

Founder

Henry Giessenbier founded the Jaycees in 1920, with 3,000 members, in St. Louis, Missouri. It was Henry's vision to provide young people with opportunities which they had little or no access to otherwise attain. He believed that young people could change the world. He was right. In his era, most young men were out of school and working by the age of 15. Their first jobs were most likely the jobs they held throughout their lives.



Henry Giessenbier Founder of the U.S. Junior Chamber.

With luck and hard work, some might reach executive positions by their forties. Giessenbier felt that young men were not receiving the opportunities necessary to develop their skills at a younger age, thus depriving our nation of an important resource, and so he formed the founding ideals of the U.S. Junior Chamber.

His theory was simple – to offer leadership opportunities to young people, giving them hands-on experience through serving the community. That concept has never wavered.

Our Proud History

1920s

1920: The United States Junior Chamber of Commerce (USJCC) was formed in St. Louis, Missouri, with 3,000 members.

1923: Get Out The Vote was the first Jaycee program to receive national endorsement.

1925: Beginning of national projects; Know America First and Fire Prevention. Birth of EXPANSION, the first USJC national magazine.

1926: Development of aviation adopted as a national project.

1927: Jaycee Charles A. Lindbergh made the first solo flight between New York and Paris. Jaycees worked with Lindbergh to develop the U.S. Air Mail Service.

1930s

1931: Distinguished Service Awards program established at the chapter level.

1935: Death of founder Henry Giessenbier.

1936: National Wildlife Federation established with guidance of USJC.

1937: Programs begun at state and national level to inform public of need for diagnosis and treatment of venereal disease.

1938: Future Magazine established. USJC name Ten Outstanding Young Men for the first time.

1939: Safety with Light campaign gained national attention as thousands of street lights were donated to communities by Jaycees.

1940s

1940: USJC endorsed the principle of a military draft.

1944: Junior Chamber International (JCI) formed at Pan American Congress in Mexico City.

1946: USJC established permanent headquarters in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Junior Golf program began.

1947: Official approval of Jaycee as a synonym of the organization. Adoption of the Jaycee Creed.

1950s

1951: War Memorial Headquarters in Tulsa dedicated. At urging of Andy Mungenast, the reference to Faith in God was added to the Jaycee Creed.

1953: Jaycees sponsored stops on Professional Golfers Association tour for first time at Greensboro, North Carolina, and Hartford, Connecticut.

1954: First Outstanding Young Farmer and Junior Tennis programs held.

1959: Jaycees supported statehood for Alaska. Hawaii gained statehood the following year due to Jaycee efforts.

1960s

1961: First Governmental Affairs Leadership Seminar conducted.

1962: Jaycees urge adoption of Uniform Vehicle Code, with emphasis on state action resulting in adoption nationally.

1963: Clean Water Program launched to improve water quality in communities across America. Gun Safety/Shooting Education adopted as a national program.

1964: Project Concern adopted as International Relations activity. Program raised money and equipment for clinics providing medical care to Chinese refugees in Hong Kong.

1965: Jaycees presented first annual National Award of Distinction from National Clean Up-Paint Up-Fix Up Bureau.

1966: Name of organization officially changed to U.S. Jaycees.

1970s

1970: Do Something campaign sparked national interest in volunteerism. Jaycees cooperation with other service organizations resulted in the founding of the National Center for Voluntary Action.

1971: More than 3,000,000 volunteer hours were provided by Jaycees to help administer seven million doses of rubella measles vaccine.

1972: Jaycees undertook model Operation Identification program to combat burglaries and aid crime prevention efforts. Five million stickers were distributed nationally through Operation Red Ball to reduce fire fatalities. Bylaw change admitted 18 -year - olds as regular members.

1973: The United States Jaycees Center for Improved Child Nutrition opened in Bloomington, Minnesota.

1977: Operation Threshold, a program dedicated to reducing alcohol abuse, reached more than 23 million Americans. Muscular Dystrophy Fundraising adopted as national program.

1980s

1980: Daisy/U.S. Jaycees Gun Safety/Shooting Education program honored with National Safety Council Award for Youth Activities.

1982: Healthy American Fitness Leaders adopted as national program.

1984: Bylaw change admitted women as full and regular members. Sign Up America campaign collected 1.5 million signatures supporting American Olympic athletes.

1985: The U.S. Jaycees endorsed the Campaign for Liberty to encourage public support for restoration of the Statue of Liberty. St. Jude Fundraising adopted as national program.

1986: First woman honored by Congress of Ten Outstanding Young Americans.

1987: Bylaw change established membership age as 21 through 39.

1990s

1990: Name of organization officially changed back to The U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce.

1992: National Wake Up America program urged communities to get involved in politics by coordinating voter registration campaigns, hosting debates, and embracing pertinent community issues. Jaycees responded to devastating hurricanes in the southeast with national support.

1993: GreenWorks! environmental education and community action program adopted by USJC. Jaycees Against Youth Smoking (JAYS) adopted as national program. Junior Chamber members were instrumental in bringing relief to the flood-stricken Midwest.

1994: Junior Chamber Mission Inn Foundation created to build a nationwide network of care facilities for children and adolescents affected by HIV/AIDS.

1995: The Jaycee Alliance was formed as a non-partisan, educational, grassroots governmental advocacy organization to give young Americans a voice in government. The Jaycee KidCare I.D. Program was organized to provide identification to aid in the recovery of missing children.

1996: The Jaycees Wake Up America Tour bus began a journey through the 48 contiguous states promoting programs and membership. Social Security Reform Town Hall Meetings program initiated.

1997: Junior Chamber Center for Entrepreneurship and Career Advancement begun a program designed to train young entrepreneurs and improve local economies.

1998: Junior Chamber Center for Entrepreneurship and Career Advancement name changed to Junior Chamber Center for Business Advancement. Two new programs; National Business Network and Virtual Networking, added to encourage Junior Chamber members to business network via the internet both nationally and internationally.

1999: JAYS program reintroduced as an educational program that informs children about the dangers of smoking. Value Investing and Career Advancement added to the Junior Chamber Center for Business Advancement.

2000s

2000: First female elected National President. Junior Chamber Center for Business Advancement develops web-based video seminar training.

2001: Name changes to The United States Junior Chamber.

2004: Bylaw change established membership age as 18 through 40.

For more insight on how the Junior Chamber has affected the lives of its members, the following book is recommended: *A Legacy of Leadership*, by John W. Clark, USJC Historian.