



OFFICE OF  
STATE TREASURER  
DENISE L. NAPIER

# NEWS

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## **CT Treasurer's Office Partners with Innovative Non-profit to Develop State-of-the-Art Financial Education Animations for Youth; New Music Video Series Debuts on TV This Weekend**

***Local Youth Learn the Art and Business of Animation While Working Hands-On; Partnership to Help Teach Young People Key Financial Lessons***

HARTFORD -- State Treasurer Denise L. Nappier and the Hartford Animation Institute (HAI) today launched a series of original, locally-developed, animated music videos highlighting financial education themes, aimed at teaching young people important lessons about using money responsibly. The first three, in what is expected to be a series of six videos, will begin airing locally this weekend on FOX61 and nationally on the Black Family Channel. Comcast will telecast the videos on its cable systems across Connecticut throughout January.

The series of 90-second video shorts is called "Big Time Saver," and features the "Scruples" characters. The characters were developed by the Hartford Animation Institute, a non-profit organization that mentors local youth in the art and business of high-tech digital animation. The founder, Joe Young, developed "Scruples" for other youth-related initiatives, and worked with the State Treasurer's office to develop themes, storyboards and lyrics for the financial education video shorts. Funding for development of the financial education video series was provided by Bank of America - Connecticut.



The videos are geared to kids ages 7-12, and present the financial lessons using modern music and high-tech animation. Plans are in the works for the videos to be posted on the Connecticut Treasury's website, and to be made available to teachers for use in conjunction with classroom instruction on money-related topics. Additional initiatives featuring the characters are under discussion.

The first three financial education videos featuring the Scruples characters are:

- ***Big Time Saver*** – focuses on the importance of saving money for one's future, and introduces the concept of earning.
- ***Save Your Money*** - highlights saving money for college, and the greater likelihood of financial success resulting from higher education.
- ***Payin' My Debt, It's My Rep*** - introduces the concept of paying one's debts in order to build a good credit "reputation".

**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

**BERNARD KAVALER** (860) 702-3277 FAX (860) 702-3043 [BERNARD.KAVALER@PO.STATE.CT.US](mailto:BERNARD.KAVALER@PO.STATE.CT.US)  
**ROBYN BELEK** (860) 702-3013 FAX (860) 702-3043 [ROBYN.BELEK@PO.STATE.CT.US](mailto:ROBYN.BELEK@PO.STATE.CT.US)

The just-completed videos were shown for the first time at a kick-off reception held Thursday afternoon at the CRT Youth Art & Technology Center in Hartford, attended by, elected officials including Hartford Mayor Eddie Perez, local business and community leaders, and students who participated in the development of the video series.

Treasurer Nappier has made advancing financial literacy a hallmark of her administration, working collaboratively with community-based and faith-based organizations and the business community to promote financial education statewide, including programs aimed at young people, women, and underserved communities.

"As a state, we must do everything we can to provide our young people with the financial education foundation they'll need to succeed, and initiatives like this speak directly to the audience we're trying to reach," Nappier said. "Working with the extraordinarily talented professionals and students at the Hartford Animation Institute in creating this series has been an exceptional experience, and I commend their creativity and dedication in helping us to get more young people tuned in to the importance of saving and managing their money responsibly."

"These animated cartoons will be effective because they teach youth financial responsibility through a fun vehicle," said Joe Young, Executive Director of the Hartford Animation Institute, a non-profit education, training and employment program created specifically for the purpose of teaching the art and business of digital animation.

"Financial literacy is a critical – and often overlooked – component of a child's education," said Susan A. Rottner, president, Bank of America Connecticut. "Bank of America is thrilled to participate in this innovative program with Treasurer Nappier and Hartford Animation Institute that will help youth in our state learn the importance of establishing good spending and savings habits at a young age. We congratulate all our partners for a job well done."

