

An animated way to teach financial literacy



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By Blake Jones -- bjones@poststar.com | Posted: Saturday, February 18, 2012 5:05 pm | (0) Comments

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A Lake George man is working to bring a financial literacy program to [schools](#), banks - and even television.

Tony Intelisano, a local resident with a background in television syndication, has been working with downstate advertising executive Mark DiPippa to promote The Centsables, a group of animated superhero characters who deliver messages about financial fundamentals to children ages 6 to 12.

Intelisano said he came up with the idea because there seemed to be a lack of youth-oriented financial literacy programs in the marketplace. DiPippa created the characters and educational materials.

The pair has been developing the concept for about five years, and they said the subject matter has never been more important.

"It's more relevant today than when I first had the idea," Intelisano said, referencing the recession and financial crisis. He added that kids need to build the foundation of financial literacy early, because by high

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The Centsables program features animated superheroes who deliver financial literacy messages to children. Lake George resident Tony Intelisano and advertising executive Mark DiPippa are the two principals behind the program, which they hope to bring to television in the fall.

school they may have already picked up bad habits.

Initially, the business partners envisioned a national sponsor that would use the materials to educate consumers across the country. They did not have luck finding one major backer and have instead been licensing the materials to banks and [credit unions](#) for use with their own customers.

The program offers banks promotional materials, educational websites and a Centsables-affiliated [savings account](#) for children.

About 30 financial institutions in 18 states have signed on, including the Corinth-based Hudson River Community Credit Union.

Spokesman Ed Behan said the [credit union](#) has been using The Centsables in its branches since 2010.

"It's a fun approach to financial literacy for our child members," Behan said.

As a for-profit business, there is also plenty of Centsables merchandising - toys, board games, books and comics - but the educational material meets standards set forth by the nonprofit Jump\$tart financial literacy coalition.

Intelisano said the program has not caught on as quickly with banks as they expected, though, so he and DiPippa are now focusing on a nationally syndicated animated show based on The Centsables characters. The content will loosely incorporate financial literacy themes, and feature break-out spots with more direct messages about saving.

The pilot episode, various public service announcements and other content is available at The Centsables site and on YouTube.

Intelisano and DiPippa said they are working with cable networks and other broadcast platforms to distribute the show in the fall.

"Part of the goal is to shine light on the issue of financial literacy," DiPippa said. "At least the parents can begin a dialogue and begin to explore and discuss those kinds of ideas so kids understand it."

To see the pilot episode and other animated content, visit www.tvseries.centsables.com. For more on the bank programs, visit www.centsables.com.

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