ECONOMIC CHALLENGE

ON THE WAY—YEAR #2

Tara O’Brien Reporting

EconomicsPennsylvania is pleased to announce the Sojk Family Student Pennsylvania Economics Challenge State Finals. Pennsylvania will join 33 other states in offering the opportunity for high school economics students to participate in a national competition sponsored by National Council on Economic Education (NCEE) and the Goldman Sachs Foundation.

REGISTER YOUR TEAMS BY MARCH ——, 2005 ! SEE DETAILS BELOW.

BENEFITS OF THE CHALLENGE

* Increases understanding of economic concepts and an appreciation for policy issues.

* Provides an opportunity for enjoyable and stimulating activity matching your team’s understanding of economics with teams from other schools.

* Motivates independent study and stimulates interest in economics and other social studies curriculum.

* Enhances debate, discussion and analytical skills.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Teams of four (4) students representing their high schools are invited to compete in one of two Pennsylvania regional competitions. At each level of competition, student teams face off against one another in answering rigorous questions on microeconomics, macroeconomics, international economics and current economic events. Students answer questions both individually, and as a team. The final round at each level will feature the top teams in each division facing off in a fast-answer round.

In addition to all-expenses paid trips to the next level of competition, winning teams at the State, Regional and National Level will receive significant prizes, including U.S. Savings Bonds.

HOW IT WORKS

The winning team at the State Final in each division will advance to the Eastern Regional Competition. The Eastern Regional winning team in each division will advance to the national competition.

TWO COMPETITIVE DIVISIONS:

The David Ricardo Division for students enrolled in a one-semester economics, consumer economics, or personal finance economics course with emphasis placed on real life economics applications.

The Adam Smith Division for students enrolled in a two-semester course, AP, Honors or IB course focused more on the theoretical aspects of economics including problem solving.

LEVELS OF COMPETITION:

* Pennsylvania state finals
* Eastern Regional National Finals* (PA state winners compete against the state winners from Maine to Virginia) (expenses paid by NCEE/Goldman Sachs Foundation) (See P. 3)

NEW FIELD CONSULTANT JOINS PITTS & RMU TEAM

She is not new to Economics Education. But that’s only one reason we are glad she is with us. Mrs. Donna Dado earned her Bachelor’s Degree at Slippery Rock University and her Master’s Degree at the University of Pittsburgh. She retired early from teaching at Bethel Park’s Independence Middle School in 1999 where she worked as Facilitator for the Gifted Education Program. This followed many years of successful classroom teaching and professional involvement with students, parents and colleagues. As a member of the Executive Board of the Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Education, , Donna has served two terms as Treasurer. She has presented at many state-wide conferences, stayed in touch with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit #3, serving as resource and judging at student competitions. Her hobbies are wood-carving, painting, gardening and movies. . .and we hear she is a great cook, too! Donna has two grown children, a son and a daughter, and lives in Elizabeth, PA with her husband, Jerry. She is working to help both Pitt and RMU Centers with workshops, grants and general office management. We welcome her and appreciate her energy, hard work and unique vision for opportunity.

How it Works

You don’t want your students to miss out on this educational and valuable experience! Business students and potential Entrepreneurs need to learn how to write a Business Plan and to enter their plans in the Regional competition for prize money!

Sojk Family Student Pennsylvania Economics Challenge

Inside this issue:

Pennsylvania Business Plan Competition

Pittsburgh & Mon-Valley Pro-

New Environmental Curriculum

2005 Workshop Schedule

Tips & Tricks to Make a Business Plan

2005 Deadlines & Dates Are: Teacher Registration: March 21 Plans Due: April 29 Regional Finalists will be announced in early June. We are proud of our local 2004 winners. The top three winners in the Eastern PA Region and from the Western PA Region will be entered into the statewide competition. More information is at: www.EconomicsPA.org

Teacher Information Packets may be obtained by calling 570-372-9997

PARKER/HUNTER HEATS UP STOCK MARKET GAMES!

Looking for “cruise control” for your Stock Market Games Teams? We’ve got it for you! In addition to our own workshop training & support from EconomicsPennsylvania, did you know that Parker/Hunter will send out a classroom consultant to help/coach/ keep you on track? Mr. Jay Yard, Sr. Vice-President of Parker/Hunter Professional Services, and newly-elected President of the Pittsburgh EconomicsPA Board, has always given many important learning opportunities to teachers and students, on-site tours, materials and curriculum support. This year, we learned that Parker/Hunter will assist participating classroom teacher with their SMG activities by sending a consultant to the requesting classroom. Mr. Bob Archbald, Parker/Hunter South Hills Office, has already assisted at our SMG training workshops and will visit your classroom by request.