## **LOCAL STUDENTS INVOLVED IN DEVELOPMENT OF VIDEO SERIES**

Students from Hartford's Weaver and Hartford High Schools, Quirk and Fox Middle Schools and Milner and Webster Elementary Schools, along with students from the Metropolitan Learning Center in Windsor and the Plainville and Cromwell Middle Schools assisted in the artistic rendering of the characters and storyboards utilized in the videos, as well as the computer animation process. They worked with professionals including Richard Ferguson-Hull of the Cartoon Network and Myrton Bewry, a former Nickelodeon and DC and Marvel comics staff artist.

In addition, seven students, mostly from Hartford, provided the voices for the seven cartoon characters included in the videos. The students spent the past eight months working on the project. They assisted HAI artists in pre- and post-concept meetings, voiceovers, singing, and coloring characters and backgrounds.

Richard Ferguson-Hull, a long-time animation director at the Cartoon Network noted for his work on the animated program *Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law*, was a technical advisor on the Big Time Saver video series. As an animation director at the Cartoon Network, Ferguson-Hull is in charge of all aspects of the animation process during the production of an animated film or animated segment for a live-action film.

"In addition to kids having fun, working and learning about animation on this project, it can be a catalyst to a job opportunity in animation," said Richard Ferguson-Hull.

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Also among those applauding the initiative are Grammy Award winning artist Wanya Morris of popular R&B hip-hop music group *Boyz II Men*, who commented that "educating kids on finance through *Scruples* is cool. I wish I had this education as a kid, I'd be even farther along," Morris said.

## **BIG TIME SAVER VIDEOS TO BE TELEVISED IN CONNECTICUT AND NATIONALLY**

Comcast will telecast the public service announcements throughout January on youth-oriented channels on at least 10 of its cable franchises, covering most of Connecticut, as part of its public service programming. Comcast is Connecticut's largest cable franchise owner. The videos will be telecast 150 times during the month on each of the cable systems. In addition, Comcast will be working with HAI and the State Treasurer's Office to provide additional support on the issue of financial education for young people.

"We are proud to partner with the State Treasurer on her financial education initiative for young people and broadcast a public service announcement throughout our Connecticut service areas during the month of January. Comcast is committed to improving the quality of life in local communities where our customers and employees live and, like the Treasurer, take a vested interest in giving young people every opportunity to be prepared for the future," said Doug Guthrie, Vice President of Comcast's Connecticut-Western Massachusetts Region.

The Black Family Channel (BFC) will telecast the financial education videos beginning on Saturday, December 2 through the end of February 2007 as a public service. They will run within the network's *BFC Kids* programming blocks, mornings and afternoons.

Black Family Channel is America's only minority owned and operated cable network committed to entertain, inform and empower communities with family programming that is original, real, authentic and relevant. BFC is currently viewed in over 16 million households. (BFC can be seen on channel 293 in the Greater Hartford area, channel 135 in the New London area and 173 in the New Haven area.)

With the support of local businesses and in partnership with FOX 61, the series will be telecast during the Saturday morning cartoon block on FOX 61 on Saturday, December 2, during kids programs between 7AM and 12 Noon. FOX 61 is working with the Hartford Animation Institute to increase visibility and awareness of the financial education videos.

The Hartford Courant's *Newspapers In Education* program will also be working with the Treasurer's Office and the Hartford Animation Institute during 2007 to promote financial education as part of it's classroom education initiatives.

Connecticut's Department of Education also praised the video series. "The State Department of Education salutes the tremendous collaboration between the State Treasurer's Office and the Hartford Animation Institute for their work to help educate our youth about responsible money management. It is never too early to teach students how to manage their money wisely and the "Big Time Saver" videos will go a long way to do that," said George A. Coleman, Interim Commissioner of Education. "Our state is proud to have had our students play an integral role in the production of this national project."

The videos were developed at the Hartford Animation Institute studios at the West End Community Center, 461 Farmington Avenue, in Hartford. HAI also offers evening classes at the CRT Youth Art & Technology Center, 1445 Main Street, in Hartford.

To learn more, visit [www.state.ct.us/ott](http://www.state.ct.us/ott) (State Treasurer's Office) or [www.scrupleskids.com](http://www.scrupleskids.com)

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