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First Southwest Bank Makes Award-Winning Financial Literacy Program Free for Local Classrooms

ALAMOSA, COLO., (November 14, 2017) – Local students are getting a free education in how to manage their money. First Southwest Bank is working with Banzai, a national award-winning financial literacy program, to make the curriculum available to 31 schools in the San Luis Valley, Pagosa, Bayfield, Durango and Cortez areas completely free.

Banzai is an interactive, online financial literacy program for middle school and high school aged students, which aligns with state curriculum requirements for personal finance education. It has become the largest program of its kind, servicing more than 33,000 teachers and available in all 50 states.

“As a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), providing quality financial education to our community is an indispensable goal here at First Southwest Bank,” says Kent Curtis, First Southwest Bank CEO. “After spearheading Teach Children to Save Day – a program tailored to fourth graders that addresses the difference between wants and needs – for the last several years, we are thrilled to be launching a program for high schoolers that advances our youth’s knowledge as they grow and encounter new financial junctures and opportunities.”

"Banzai is a web-based financial literacy program. Students have their own bank accounts, and they work through assignments that are based on real life," Morgan Vandagriff, co-founder of Banzai, says. "But because First Southwest Bank is sponsoring it, local schools get it for free. More than ever, it's important that students develop sound financial skills to prepare them for the real world. First Southwest Bank realizes that, and they're doing something about it."

First Southwest Bank has offered time, money, and industry experience to help local schools teach personal finance in the classroom. Students using the program are exposed to real-life scenarios where they learn to pay bills and balance a budget – but it’s not always easy. Students must learn to manage unexpected expenses such as parking tickets, interest charges and overdraft fees. The educational program also introduces students to auto loans, bank statements, entertainment costs, savings and more.

“Too often students get out of school and they just aren't ready for the financial roller coasters life can give us,” Vandagriff said. “Banzai teaches students to navigate those twists and turns and come out on top. We're excited to work with First Southwest Bank to improve financial literacy in local schools.”

Teachers interested in using the Banzai program can visit fswb.teachbanzai.com or call 888-8-BANZAI.

About First Southwest Bank

Serving the San Luis Valley and rural Colorado for more than 100 years, First Southwest Bank offers personal and business banking at their seven branches, with an emphasis on businesses supporting rural communities. First Southwest Bank and their employees actively live-in and give back to our communities, volunteering with more than 40 local organizations, and donating to 115. As a CDFI bank, First Southwest Bank is focused on cultivating valuable relationships, investing in economic and social doers, and fostering a well-lived rural culture. More information about First Southwest Bank is available at fswb.com. Member FDIC, Equal Housing Lender

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