

**Phil McLendon**  
**JMG Career Specialist**  
**Frenchtown High School**  
**17620 Frenchtown Frontage Road**  
**Frenchtown, Montana 59834**  
**(406) 626-2773 – Classroom**  
**(406) 241-3605 – Cell**

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for allowing me this opportunity to stand before you today and talk about the Jobs for Montana's Graduates program. My name is Phil McLendon and I am the Career Specialist of the Frenchtown High School JMG Chapter. I am a graduate of the University of Montana in 2009 and am currently in my fourth year of teaching JMG.

The administration at Frenchtown felt that JMG was a necessary program to implement because of the positive impact it makes in young adults lives and the tools that it provides them with to finish high school with a determination, motivation and set of skills they need to complete high school and become productive citizens. The principal of Frenchtown High School, Dr. Rory Weishaar when asked, what is the strongest factor in considering the need for JMG at Frenchtown high school replied, "To make sure we do our best to help the students who are unsure about their futures. This can focus them toward future goals and help them stay in school in case any of them are at-risk students (and do not qualify for other services)."

Currently there are 30 students enrolled in Frenchtown JMG, with a total of 98 students participating in the program since bringing in on in 2008-2009.

Students of Jobs for Montana's Graduates benefit in so many ways. Student's raising their expectations of themselves, investigating and selecting realistic career goals, learning and teaching leadership and teamwork skills, and acquiring workplace values and employability skills. They also participate in a series of professional development and competitive events at two conferences a year, Fall Leadership Conference and the Career Development Conference where they compete with other students throughout the state, which leads to positive and professional relationships to be established, skills to be developed that they can carry with them after high school and gives them a sense of accomplishment that they would otherwise not be able to experience. For the past three years, JMG has given an award to the school that best displays courteous skills, best leadership traits and most professional dressed better known as The Most Professional School Award. I am proud to say that my students at Frenchtown High School have applied themselves and worked diligently in winning the award three years running and it has made a significant difference in their lives and an experience that in no doubt was and always will be a benefit.

Two years ago I had the incredible privilege to attend the Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) National Training Seminar (NTS) in New Orleans, Louisiana. That experience of attending workshops, meeting other specialists from around the country and taking notes of what works for them in their programs provided me with a great deal of encouragement and information that I couldn't wait to get back and start applying with my students. The NTS was exactly what I needed as a young and developing teacher to help provide me with a sense of confidence and knowledge that has paid off.

Funding is essential to the success of JMG and it would be a disservice and harmful effect on the youth served if JMG was no longer available in school across Montana. The data that is collected on the students when they first come into the program along with the barriers that they face is significantly different from when they graduate high school in that these same students have overcome barriers, gained confidence and believe in themselves and the impact that they can make on society.

At Frenchtown High School word is getting around about JMG and what a fun and engaging class it is. Every year our numbers have gone up and will continue to rise as long as we keep JMG a priority in our school. We have been discussing possibly starting a JMG program in the middle school just so that we can start serving students even younger and get the thoughts and skills that JMG instills going before they get into high school.

When asking our administration staff what impact JMG has had on our school, they said, "We want to continue to connect with these students so they know we understand them and are doing our best to help them. This includes making sure they know how to help themselves and become self-advocates after they are done with high school. We want to continue the program and we hope it keeps growing so we don't leave any student "out there" disconnected to our school. JMG fits into our Connected Schools ideal for school improvement and we want to continue to have the highest graduation rate of all public Class A schools in the state.

JMG has had a major impact on my life and is exactly the program I needed when I was younger. I speak a lot of the generation known as the "greatest generation," a term coined by journalist Tom Brokaw to describe the generation who grew up in the United States during the deprivation of the Great Depression, and then went on to fight in World War II, as well as those whose productivity within the war's home front made a decisive material contribution to the war effort. He argued that these men and women fought not for fame and recognition, but because it was the right thing to do. It is my hope and prayer that I will be affiliated with JMG for many years to come and that we can understand and see the significant impact that it has within our schools, communities, but most importantly the students we serve and that it is a priority to keep it in our schools, simply because it's the right thing to do.

Thank you for your time.