Brothers win state contest in U.S. essay contest

Dakota Becker left, a seventh-grade student at Fiddlesticks Academy, was the state middle school contest, and his brother Riley, a fifth-grader at Jacksonville High School, placed second overall.

Dakota Becker, left, a seventh-grade student at Fiddlesticks Academy, was the state middle school contest, and his brother Riley, a fifth-grader at Jacksonville High School, placed second overall.

**FINANCIAL ADVICE**

If you have a passion for investing, you might want to consider participating in the stock market. Whether you're just starting out or have been investing for a while, here are some tips to help you get started:

1. **Set Financial Goals:** Determine what you want to achieve with your investments. Are you saving for retirement, buying a home, or funding your child's education? Setting clear goals will help you stay focused and make informed decisions.
2. **Educate Yourself:** Investing can be complex, so it's important to learn as much as you can about the stock market, mutual funds, and other investment options. Read books, articles, and blogs, and consider taking courses or workshops.
3. **Diversify Your Portfolio:** Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Diversification helps to minimize risk and can lead to more stable returns. Consider investing in a mix of stocks, bonds, and other assets.
4. **Time the Market:** While it's tempting to buy or sell stocks based on short-term trends, it's often more successful to focus on long-term performance. Over the long run, most stocks and mutual funds have performed well.
5. **Stay Informed:** Keep apprised of economic and political developments that could impact the stock market. This will help you make informed investment decisions.

Remember, investing is a long-term game. It's important to have a strategy and to stick to it, even during times of market volatility. Happy investing!