



## Sea the World: How Two Industry Professionals are Building the Future of the Maritime Industry



By Kevin Maher

Flashing lights, delectable bites, premier drinks, and more than 900 people surrounded Christine Battles and Megan Lagasse when they walked into JA World Uncorked in January 2018. The two attended on a whim, enjoying the food and wine extravaganza at JA World Huizenga Center until they both questioned the festival's purpose. That's when they learned more about the Junior Achievement of South Florida (JASF) located in Coconut Creek, Florida, an organization that empowers youth with knowledge, ability, and confidence to navigate their future. The purpose moved Battles and Lagasse, but they believed something was missing in JASF's

coverage — the maritime industry.

"Megan and I talked about this, and we said, 'How is it possible that the yachting capital of the world is here in South Florida and there isn't a presence here,'" Battles said.

JASF helps more than 20,000 eighth grade students from Broward County and south Palm Beach Counties learn how financial decisions will impact their lives at the Patten Family Finance Park, a sprawling education center that students visit annually. The center consists of mini storefronts, like a mayor hall where students learn how to vote, a Publix, and a TV station. After discussions with JASF's senior development directors, Battles and Lagasse learned there was a storefront opening within Finance Park. However, the cost was \$40,000 a year and required a three-year commitment. Unphased, Battles and Lagasse got to work.

"Megan and I got in touch with Lisa Morley, with Maritime Professional Training, and Lucy Reed, with

*The Triton*, and we raised \$137,000 in six weeks," Battles said.

Spearheaded by Creator and Co-founder Battles and Co-founder Lagasse, the team got 24 partners to make financial commitments. With Battles' experience as chief administrative officer of Advanced Mechanical Enterprises (AME) and Lagasse's as marine director for Pier Sixty-Six, "Sea the World" was born in May 2019.

**"The kids only know what they know, and the more exposure we can give kids to different jobs on the water, the better," Lagasse said. "We need new people in our industry, and this is how you start."**

Sea the World's marine industry storefront started as nine walls and think tanks that covered different careers in the maritime industry and has evolved to follow new education techniques. Now, the space includes a 3D life-size container ship display, augmented reality, iPads for online scavenger hunts, and other facilities that educate students on eight

career paths in the maritime industry, with a hope of instilling a passion for maritime in them.

“We definitely have an issue with age gaps when it comes to service, and we need to do better at filling that gap,” Lagasse said. “With this new group of people coming into the industry, we have an opportunity.”

“The way we fill the pipeline is by getting more students to understand that this is a direction they can go when they get out of high school, and that there’s so many jobs that you don’t have to go to college for,” Battles said.

As Sea the World has grown since 2019, so have the programs available for students through JASF. High school seniors who aren’t interested in college can commit six months of their senior year to the JA Pre-Apprenticeship Program. The program is a work-based learning experience where seniors learn soft skills, gain industry certifications,



  
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and explore careers through worksite tours. Students learn about construction, telecommunications, water treatment utilities, and the maritime industry.

“Throughout the six-month pre-apprenticeship program, students get to go on tours to places like Pier Sixty-Six, Port Everglades, to AME and to DeAngelo Marine Exhaust,” Battles said. “They’re seeing all those things three months before they graduate high school, and then they choose a career path where their information is more detailed.”

Students who go down the maritime path gain certifications like a maritime 10-hour OSHA, first aid, and forklift driving, along with soft skills like how to build a resume, have a successful interview, and create a LinkedIn profile. The program has grown from 25 students in 2021–22 to 258 students in 2024–25, with success stories like Armani Hosang. Hosang now works for AME after going through JASF’s Pre-Apprenticeship Program and the Marine Industries Association of South Florida’s apprenticeship program.

“Armani was graduating high school and didn’t want to go to college, so we interviewed him,” Battles said. “He was

young and green, and didn’t have any bad habits. We were able to teach him the right way from the beginning, and he’s been with us for almost two years now.”

With Sea the World and JASF’s Pre-Apprenticeship Program successfully funneling young, talented professionals into the maritime industry, Lagasse says she’s seen more successful changes in the dialogue surrounding a career path outside of college too.

“An overall success story is changing the dialogue, telling kids it’s ok not to go to college and you can be successful in whatever path you choose,” Lagasse said. “It’s important to make sure kids are successful and feel confident, and this gives them that boost that I think everyone needs.”

As Battles and Lagasse continue to work towards educating the youth on maritime opportunities available, they need help. Companies can contact them to become donors or volunteer at JASF, industry professionals can volunteer at JASF and help change student’s futures, and anyone can share their story to help them continue to grow. <

