



FOUNDATION

Press Release

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Young Trailblazer Forges Path to Financial Freedom through Investing

Fifth Grader Clara Duffer Places 1st in Arizona in the SIFMA Foundation's Fall 2023 National InvestWrite® Competition

New York, NY, May 11, 2024 – Echoing the immortal words of Nelson Mandela, “It always seems impossible until it’s done,” Clara Duffer defied the odds by creating a high-powered investment portfolio that could make Wall Street proud. Currently enrolled in 5th grade at Canyon Springs Stem Academy in Anthem, AZ, Clara developed a diversified investment portfolio aimed at securing long-term financial success.

Clara’s investment strategy placed her 1st in the state in the SIFMA Foundation’s Fall 2023 InvestWrite competition. Clara triumphed among thousands of participants nationwide for her astute insights into the dynamics of capital markets in the elementary school division. In recognition of her accomplishment, Clara and her teacher, Christine Rowlan, were honored by the SIFMA Foundation and the Arizona Council on Economic Education during the ACEE’s Awards Ceremony held on May 11.

The SIFMA Foundation’s InvestWrite national essay competition serves as a vital bridge between classroom education in mathematics, social studies, language arts, and the practical application of research and knowledge essential for saving, investing, and long-term financial planning. The competition is a culminating activity for the acclaimed Stock Market Game™, a curriculum-based financial education program challenging students to manage a hypothetical \$100,000 online portfolio of stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and cash. InvestWrite empowers students to apply their hands-on learning in real-world scenarios that teach the fundamentals of investing.

SIFMA Foundation’s programs are proven to enhance participants’ test scores in math and economics, foster financial planning skills, promote teamwork and interpersonal social-emotional learning, and better prepare students for future academic and professional endeavors. With a steadfast commitment to closing opportunity gaps in society, the SIFMA Foundation equips young people from all backgrounds, with a particular focus on underserved youth, with a robust understanding of financial markets.

A number of studies have emphasized the critical need for financial education to navigate today’s complex economic landscape. Investing in financial education yields long-term benefits, both for

individuals and for society as a whole, by fostering economic stability and reducing financial vulnerabilities, according to *Financial Literacy and Financial Education*, a recent study by Tim Kaiser and Annamaria Lusardi. It emphasizes the need for comprehensive and accessible educational programs from an early age. SIFMA Foundation's programs are leading the way in reaching and engaging youth and their teachers and families.

"It brings me immense joy to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Clara and her teacher for a remarkable achievement in InvestWrite," said Melanie Mortimer, President of the SIFMA Foundation. "Clara's essay details a very thoughtful and compelling plan for long-term financial independence. Her achievement signals the value of early financial education in setting youth on a path to positive financial life outcomes."

The Stock Market Game and InvestWrite are offered in Arizona through the Arizona Council on Economic Education. "We honor and congratulate our InvestWrite winning student and teacher," said Elena Zee, President & CEO of the Arizona Council on Economic Education, "Helping Arizona 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 Arizona economy."

The Fall 2023 InvestWrite competition posed the following challenge to 4th-12th graders: 'Which of your Stock Market Game investments performed well or poorly, and why? Using at least one of your Stock Market Game investments, how would you build a diversified portfolio of stocks, bonds, and mutual funds aimed at achieving a personal, family, or community goal by 2033.'

Thousands of volunteer financial professionals from hundreds of financial firms select the winners of InvestWrite each year. Clara captivated this panel of expert judges with a compelling and insightful essay.

Winning Essay

The Crash of the British Biscuits

Being in the Stock Market Game was a positive experience for my team. Our class learned a lot about stocks. It was interesting to think about how one share can affect your whole portfolio. It felt really empowering to be able to spend \$100,000 of fake money. This essay will share what stocks my team did well with and why. It will also share where we didn't do as great, and it will explain how someone could earn \$10,000 over 10 years by investing in the stock market.

