



## NEWS RELEASE

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## Butler County Teens Fighting Hunger Win International Competition

### *JEE Foods Traveled from Ross Township to South Africa for 2018 SAGE World Cup*

Ross Township, Ohio (Aug. 20, 2018) – JEE Foods, a student-run nonprofit developed in the Butler Tech Information Technology program at Ross High School, has earned international honors for its work to fight hunger and poverty. Four of its student business leaders recently traveled to South Africa where they won the 2018 SAGE World Cup for social enterprise business and \$2,000 in prize money. SAGE, Students for the Advancement of Global Entrepreneurship, is a nonprofit operating in 22 countries that gives students a voice in addressing global challenges and raising standards of living.

JEE Foods was created to address United Nations Sustainable Development Goals of No Poverty and Zero Hunger. The student leaders have partnered with local restaurants and companies to collect food that is nearing its expiration date and preserve it using dehydration and flash-freezing techniques. Working out of a kitchen in the Ross Local Schools' administration building, student volunteers redistribute the food in several forms, including meals ready-to-eat (MREs).

Michael Rivera, a Ross High School senior and CEO of JEE Foods, has prior experience on the world stage. He was a co-presenter of JEE Foods at United Nations Headquarters in February 2018. "It was really heartwarming to know the international community could put differences aside and come together for a greater purpose," Rivera said of the SAGE World Cup. "We have a responsibility to be global leaders regardless of our age or the situations that we're in."

For Olivia Colyer, a Ross High School graduate setting out to study international business at The Ohio State University, this was her first trip out of the United States. She said the interaction with teenagers from other countries and cultures was a great experience. "The fact that we were all there together, not just competing but to make friends and connections, I see hope," Colyer said. "We see from our point of view, and they may see a

certain way, but I didn't even think about that whenever I interacted with other countries, because they are really just teenagers – people just like me and you.”

Butler Tech has participated in SAGE for 12 years and made it to the World Cup several times, but JEE Foods earned the first international win. Instructor Tom O'Neill says the drive and motivation of these students is strong. “They're soliciting partnerships and going out not afraid to talk to companies to say, ‘Look, can you help? Here's what we're doing,’” O'Neill said. “No fear. No limits.”

“This was our 16th annual SAGE World Cup, and I was thrilled to see the quality of the businesses started and operated by teens,” said Curtis DeBerg, Chief Executive Officer of SAGE Global. “JEE Foods set a new bar for other teens interested in launching social enterprises. To be great, a SAGE SEB (social enterprise business) must prove measurable impact and effective use of community resources. JEE Foods stood out among all the social enterprises here in Durban, South Africa. Their work in addressing hunger and poverty in Ohio is a model for how teens can change the world, one impoverished person at a time.”

Student presenters from JEE Foods who traveled to South Africa include: Michael Rivera, Chief Executive Officer; Olivia Colyer, Human Resources; Levi Grimm, Chief Marketing Officer; and Brett Eads, Chief Financial Officer. For more information about JEE Foods, visit [JEEFoods.com](http://JEEFoods.com).

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### **About Butler Tech**

Butler Tech is one of the largest career technical schools in Ohio. Its passionate educators are on a shared mission of transforming lives to make our students career-ready and college-prepared. Our teachers serve more than 17,000 students daily on Butler Tech's five campuses and in classrooms within our 10 associate school districts. Butler Tech also serves adult students with programs in healthcare, industry, public safety, commercial trucking, drone piloting, high school diploma programs, and English as a Second Language. For more information, visit [ButlerTech.org](http://ButlerTech.org).