

# STUDENT NEWS BLOG

DIGITAL LITERACY - 21st CENTURY TOOLS FOR STUDENTS

Prepared for...



## STUDENTS TODAY

Teens and pre-teens live in a 21st century digital world. They receive and absorb most of their news content via online sources like blogs and social media websites.



## BE RELEVANT

Stage of Life LLC has built a customized, educational blogging platform for Junior Achievement to help bridge the gap between traditional media formats (newspapers or newsletters) and new-media channels (blogs).

## Did you Know?

--Over **391 million** people view more than **3.8 billion blog pages** each month from just ONE of the top four popular blogger platforms: WordPress, Blogger, Tumblr, etc..

--The **HuffingtonPost.com news blog** is one of the Top 10 most popular websites in the United States with over **10 MM unique visitors per DAY** and 46 MM page views\*.

--The news blog site, DrudgeReport.com news blog sees 2.8 MM people per DAY\*.

--Newsweek, the print magazine, **moved to an online-only news site.**

--Teens spend more time online and using social media than watching TV.

\*Quantcast rankings

## The PLAYERS...

1



**STAGE OF LIFE LLC**

BLOG PLATFORM PROVIDER

2



**JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT BIZTOWN**

THE EDUCATIONAL PARTNER AND STUDENT USER BASE

3



**AFFINIGENT**

STAGE OF LIFE'S TECHNOLOGY PARTNER AND BLOG ENGINE DESIGNERS

# BIZNET NEWS

## ANATOMY OF A SCHOOL BIZTOWN NEWS BLOG



SCHOOL LOGO

NEWS BLOG HEADLINE  
STORY TEASER COPY

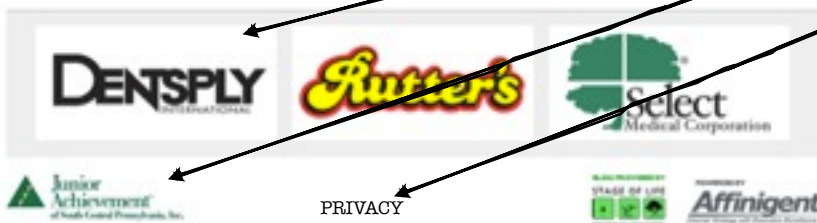
SHOUT OUTS

BIZTOWN BUSINESS ADS

REAL-LIFE CORPORATE  
BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

JA LOGO

PRIVACY CLAUSE

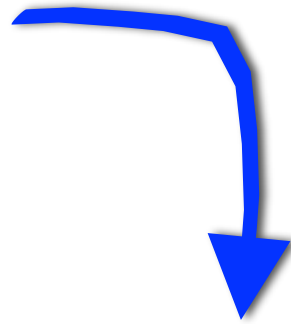


PRIVACY

**PRIVACY**  
STUDENT PRIVACY IS IMPORTANT  
(AND IT'S OUR LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY  
TO PROTECT THE IDENTIFY OF  
MINORS).  
THE STAGE OF LIFE BLOG PLATFORM  
HAS ADDRESSED PRIVACY CONCERNS

# ARTICLES: Screen Shots of the BizNet News Platform

Add Content Form

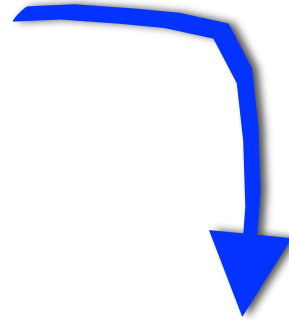


Blog Article Interior Page



# SHOUT-OUTS: Screen Shots of the BizNet News Platform

Shout-Outs Management Page



Shout-Outs Interior Page





## Education



**Why Students  
and Teachers  
Adopted  
StageofLife.com**

...

Over 5.5 million words have been uploaded to StageofLife.com, and most of those are coming from real life stories being shared by teens and college students.

Early on, we found young people gravitating to StageofLife.com to blog, as we had built an open, welcoming and free user platform that encourages teens to write outside of the classroom in their own voice.

In addition to now hosting the #1 organically ranked Google writing contest for high students, we work with educators (namely high school and college English teachers/professors) to get their students inspired to make a difference in this world through blogging.

Our national writing contest posters hang in over 500 high school classrooms throughout the U.S. and in the hallways of dozens of colleges.



### Our Educational Resources...

- Classroom Blogging Exercises
- National Writing Contests
- Monthly Writing Prompts
- Mentor Texts and Lesson Plans
- Goal Setting
- Inspirational Teen Trends
- Digital Literacy
- Educational Blogging Platforms
- Teacher Coupons
- Classroom Posters
- and more...

CEO and Founder, Eric Thiigs, has been a featured guest speaker at education conferences such as Tech.It.U and the PA Council for Teachers of English to discuss trends and opportunities on teen blogging.

## OUR TEEN BLOGGING GETS PRESS



Mint.com's [Education Blog](#) features essays from **Stage of Life** teen writers as a way to personalize financial literacy.



[SocialTimes.com](#) ran a feature story about **Stage of Life's** digital literacy efforts to introduce blogging to high school and college students.



