

SCHOLARSHIPS TO BE PROVIDED TO UP TO 300 COMPANIES TO OFFER UNBIASED WORKPLACE FINANCIAL EDUCATION TO EMPLOYEES

Staples, American Bar Association and Barnes Foundation Are Three of the First Companies to Benefit From Online Training Program to Provide Employee Financial Education.

WASHINGTON, D.C.///October 28, 2013///Office supply giant Staples, the American Bar Association, and The Barnes Foundation are among the first recipients of scholarships for the 2014 Financial Fitness Challenge (FFC), an online training program allowing employers to help their employees increase their financial and investment knowledge to improve their financial well-being. The nonprofit Investor Protection Institute (IPI) and Investor Protection Trust (IPT) announce their sponsorship of the FFC scholarships to provide training for up to 250 employees each at up to 300 companies in 2014.

IPI and IPT President and CEO Don Blandin said, **“The Investor Protection Institute is proud to help support the Financial Fitness Challenge program as a part of its work with the Investor Protection Trust to promote Investor Education in Your Workplace® in general. IPI and IPT have a long commitment to protecting investors and have found working with employers to help them educate their employees has consistent positive outcomes for both parties – employees with an increased knowledge base in finance and investing and lowered stress levels due to personal financial challenges, which leads to more productive employees for participating organizations. We’re pleased to expand our commitment to employer-based financial and investor education through sponsoring the Financial Fitness Challenge.”**

The Financial Fitness Challenge program engages employees in the workplace where employers can directly influence them to participate. The event-based program engages employees in a friendly competition that boosts engagement and participation and also results in increased financial confidence. In the 2013 program, participants rate their own increase in knowledge about investing for retirement at an average improvement of 150 percent.

Consistent improvements from prior participants at companies such as Major League Baseball, Intel® and Gulfstream have been demonstrated through tracking participant knowledge and behavior over time. These improvements include up to 50 percent improvement in financial and investment knowledge behaviors such as: using a budget, starting/building savings, starting/increasing contributions to 401(k) and other retirement programs, and increased use of other employee benefits. Additionally, up to a 30 percent improvement has been seen in financial and investment knowledge. The program has proved effective in many types of organizations and industries, for all types of workers, in both small and large companies, and for employees of all ages.

Participants in the 2013 Financial Fitness Challenge program reported that their stress due to financial challenges decreased by 27 percent or more, and more than 90 percent of participants rate the coursework as relevant to their lives and easy to use.

Scholarships will be given to up to 300 organizations for the 2014 Financial Fitness Challenge program. The deadline to apply for a scholarship is December 20, 2013. Scholarships are provided on a first-come, first-served basis to qualified companies. For more details about the program and scholarships, please visit www.ffcwebinar.com or call 1-888-345-1285.

ABOUT THE GROUPS AND INVESTOR EDUCATION IN YOUR WORKPLACE®

The **Investor Protection Trust** is a nonprofit organization devoted to investor education. More than half of all Americans are now invested in the securities markets, making investor education and protection vitally important. Since 1993 the Investor Protection Trust has worked with the states and at the national level to provide the independent, objective investor education needed by all Americans to make informed

investment decisions. The Investor Protection Trust strives to keep all Americans on the right money track. For more information, go to <http://www.investorprotection.org>.

The **Investor Protection Institute** is an independent nonprofit organization that advances investor protection by conducting and supporting unbiased research and groundbreaking education programs. IPI carries out its mission through investor education, protection and research programs delivered at both the national and grassroots level in collaboration with state securities regulators and other strategic partners. IPI is dedicated to providing innovative investor-protection programs that will make a meaningful difference in the financial lives of Americans in all walks of life and at all levels of sophistication about financial matters. For more information, go to <http://www.protectinvestors.org>.

The IPI's and IPT's support of the Financial Fitness Challenge program is the latest in an ongoing commitment to helping improve investor education through Investor Education in Your Workplace® (IEiYW) program. The IEiYW program is an award-winning online financial and investment education program for employers to help educate their employees about long-term savings and investing. Course topics available in the IEiYW program include: saving and investing, personal finance, investing basics, investment strategies, investment risks, retirement planning, retirement plan options, mutual funds, financial advisors and putting it all together. Further details can be found at <http://www.investorprotection.org/ipt-activities/?fa=ieiyw>. The IEiYW program has been field-tested nationwide by more than 15,500 employees working at approximately 400 companies.

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