

## Jóvenes Adelante Graduates Form Alumni Network

A dream has come true for the Jóvenes Adelante family – the graduate “alumni” became a reality! After several months of planning, twelve former JA students assembled, and with guidance from the JA staff team, formally launched their own Graduate Network. Now, through extending its family ties, JA expands its influence and its resource base, linking scholarship applicants and current scholarship recipients with their more experienced peers.



JA staff designed ice-breakers, music and team-building activities to put everyone at ease and to create bonds across the graduate group, the staff team and the board. Since the graduates had studied at several different universities, most of them had never met. It didn't take long to get the room buzzing as the graduates shared their JA experiences and swapped contact details. “It feels like coming home,” said Rosario Hernandez Morales, who now works as a food scientist with Lactalis Group. “We all started out in the same place, and what we've been through is so similar -- it makes us comfortable with each other, like family.”

Student Programs Coordinator Diana Cadena, a JA graduate herself, shares “Until now, it was like something was missing. When we graduated, our natural link with JA came disconnected pretty quickly; the new students took our place.” Alex Torres, who now owns a laundry business in San Miguel, agrees, adding, “Now, by staying in the family, we can start helping the whole JA mission. It's good that the younger students can see that we made it, which means they can make it too.”

Fernando Contreras, a recent communications technology graduate, has just begun working with

a Queretaro-based company that develops application software for mobile devices. He shared, “I really look forward to more meetings like this one. As we are all working hard to get established in our careers, it will be a bit help to learn from each other and support each other.” Leonti Soria, a 2014 business administration graduate now working at Cipress Produce in San Luis Potosi, echoes, “We can bolster each other, encourage each other, by sharing the experiences we’ve had getting into the workforce.”

This optimistic group of young movers-and-shakers is bursting with ideas about how to engage with JA’s mission, offering to assist with student recruitment and selection, to become mentors, and to help with ever-important fundraising. They hope to create a searchable database where they can alert each other to job opportunities and meet up with graduates living nearby.

JA is thrilled to welcome its graduates back into the fold – we know we will be stronger and more dynamic with their support.