The “Stock Market Games” is a ten-week simulation of Wall Street trading that teaches students about the American Economic System. SMG is designed specifically for classroom use to help students understand stock trading, cost & benefits of investing, sources and use of capital, profit and loss and other economic concepts. There are many other benefits to playing this game: meets educational standards across disciplines, promotes cooperation and group autonomy among students teams, creates interest in current events and others. More than 450,000 students in 49 states play this game each fall & spring. Three game divisions for grades 4-6, 7-8 and 9-12 are available. Find out more about this game by contacting game coordinators: SMGofPA@temple.edu or go to www.EconomicsPA.org to learn even more. Our goal for Pennsylvania is to have 100,001 students playing! Thanks, Parker/Hunter for your expert help!

PLAN AHEAD FOR BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION!

You don’t want your students to miss out on this educational and valuable experience! Business students and potential Entrepreneurs need to learn how to write a Business Plan and to enter their plans in the Regional competition for prize money!
NEW ENVIRONMENTAL CURRICULUM
Contributed by Dr. Mike Gumpner, Millersville University Center for Economic Education
If you are interested in learning about the Heinz Endowment Project, consider using EconomicsPennsylvania's new Environmental Curriculum based on a research project funded by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania entitled, “An Interdisciplinary Approach to Benefit Cost Analysis of Public Farmland Preservation Programs,” an interactive, interdisciplinary, and high interest curriculum for grades 10 – 12 was developed. This curriculum is designed to promote an understanding and increased awareness of environmental problems related to land use and preservation. The lessons and activities encourage students to explore farmland preservation and land use historically, geographically, and demographically while they learn and apply both fundamental and current economic tools and analysis. The curriculum features 8 full units incorporating more than 80 hours of classroom lessons and laboratories and culminates in an interactive simulation entitled “Farmland vs. Development,” where students assume special interest roles as they tackle the question of commercial and residential development vs. traditional and agricultural preservation. The lessons integrate solid research problems, mathematical and statistical analyses, construction and constraint analysis, as well as basic economic fundaments such as scarcity, opportunity cost, benefits and costs, supply and demand, the influence of economic systems from traditional to free market, and the efficient use of productive resources are taught. In addition, this curriculum is unique in that it explores more sophisticated and complex environmental economic concepts such as intrinsic and altruistic value, consumer motivation for environmental resources, and the measurement of aesthetic value. Students are exposed to interactive lessons that will teach them the basic techniques used by environmental economists. Special note to teachers: The lessons and units can be used individually and integrated into your current curricula.

Content Units Are:
• ZOOMING IN ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
• SHOULD MALTAHS BE IN MOTHBALLS?
• LAND, LAND EVERYWHERE! LAND USE ISSUES—WHERE’S THE BEEF?
• USING ECONOMICS AND MAPS TO ANALYZE ISSUES RELATED TO AGRICULTURE AND LAND USE
• THE AMISH AND LANCASTER COUNTY FARMLANDS
• ECONOMICS OF LAND USE APPLYING THE FUNDAMENTALS
• THE ECONOMICS OF FARMLAND PRESERVATION
• RES PUBLICA — A SIMULATION

Participating teachers will receive an introduction to the curriculum, an introduction to environmental economics from Millersville University experts, lesson demonstrations, and great classroom ideas. Look for workshop sites and costs for this new and exciting curriculum at: www.economicspa.org

ECONOMICS CHALLENGE, (cont’d from P. 1)

PRIZES:
All participating students receive t-shirts and certificates
Pennsylvania Economics Challenge state final winners receive $300 Savings Bonds and engraved plaques
NCEE/Goldman Sachs Economics Challenge Eastern Regional National Finals receive $500 Savings Bonds
NCEE/Goldman Sachs Economics Challenge National Competition winners receive $1,000 Savings Bonds

For sample questions, printable brochures, registration form and more information, please go to www.economicspa.org

~ EIGHTY PERCENT OF SUCCESS IS JUST SHOWING UP ~

PENDDARIN DATES & LOCATIONS:
Pennsylvania Finals: April 5, 2005 in Harrisburg, PA
National Dates & Locations:
Eastern Regional Competition to be held April 22, 2005
National competition: Held in New York City
May 21-23, 2005

WE WELCOME ALL TO ENTER THIS EXCITING, PRESTIGIOUS EVENT!
Contact Tara O’Brien at: tobrien@economicspa.org 412-760-7667

NEW WINTER-SPRING WORKSHOP SCHEDULE-2005

Stock Market Game Workshops
After-school workshops will introduce first-time advisors to the Stock Market Game. A review of economic concepts and stock market basics, along with hands-on computer experience will prepare teachers to guide their students through the Stock Market Game Program.

