot of group work and critical thinking. He was put into a team and challenged to create a unique business concept and comprehensive business plan. His team thought up an automatic ketchup dispenser for fast-food restaurants and won that year's competition. Each student was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship, and Fortner is going to Edison State College.

His biggest takeaway, Fortner said, was a passion for business. Before participating in Junior Achievement classes and attending CEO Academy, Fortner wanted to be a linguist. Now, he wants a career in business.

"It opened up a whole new page for me," he said. "I learned a lifetime worth of knowledge."

### **If you go**

- **What:** Junior Achievement of Southwest Florida Business Hall of Fame for Lee County
- **When:** Thursday, with the reception beginning at 5 p.m. and the dinner/program at 6:30 p.m.
- **Where:** Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort & Spa
- **Cost:** Ranges from \$250 to \$7,500 depending on the number of people and level of sponsorship
- **Student sponsorship:** Sponsor a student to attend the event for \$125
- **Contact:** 225-2590

### **Norman Love**

Norman Love is the chef, president and founder of Norman Love Confections. On Thursday, he will be inducted into the Junior Achievement of Southwest Florida Business Hall of Fame for Lee County.

He founded Norman Love Confections in 2001 and now has two Norman Love Confections locations and one Artisan Gelato by Norman Love location. He is working to open another Norman Love Confections at Miramar Outlets and hopes to expand to Sarasota and Florida's east coast.

Love's community involvement is extensive and includes the local chapters of Make-A-Wish Foundation and Ronald McDonald House Charities. He's also passionate about the Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida.

He said the Business Hall of Fame banquet is an opportunity to hopefully make an impression on young entrepreneurs. And looking at the past laureates, Love said he's humbled and honored to be inducted.

"To be included in their company and get recognized for something I'm so passionate about," he said. "Really is a humbling honor."

#### **Mark Loren**

Mark Loren is the founder and owner of Mark Loren Designs. On Thursday, he will be inducted into the Junior Achievement of Southwest Florida Business Hall of Fame for Lee County.

He opened Mark Loren Designs in 1985. He has two locations and, moving forward, will possibly open new locations and may start consulting with other jewelry stores.

His vast community involvement includes the Bobby Nichols-Fiddlesticks Pro-Am Invitational Golf Classic, Southwest Florida Wine & Food Fest and the Children's Advocacy Center of Southwest Florida. He is also involved with the Law and Order Ball, which is a first-time event that the Rotary Club of Fort Myers South will host this October. The ball will honor Lee County law enforcement.

Loren was surprised when he learned of his induction to the Business Hall of Fame. He considers the past laureates to be his mentors and never saw himself on their level as he's still learning and growing.

"That's why it came as such a humble pleasure and surprise," he said.