

## Robert Deskin, JA Volunteer



Bob graduated university with a degree in chemistry, following university he got a job in a paint coating development lab. After two years, he decided that this line of work was not what he wanted to do for the rest of his life. Bob went back to school and decided to take a computer programming course. He then worked for a number of companies as a programmer and analyst, and then joined Cognos to work in their products group as a customer support specialist; he also did quality control, documentation, education, and feature design.

Eventually, Bob became a product manager. Bob took his much deserved retirement from IBM in 2013. Following his retirement a California-based company acquired the product that Bob used to manage, they asked him to share his expertise so he is currently consulting part time.

For over 10 years, Bob has been an amazing and reliable Junior Achievement volunteer. Bob has delivered countless *Business Basics* (grade 5) and *Economics for Success* (grade 8) programs in our Ottawa school community. In addition, Bob has proved to be an exceptional mentor to new JA volunteers.

Bob has many memories and anecdotes from delivering JA programs in classrooms. Here is a funny memory that Bob recalls from the personal budgeting exercise in the *Economics for Success* program: “I had two girls who were best buds and had an expensive life style. When they got their pay cheque and saw how much in debt they would be, one looked up at me and asked, in all seriousness, “Are we

going to jail?” Trying not to laugh too hard, I explained that we don’t put debtors in prison any more, but that debts do have to be paid over time”.

Bob also cherishes his memories of making an impact on students learning. Bob recalls:”... when I hear from a parent that their child came home excited about what they did, I know I made a difference with that child. When I see the difference in how a student pays attention from the morning where it’s so so, to the afternoon where it’s focused, I know I’ve reached that student.” Bob continues, “I’ve had lots of thanks from students and teachers, but one of the nicest things said to me was when one grade 5 student asked if I was coming back the next day to do more.”

When we asked Bob what he has learned from volunteering this humble and generous volunteer shared his thoughts: “I’ve learned a lot about children that will help me with my grandchildren. How curious they can be, how insightful they can be, how innocent they can be, and how funny they can be. I have a lot more respect for teachers, I had respect before but I am amazed by their patience and fortitude. I was surprised at how grateful people are when you volunteer. That volunteering is relatively rare which makes it all the more important.” Bob’s final thoughts on volunteering with Junior Achievement echo the same thoughts of all of our fantastic ONFE volunteers: “This type of volunteering is quite literally paying it forward. I, we, have the chance to influence the next generation. It’s a wonderful opportunity and a great responsibility” Says Bob.

Bob has a very full life and is interested in so many things that he can’t imagine ever being bored, he loves playing with his two grandchildren and watching them grow. Bob plans on volunteering with ONFE for many more years and is grateful to have the opportunity, in some small way, to make a difference.

*JA programs inspire youth to make better financial decisions, start up a business and create a career plan. For more information about volunteering with JA, please visit our website [www.jaottawa.ca](http://www.jaottawa.ca)*

Written by Rebecca Kaell, Program Manager - JA Ottawa