



Press Release

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Chapel Hill Middle Schooler's Award-Winning Financial Plan Wows Wall Street, Sweeps SIFMA Foundation's National InvestWrite® Competition

Connor Markwell's long-term investment plan catapults him to first in the nation

Raleigh, NC, August 14, 2020 – Connor Markwell just made history. The diligent eighth grader defied the challenges of distance learning and cinched an exhilarating springtime win in the SIFMA Foundation's 2020 InvestWrite competition. Markwell researched and composed an impressive investment plan promising a bright financial future and now he's being recognized nationally. In his essay, Markwell tapped research tools that financial professionals use to make good decisions for their clients and created a high-performance portfolio that climbed to first place in the nation.

From P/E ratios and Betas to fixed income and growth stocks, Markwell's broad knowledge of investing enabled this impressive eighth grader from Smith Middle School in Chapel Hill, NC to climb to the top of the competition in the middle school division and beat out thousands of students competing nationwide.

InvestWrite is a national essay competition that bridges classroom learning in math, social studies, and language arts with the practical research and knowledge required for saving, investing and long-term planning. The competition serves as a culminating activity for participants in the SIFMA Foundation's Stock Market Game™ program. Essays are judged by thousands of financial professionals who volunteer their time each year to ensure young people are exposed to the essentials of personal finance early in life.

"SIFMA Foundation levels the playing field for youth of all backgrounds to compete and succeed in the global marketplace," said Melanie Mortimer, President of the SIFMA Foundation. "We equip educators and families with our award-winning programs, now fully enabled as distance learning solutions, so millions of students like Connor can easily and effectively prepare for financial independence, economic mobility and the workforce."

The Stock Market Game and InvestWrite are offered in North Carolina through the North Carolina Council on Economic Education (NCCEE) and the Triangle Challenge of the programs are supported by the Coastal Credit Union Foundation. "We honor and congratulate our InvestWrite winning student and teacher," said Sandy Wheat, Executive Director of NCCEE "Helping North Carolina

students better understand our economy, our markets, the role of investors, and how to make good investments will pay dividends for the students, their education, and the North Carolina economy.”

Creighton Blackwell, VP of Corporate Affairs and Community Engagement for Coastal Credit Union and chair of the NCCEE board of directors said, “Coastal Credit Union is committed to supporting financial education initiatives in the Triangle Region of North Carolina. We are especially proud of Connor’s achievement, so much so that the NCCEE is providing Connor with a \$500 scholarship.”

The Stock Market Game and InvestWrite programs provide students like Markwell critical exposure to investing, capital markets and financial readiness. The Stock Market Game™ and InvestWrite help millions of students also strengthen their math, economics and long-term saving and investing know-how, follow financial news and stay apprised of current events. Students develop essential skills including teamwork, communication and leadership as they manage their online portfolios with their peers. They work in groups during The Stock Market Game and then write InvestWrite essays individually to apply what they have learned using critical thinking, analysis and creative writing. Since InvestWrite’s launch in 2004, over 240,000 students have submitted essays.

The Spring 2020 InvestWrite competition required students to write an essay reflecting on how the capital markets help make our country strong by supplying capital to launch businesses, create jobs, develop our communities, and drive our economy. The students were expected to identify stocks, bonds and mutual funds that could be included in a successful long-term portfolio using the knowledge they gained participating in the SIFMA Foundation’s Stock Market Game.

Markwell developed a plan that would have an impact today and 10 years from now. In describing his successful long-term portfolio, he said, “Overall, I was able to determine and invest in a stock, a bond, and a mutual fund that I believe help build our communities and our economy while also allowing me to invest in stocks that are successful now, and are forecasted to be for the next 10 years, while environmentally benefitting America for years to come.”

Winning InvestWrite essays are chosen through rigorous judging by thousands of teachers and industry professionals who evaluate students’ understanding of long-term investing, diversification, the global capital markets, and factors that drive investments as well as their expression of investment ideas in essay form. Winners receive exciting awards and prizes including laptops, classroom pizza parties, trophies, plaques and banners, and certificates.

An independent, double-blind, nationally randomized evaluation conducted by Learning Point Associates (now AIR) found that The Stock Market Game improves students’ academic achievement and personal financial behavior. Students who participated in the SIFMA Foundation’s Stock Market Game scored significantly higher on mathematics and financial literacy tests than their peers who did not participate. They also found that teachers who taught The Stock Market Game reported that the program motivated them to better plan for their own financial futures. The Stock Market Game has been named the only program that successfully increased scores on the Jumpstart Coalition’s test of high school students’ financial literacy.

Connor Markwell and his teacher, Tony Carter, were honored on Friday, August 14, 2020, at 2:00 PM ET during a surprise video presentation. Representatives of the SIFMA Foundation and the North Carolina Council on Economic Education joined to congratulate the winning student and teacher.



Image from Zoom meeting surprising Connor and his family.

