



“TRADER! TRADER!”



Forget reality shows and teen soaps. This fall, the drama will be happening in Wichita as high school students compete to see who can win the most cash at the Stock Market Challenge on October 23. The event is being organized for the second year in Wichita by Junior Achievement (JA), a nonprofit organization that teaches students from kindergarten through 12th grade about business and economics.

“It’s really volunteer-driven,” says Susan Addington, community relations manager at Koch Industries, a major sponsor of the event and participant in Junior Achievement educational programs. “It’s a great, fun way for people to understand what Junior Achievement does.”

Although the money and NYSE quotes aren’t real, you’d never know it by the enthusiasm and determination of the individuals crowding the stock market floor. The simulated Stock Market Challenge teaches students the ins and outs of Wall Street while they raise money that will help them become even more financially savvy.

Student teams compete in a daytime event, while corporate teams face off later in the day. Proceeds from the adults’ entry fees will benefit Junior Achievement. According to Lou Parkhurst, a member of the volunteer committee, \$100,000 was raised at last year’s challenge.

During the simulation, teams are given a starting budget of \$500,000. They spend 60 days on the stock market floor, with each “day” lasting about a minute and a half. Competitors use a handheld device to buy, sell, trade and get hot tips. The adults can actually purchase news releases and other advantages with real money.

As word about the contest builds, the committee anticipates a lot more involvement and excitement at the high school level, says Parkhurst.

Andover Central High School boasted the first-, second- and fourth-place teams in 2007. The winning team defied a Wall Street stereotype: all the members were girls.

“They were anywhere from fifth to second all the way through,” says team adviser Bob Gould. “They took a little gamble at the end and it worked for them. They jumped past our boys who ended up getting second place.”

Junior Achievement volunteers visited Gould’s accounting and computer classes to explain the program. While a number of students were interested, not everyone who participated was enthusiastic at first, according to Gould.

“They were in last place for quite a while; they didn’t like that,” he says with a laugh. That was motivation enough for the reluctant team to cruise into the winner’s circle.

This year’s first-place team may get to travel to New York City for a national competition; those plans are still tentative. However, everyone who participates will benefit.

“You can sit there and talk about it in class, but there’s nothing like hands-on experience,” says Gould. “Some of my students are thinking about that type of career... it gives them an option to explore.”

~STEPHANIE BARNARD

