

Sammy's Big Dream! Becomes a Reality in Arkansas

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For the second-graders at Crestwood Elementary in North Little Rock School, the morning of Wednesday, February 27, started out like any other morning. Assembly, announcements, whispered discussions about the upcoming Book Character Day. Nothing out of the ordinary.

But just before morning recess, the schedule shifted. The students were directed to go to the Commons Area and take a seat on the floor mats.

And then, Officer Tommy Norman walked in. In full police uniform.

What was going on?

"Who here likes to read?" Officer Tommy asked and the excitement mounted. Most hands went up.

"And who likes to buy things?" Officer Tommy asked. Yet more hands went up.

"And who would like to hear the story of Sammy Rabbit who wants to buy a trip on the world's first outer space roller coaster?" Officer Tommy asked. Now the hands went flailing.

So began the Celebrity Read-Aloud at Crestwood Elementary School, thanks



Economics Arkansas Executive Director Kathleen Lawson asks about students' saving habits.

to a collaboration between the Arkansas Bankers Association, Economics Arkansas, Sammy Rabbit, and the Garrett Financial Planning Network.

During America Saves Week, February 25 through March 2, Economics Arkansas hosted four Celebrity Read-Alouds of the children's book *Sammy's Big Dream!* in schools in Central Arkansas, Jonesboro, and Springdale. Sammy Rabbit desperately wants to ride the world's first outer space roller coaster but doesn't have the money. Yet determined saving and working extra jobs allow him to fulfill his big dream. After the exhilarating ride, he concludes, "Saving is a great habit."

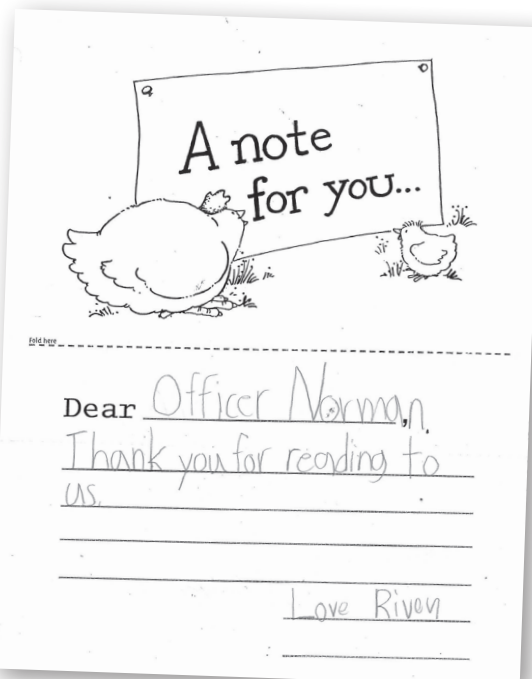
Titled "Arkansas Dream Big Read Financial Literacy," the initiative was designed to inspire elementary school students to read and save. Copies of

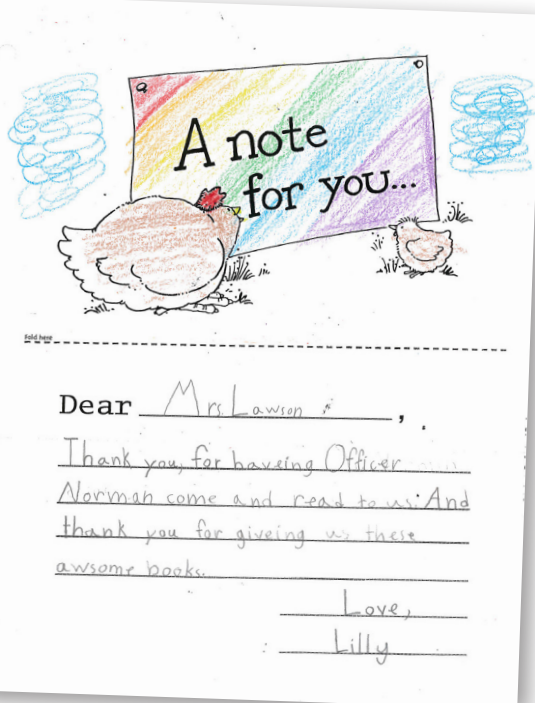
Sammy's Big Dream! were distributed to the libraries of every public elementary school across the state, along with links to free lesson plans and instructor guides and discounts toward purchases of additional resources for teachers.

According to studies, adult money habits and attitudes are set by age 7. Sadly, nearly two-thirds of all adult Americans cannot pass a basic financial literacy test, and forty percent do not have enough savings to cover a \$400 emergency expense. Campaigns such as "Arkansas Dream Big" seek to help change these statistics.



ABA President & CEO Lorrie Trogden and Officer Tommy Norman before the *Sammy's Big Dream!* reading event on February 27.





In addition to Officer Tommy Norman of the North Little Rock Police Department, other celebrity readers included:

- A-State Chancellor Dr. Kelly Damphousse at Valley View Elementary School, Jonesboro
- Craig O'Neill of THV11 at David O'Dodd Elementary School, Little Rock
- Chuck Barrett, Voice of the Razorbacks, and Chelsea Helms of Fox 24 at Jones Elementary School, Springdale

The Crestwood Elementary students showed some money savvy already. When asked about the best place to store cash, the overwhelming majority shouted, "In a bank!" What about the \$300 Sammy Rabbit needed to go on the outer space roller coaster—was that lot of money? "No," was the consensus.

As Arkansas's premier educator of economics and personal finance, Economics Arkansas engages in active collaborations with many diverse partners year round to teach Arkansas students how to develop the sound decision-making, money management and marketable job skills they will need to thrive as adults. To discuss how to bring Read-Alouds, saving campaigns and similar activities to your schools and communities, please contact us at 501-682-4230 or kathleen@economicsarkansas.org.

Bankers Shine a Spotlight On Saving



Southern Bancorp bankers Monte Hodges, Nathan Pittman, Janie Ginocchio, Darrin Williams, and John Olaimey flank Governor Asa Hutchinson as he proclaimed February 25-March 2 "Arkansas Saves Week."

Banks across the country were actively spreading a message of savings as part of America Saves Week 2019, February 25 – March 2. Arkansas banks participating in the event include First Arkansas Bank & Trust, Centennial Bank, Southern Bancorp, Today's Bank, and BancorpSouth.

"At Southern it is our mission to be wealth builders for everyone, and we believe that saving is the foundation to building wealth," said Darrin Williams, Southern Bancorp, Inc. CEO. "America Saves Week is a great opportunity to encourage everyone in our communities to invest in their financial future."

Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson recently proclaimed February 25 – March 2 to be Arkansas Saves Week and Military Saves Week.

America Saves Week is coordinated by America Saves and the American Savings Education Council. Started in 2007, the Week is an annual opportunity for organizations to promote good savings behavior and a chance for individuals to assess their own saving status. Typically thousands of organizations participate in the Week, reaching millions of people.