Clockwise from top left:

Naomi Richardson, Stock Market Game Coordinator, NCCEE

Melanie Mortimer, Director, SIFMA Foundation

Connor Markwell, Winning student with Family in background

Creighton Blackwell, VP Corporate Affairs and Community Development, Coastal Credit Union

Winning Essay by Connor Markwell

“Have you ever considered the possibility of benefiting your community, while at the same time, generating a profit?”

This is the question I asked my father when he first introduced me to the stock market in the fifth grade. Of course, those weren't my exact words, but more-so a paraphrase of what I actually said. Now, my two shares of Apple stock have grown exceedingly well, which helps me appreciate what my investment has done to financially help me, as my profit continually increases over time. Beforehand, I was vaguely familiar with the stock market, but now after studying it in class as well as experiencing it in The Stock Market Game, I realize what my first purchase of Apple stock really did, which is help build the American economy. I was presented with this essay question by my social studies teacher, and I thought it was a perfect opportunity to give my own opinion and beliefs on how the stock market is creating room for new jobs, as well as affecting our communities, and how by investing long term in companies, I can diversify my portfolio such that my investments now are successfully helping me and others for the next 10 years. So now I am prompted to ask a new question, three years after purchasing my first stock, which is, “Can I select a stock, bond, and mutual fund to invest in that will advance our local community as well as generate job opportunities and boost the American economy, while also helping me save for my own future?”

In order to answer this question, I researched some of the most forward-thinking local companies in North Carolina that consistently generate new job opportunities, and that investing in will help grow the business as well as its workforce. So, after analyzing regional companies, I came to the conclusion to invest in IBM stock as it has three establishments in the Triangle region alone. Also, I believe it is a very forward-thinking company as it has the most US patents generated by a business and is therefore often creating new innovative projects. Its most recent product is the AI, Watson, which is capable of answering questions due to its advanced analytic software and is used to “optimize employees' time to focus on higher value work.” So therefore, I chose to invest in IBM stock since it is creating jobs for our community, is helping to further develop it, and is what I believe to be a good long-term investment as it is constantly creating new technological products.

After investing in IBM, my goal is to look for an ecofriendly mutual fund that consists of stocks and bonds of companies that are creating new products that benefit the environment, such as renewable energy companies. After researching possible mutual funds, I decided on the New Alternatives Fund, which consists of stocks like Acciona SA that generate renewable energy through wind turbines. Overall, the mutual fund is very diverse with around 50 different stocks in total, all of which benefit the environment, with 63.4% of their investments in renewable energy power producers and developers. In addition to this, according to their yearly financial report, the average financial return for one year is 36.68%. Also, due to success in their investments, the class A shareholder's share price for one share went from \$48.48 to \$58.60 in the course of just one year. Also, I believe this company will have a major impact in the upcoming years, with climate change becoming more of an issue and people seeking more environmentally friendly alternatives to old methods of energy production. Therefore, I chose this mutual fund as it is growing outstandingly well, is benefiting the environment, and has potential as the future of energy in America.

Finally, I purchased a bond whose purpose is to economically move America forward, while also reaping a decent profit. In order to fulfill these goals, I decided to purchase a treasury bond as it allows more spending money for Congress which helps eliminate national debt, and also helps stimulate the American economy due to the fact that when you swap out a bond, you are giving cash to the general public. Also, this helps benefit me indirectly since bonds are so closely linked to the American economy, and I can use

them for forecasting of the stock market. I can do this by using the fact that bonds tend to move before stocks do, which allows me to use bonds as a warning system for stock market sell offs.

Overall, I was able to determine and invest in a stock, a bond, and a mutual fund that I believe help build our communities and our economy while also allowing me to invest in stocks that are successful now, and are forecasted to be for the next 10 years, while environmentally benefitting America for years to come.

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About the SIFMA Foundation for Investor Education

The SIFMA Foundation is dedicated to fostering knowledge and understanding of the financial markets for individuals of all backgrounds, with a focus on youth. Drawing on the involvement and expertise of educators and the financial industry, the SIFMA Foundation provides financial education programs and tools that strengthen economic opportunities across communities and increase individuals' access to the benefits of the global marketplace. Notable Foundation programs include The Stock Market Game™, which has enabled more than 19 million students to become financially prepared for life, the InvestWrite® national essay competition, the Capitol Hill Challenge™, and Invest It Forward®. For more information on the work of the SIFMA Foundation, visit, visit www.sifma.org/foundation.

About the North Carolina Council on Economic Education

The North Carolina Council on Economic Education, a nonprofit organization, provides North Carolina K-12 students with the economic knowledge and financial skills needed to thrive in the dynamic economy. By providing quality training and up-to-date resources, the North Carolina Council on Economic Education partners with teachers and school divisions to help students develop decision-making skills needed to be informed consumers, productive employees or innovative entrepreneurs, thoughtful investors, and reasoned voters. For more information, visit www.nccee.org.

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