Overall, my team's portfolio did not perform well. However, we did have some stocks that stuck out. To start off, Costco did the best and made us a whopping \$1,966.85. This helped our portfolio a lot, considering that without Costco, our team would only have \$22,600.98 left. Another stock that represented well was Coca Cola, which made us a positive amount of \$1659.01. The entertainment industry performed well for our team since Netflix and Spotify combined made us a total of \$2175.87. Unfortunately, these gains did not help us, as our team still lost a huge amount of money.

As stated above, our portfolio did not do as well as we had hoped. This is because 13 total stocks in our portfolio underperformed, which caused our team to lose approximately three-quarters of our initial investment. To start off, Lululemon did the worst and lost us a huge amount of \$4,041.80. This was detrimental for our portfolio, considering that without Lululemon, our team would have \$28,609.63 left.

Another stock that represented badly was Wingstop, which lost us a negative amount of \$3,507.00. The food industry performed poorly for our team since Cracker Barrel and McDonalds combined lost us a total of \$2,825.50. While it was bad that our team lost such a large amount of money, it was a rewarding and educational experience, and helped me determine how I could save money for other goals in life.

Ten years from now, a great goal would be to have \$10,000 to move to LA to pursue my dreams of becoming an actress. I will do this by applying the skills and tips from this activity to my near future. One thing I will apply to my future stock purchases is to do more research before I purchase the stock. This would include past trends and movements, as well as current news about the company to figure out if it will do well in the future. Another thing I will do in the future is limit purchases of underperforming stocks. Many of the stocks that I bought were already underachieving for quite some time. I purchased the stocks thinking that they should bounce back up because their names were very recognizable. By using these skills in the future, my next attempts at the stock market will provide a more positive outcome.

In this essay, I have shown you what stocks did well for our team and why, which stocks did poorly and why, and what I can apply to my future experiences in the stock market. While more of our stocks performed positively, the amounts gained did not make up for the negative effects of the rest of our portfolio. The 16 stocks that performed positively only totaled \$9,172.21. As you can see from the paragraph above, the 13 negatively performing stocks showed great losses. In total, these stocks lost our team \$15,682.32. Overall, this was a very positive experience for me and my team.

About the SIFMA Foundation

The SIFMA Foundation is committed to closing the opportunity gap by fostering greater knowledge of the financial markets for young people of all backgrounds. Drawing on the support and expertise of educators and the financial industry, the Foundation provides financial education to strengthen economic opportunity across communities and increase awareness of the benefits of the global marketplace. Since 1977, the Foundation's flagship program, The Stock Market Game™, has guided more than 22 million students on their path to financial independence by attaining stronger life skills, improving academic achievement, and boosting their social-emotional learning. For more information on the SIFMA Foundation, visit www.sifma.org/foundation.

About InvestWrite®

InvestWrite® is a culminating activity for Stock Market Game students extending their classroom learning with a written challenge to address real-world financial issues and situations. Students must analyze, think critically and problem solve about a long-term saving and investing scenario. More than 275,000 student essays have been evaluated by their teachers and over 50,000 financial professionals have served as volunteer judges. Essays are judged by financial professionals who volunteer their time each year to ensure young people are exposed to the essentials of personal finance early in life. Judges 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 locally and nationally rise to the top to earn exciting awards including laptops, classroom pizza parties, trophies, plaques and banners, and certificates. For more information about InvestWrite®, visit www.investwrite.org.

About the Arizona Council on Economic Education

The Arizona Council on Economic Education (ACEE) is a 501(C)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to improving economic and personal financial literacy in Arizona. ACEE is the author of Arizona K-12 Economic Education Academic Standards and the only organization in Arizona which: provides teacher professional development in teaching personal finance and economics; has a

strong, affiliated academic base with universities and community colleges; and distributes proven independent economic education curriculum resources to schools free of charge. For more information, visit www.azecon.org.

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