

Meet the Movers and Shakers of BizTown

Children of ONEOK employees recently participated in BizTown, a simulated city in which elementary school students operate banks, manage restaurants, write checks and run for mayor.

It's not every day that President and CEO Pierce Norton gets to meet another CEO of ONEOK.

Fifth-grader Chase Crossman – son of Jessica Crossman, supervisor, asset integrity and engineering in Tulsa, Oklahoma – was the recent CEO of ONEOK in BizTown, a simulated city in which elementary school students operate banks, manage restaurants, write checks and vote for mayor. BizTown is a program of [Junior Achievement of Oklahoma](#), a nonprofit that inspires and prepares young people for success.

“Our commitment to funding BizTown for more than 10 years reflects ONEOK’s dedication to fostering the next generation of leaders,” said Chrissy Jennings, executive director – ONEOK Foundation and community investments in Tulsa. “By investing in programs like this, we help build stronger communities and empower our future leaders to thrive.” [See our video about BizTown on LinkedIn.](#)

“BizTown is a great experience for children to learn about area businesses, how they operate and how they rely on employees in different job roles, as well as other businesses and government offices, to accomplish the activities required to make money,” explained Jessica. “It also teaches children what the businesses that they see in their daily lives do to impact their lives and communities.”

All fifth graders, including Chase, had to apply and interview for the jobs they were interested in early this year.

“Chase was very determined to get the CEO of ONEOK position,” said Jessica. “He found out in February that he got the job. The fifth graders spent time in school over the next couple of months learning about personal finance and preparing for their positions.”

For his new role, Chase insisted on a suit and tie that matched his sneakers. He wore that same suit and tie recently to meet President and CEO Pierce Norton.

“Chase was very excited to meet Pierce,” Jessica said. “Pierce asked Chase what his favorite subjects are and what sports he plays. Chase asked Pierce how he got to where he is, and Pierce told him his story from mowing lawns at a young age, running wiring under houses, working out in the field and how important all that was to understanding how things work and how working hard to be the best you can at the job you are doing at that time leads to other opportunities.”

Over the years, BizTown has seen lots of ONEOK offspring participate in the program. Chase's fellow classmate and friend, Drake Wingfield, fifth-grade son of ONEOK Data and Reporting Specialist Katie Wingfield, ran for mayor of BizTown last fall and was elected.

"Drake learned how to prepare a speech, and he learned about different roles in city government," said Katie. "He conducted a census, and he managed the surveys and nominations for the Citizen of the Day and Quality Business awards.

"In his own words, Drake said, 'I learned how to be responsible for my city,'" Katie shared. "As a parent, I think this is an amazing opportunity for young students in Tulsa and the surrounding areas. BizTown gives students the opportunity to learn basic skills and responsibilities necessary for their job while also teaching them about the uniqueness and importance of everyone's role in the workplace and in their community – as a citizen, a worker and as a consumer."

Chase also wasn't the only CEO with ONEOK ties at BizTown, as Taylor Staniger – fifth-grade son of Steve Staniger, supervisor, asset integrity and engineering – was selected as CEO of BOK Financial.

"All students were able to receive a salary payment to debit card twice during the day," Steve explained. "Throughout the day students had time to work, spend money, invest money and break for lunch. As a business team, each business had a goal to pay off the company debt. It was rewarding to see Taylor have individual success as a bank CEO while sharing in team success to pay off the bank's debt. Additionally, Taylor was tasked to provide a speech in front of his classmates and teachers. He delivered a great speech on the mayor's stage in front of all!"

Steve was a BizTown volunteer the year his oldest son, J.D., was in fifth grade and worked as a BizTown engineer for Sinclair Oil. Meanwhile, Steve worked at the Chick-fil-A lunch space for students.

"I learned there was a lot of preparation for the students leading up to their BizTown experience," Steve said. "They applied for positions, balanced a checkbook and had built-up excitement for the day. The kids each had a job function that they fully embraced. Each job had a purpose, and the kids were excited to learn their tasks and execute them throughout the day. It was a fun learning experience that gave a taste of reality for their future selves!"

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PHOTOS