TIME.com money writer, Brad Tuttle, talked about **Stage of Life** and shared one of our teen writer's essays on TIME's blog.

and more...

# “BizNet News” - Bringing 21st Century Digital Literacy to BizTown



YORK, PA – Junior Achievement (JA) of South Central PA, StageofLife.com, and Affinigent, Inc. joined forces to launch “BizNet News” - a student run news blog to replace the paper format previously used by schools when participating in JA BizTown, the experimental educational program that enables students to learn economic concepts in an interactive, hands-on environment.

StageofLife.com, an educational blogging community, approached its local chapter of the financial literacy, work readiness, and entrepreneurship non-profit, Junior Achievement, with an idea to build a customized news blog platform for JA to utilize in its BizTown sessions to help bridge the gap between traditional media formats (newspapers or newsletters) and new-media channels (blogs and social media).

Eric Thiels, CEO of StageofLife.com, said, “With newspapers and other forms of traditional print media in flux, more people are getting their news online from blogs. Consider that the HuffingtonPost.com (a blog) is one of the top 10 most visited websites in the United States with over 61 million unique visitors per month - that's more than the NY Times and CNN.com combined. Couple traffic statistics like this with the fact that pre-teens and teens spend more time online using social media than watching TV and it becomes crucial that students in today's digital world be prepared to utilize, read, access, and understand the world of blogging and blog news-environments. They will become the next users of that media format.”

Junior Achievement Director and head of the BizTown experience, Heidi Potter, was intrigued by the idea and started working with StageofLife.com on the custom news blog concept over the course of six months, eventually naming their platform, *BizNet News*.

“We had limitations with our old newsletter software, and we were ready for a big change. We wanted to take our BizTown 'newspaper' and turn it into something interactive, modern, and digital. It was definitely time for a technical upgrade and talking with StageofLife.com and the news blog concept turned out to be a perfect fit for us,” said Potter.

For implementation and design, StageofLife.com pulled in web development partner, Affinigent Inc. of York, PA, to customize the BizNet News blog environment with features that include...

- News story posts using a blog-format with unlimited word count and photo posts within the story
- Streamlined BizTown business ad listings that take the shape of more internet-friendly advertising concepts
- “Shout-Outs” that combine aspects of social media with business ad listings
- Junior Achievement corporate sponsorship placements
- Pre-work upload options for teachers or JA Staff
- Customized news blog for each individual BizTown school session
- “Comments” field that allows for students, parents and educators to continue interacting with the BizTown experience through the Biz Net News portal after the actual BizTown session is complete
- Real-world practice of students using a web-based news blog interface to write, upload and publish stories and articles

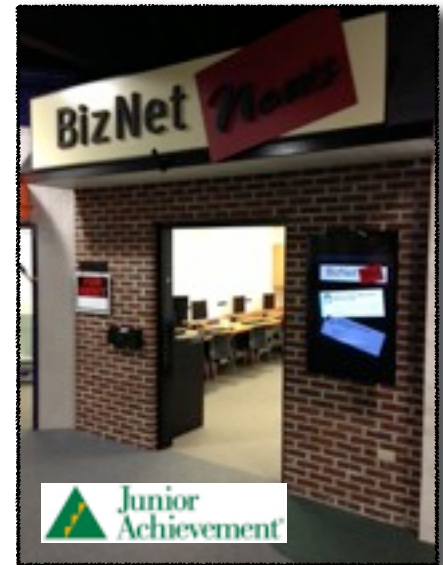
After the platform was built, Affinigent, Inc. CEO, Don Bishop, shared, “We focused on two goals during our design. 1) We wanted to make it easy for the students to use and 2) we wanted the blog platform to have the ability to grow.”

Several York County, PA and Lancaster County, PA school districts were first to trial the new blog platform during its launch this fall. In one case, after its BizTown experience was over and the students returned home, the BizNet News site for that school saw over 60 post-visit comments to the stories and articles uploaded by the student staff from their peers, teachers and parents re-visiting the news blog in the days following their actual JA BizTown session.

“This is exactly what we wanted to see happen – their experience didn't end with the close of the BizTown doors that day...the students and teachers came back to us, digitally, for more.” said Tom Russell, President of the Junior Achievement of South Central PA. He continued by summarizing the collaborative partnership, “We couldn't have found better partners in StageofLife.com and Affinigent, Inc. to execute and launch this amazing new digital literacy experience for the schools and 7,000+ students that utilize our JA BizTown each year!”

For more on this story, reactions from teachers, or other information relating to any of the organizations mentioned, please contact...

Junior Achievement of South Central PA  
Non-profit organization that brings the real world to students through hands-on curriculum  
Heidi Potter, Director of JA BizTown or Tom Russell, President  
[heidi@jascpa.org](mailto:heidi@jascpa.org) or [tom@jascpa.org](mailto:tom@jascpa.org)  
610 South George Street - York, PA 17401  
(717) 843-8028



*New BizNet News blog headquarters at JA BizTown for South Central Pennsylvania*