

Greenwich Time

Investor funds mini-trading center

By: Michael Juliano, Staff Writer

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Greenwich investor Mark Shenkman, founder of Shenkman Capital Management Inc. in Stamford and New York, has funded the Mark R. Shenkman Trading Center at his alma mater, Wibraham & Monson Academy in Wibraham, Mass. (Kathleen O'Rourke/Staff photo)

A Greenwich investor has brought a bit of Wall Street to his old prep school in southern Massachusetts.

Mark Shenkman, the founder of Shenkman Capital Management Inc. in Stamford and New York, has funded the installation of the Mark R. Shenkman Trading Center at his alma mater, Wilbraham & Monson Academy in Wilbraham, Mass.

"I had two teachers who struck my interest in the stock market, so if kids have an interest today, they may become interested in it as a career," said Shenkman, a 1961 graduate of the 200-year-old institution. "I've always felt that kids have little knowledge of the way the financial system works, and it's too late to start as an adult."

The trading center, which is equipped with 16 dual-monitor computers with trading simulation software, may also teach them to handle personal finances, Shenkman said.

"The kids will be able to track their favorite stocks on a daily basis and then compete with each other on creating the best portfolio," he said. "It's great to know history and English, but it's also important to know about the economy and how the financial system works."

The trading center is used to teach a 10-week course on monitoring the stock market and researching companies to make informed trades, said Will Kwon, the center's director.

"This is as real as it gets," he said. "We don't want kids randomly throwing darts at a newspaper."

The pupils start with \$1 million in virtual capital and then start buying and trading stocks using the computers, Kwon said.

"This is just for educational purposes," he said. "The idea is to instill the idea of economics and finance as an integral part of education."

Many students are intrigued by the new space, which displays a Dow Jones ticker, has the day's Wall Street Journal and a TV tuned into CNBC.

"Because it looks cool, it draws them into it and gets them motivated," Kwon said.

The trading center is part of the school's Center for Entrepreneurial & Global Studies program, which focuses on global citizenship, entrepreneurship and finance.

"It allows us to get a more real-world understanding of global actions that affect their world," program director Walter Swanson said. "If they're really not aware of what's happening, they remain rather sheepish about it."

The center comes at a time when it has become crucial for students to have an understanding of the economy and world finance, said Rodney LaBrecque, head of Wilbraham & Monson Academy, which serves Grades 6 to 12 and also offers a post-graduate year.

"Now that our financial systems are intertwined with each other, we felt it was really important for students to get a grip on the bigger picture of the financial field," he said. "I think Mark has foreseen that this will become part of the curriculum in schools."