January 31st at Intermediate Unit #1
February 1st at Intermediate Unit #3
April 22nd at Intermediate Unit #4

Understanding the Pennsylvania Economic Standards
This workshop will provide an understanding of what is expected from the PA Economic Standards. A review of the standards will accompany a lively discussion and modeling of best classroom practices.
February 2nd at Intermediate Unit #1

Financial Fitness for Life
Financial Fitness for Life workshops are designed to provide two workshops on Financial Literacy. Both parents and teachers will have the opportunity to engage in lectures from the Financial Fitness for Life curriculum, and to receive personal copies of the curriculum, including the CD-ROM.
March 4th for TEACHERS grades 6-8 or 9th-12th, 9:00-4:00, lunch and snacks will be provided
March 11th for PARENTS at Allegheny Intermediate Unit #3

The Stock Market Game Program
The Stock Market Game Program (SMGP) is a ten-week simulation of Wall Street trading that provides a framework for teaching students about the American economic system and operation designed specifically for classroom use to help students understand the stock market, and many other related economic concepts. To learn more about the SMGP and to register, please visit our website: www.economicspa.org

The American Corporation
A Roundtable discussion with Corporate Presidents, CEOs, and Entrepreneurs regarding the economics & structure of the American Corporation. Small group discussions will take place mid-week morning.
FEBRUARY 3, 2005 from 8:30-Noon. If you are interested in attending this event, you must reserve space with Lora Space (lora@economicspa.org) or by calling 412-760-7791.

NCEE/Goldman Sachs Economics Challenge
The National Council on Economic Education (NCEE) and EconomicsPennsylvania invite all High School Economics Students and Teachers to the 2nd Annual Pennsylvania State Finals, April 5, 2005. Teams of four students answer rigorous questions on microeconomics, macroeconomics, and international economics. The most exciting round of the competition is the final round conducted in an oral quiz-bowl format. Winning teams advance to the Regional Finals at the end of April. Many exciting prizes for all teams!

For more information, visit www.economicspa.org or www.economicschallenge.ncee.net

GIVE PAYCHECKS A BOOST!

It is a tax season and there are valuable benefits available to families and individuals which may mean putting thousands of paycheck dollars back into pockets of low to moderate income earners. Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and the PA Tax Back Program are important tax benefits that all should know about. Free tax prep services are available from VITA throughout Allegheny County Jan 20-April 15. Call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040 or call 1-800-829-2050 to find out more about these. Or contact Kristie Weiland, Tax Campaign Coordinator at Just Harvest; www.justharvest.org

All workshops qualify for Act 48 credit hours.

FINANCIAL LITERACY for ALL—A HEINZ ENDOWMENT PRIORITY IN PITTSBURGH & THE MON-VALLEY
Reported by Lora Space

The overall mission of this project, funded by the Heinz Endowment, is based on growing evidence of need for Financial Literacy Education in Western Pennsylvania. Students and their Parents in schools along the Monongahela River Valley and in the City of Pittsburgh need formal curriculum support for mastering skills in Spending, saving, investing, using credit and budgeting. Evidence from local banks and credit counseling services shows that predatory lending is up 40% from the 2004 year’s data and academic tests show that these skills are either not being taught or mastered in consistent ways. The PSSA does not measure Financial Literacy skills except for Business & Consumer Education courses at high school levels, not for all students, K-12. These facts point the need for education among the general public as well as in the schools and local communities, especially those showing poor academic achievement.

Schools targeted for this project were chosen from those whose PSSA and Standardized tests show a pattern of below standards mastery, especially in the middle school levels. Four participating Mon-Valley Schools for the 2004-2005 year are: Clarion City, Steel Valley, East Allegheny, and McKeesport. These schools have base-salary teachers to supplement their own local program using the NCEE’s Financial Fitness for Life curriculum and other materials provided by EconomicsPA. This program is unique in that it has a Parent Component and provides with activities complimentary to the classroom lessons their children are receiving. The Pittsburgh City Schools are participating in this project in four of their high schools: Braddock, Allegheny, Longridge and Westinghouse and they are using resources from EconomicsPA to refresh, update and strengthen their Business & Finance Academy, offering both students and parents opportunities for valuable business connections and on-site visits. A special Pilot Program has been developed among the Pittsburgh and EconomicsPA Pitt Center staff, with Emily Davis, Pittsburgh’s Supervisor of Business Education, and Roland Handy, Career Counselor, taking the district lead with this effort.

The Heinz Endowment has given EconomicsPA a unique and precious opportunity to help these schools and to assist in existing community improvement projects. For further information about the Heinz Endowment Project, please go to www.economicspa.org. Our heartfelt thanks to Heinz and to the schools who are working so hard to make this project a reality! ~ A 10,000 mile journey begins with one phone call! ~