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The Bell Heard 'Round the World

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Scene at the University of Dayton Arena: screaming students, the pep band blaring the UD fight song, red and blue confetti. It sounds like a basketball game.

But add the NASDAQ stock market's closing bell, investment star Christopher Gardner, the United National Global Compact and broadcast it by satellite around the world and it becomes a part of history – both for the University's RISE VIII Global Student Investment Forum and for NASDAQ.

"When we push this button, markets will close from Dayton to Dubai," said Gardner, owner and CEO of Christopher Gardner International Holdings and inspiration for the movie The Pursuit of Happyness. "It's an absolute honor for me to be a part of this."

Ringing the NASDAQ bell March 27 with Gardner were Daniel J. Curran, president of the University of Dayton; Frank Hatheway, senior vice president and chief economist for NASDAQ; Georg Kell, executive head of the UN Global Compact; Bob Froehlich, chairman, investor strategy committee, Deutsche Asset Management and RISE co-chair; and David Sauer, associate professor of finance and executive director of the RISE forum (Redefining Investment Strategy Education) and 250 students representing colleges and universities from all over the world.

"We're very excited that the first closing bell ceremony on a university campus is here at UD," Curran said. "It's a celebration and tribute to our great collaboration with NASDAQ and the UN Global Compact."

Kell celebrated the global education aspect of the event: "Nothing is more important for the financial markets than for future leaders to have open minds about global affairs."

The closing bell appeared on the NASDAQ tower in Times Square in New York City, and participants in the arena saw it in person, as well as on giant screen broadcasting satellite transmissions from CNBC and Bloomberg News cable channels.

More than 2,300 students, faculty and professionals representing 267 universities from 69 countries are attending the three-day event, which is the largest student investment forum in the world. Modeled after the World Economic Forum held annually in Davos, Switzerland, RISE emphasizes interactive discussions.

Students had a chance to hear from distinguished strategists and leaders in the finance world, and to pose questions to them and give their own views on topics ranging from key economic indicators and the recent performance of the Federal Reserve Bank.

National financial media covered a speech by Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland President Sandra Pianalto who also took questions from students. Before asking their questions, the students were asked by moderator Froehlich to give the Fed a grade for its recent work in trying to calm the financial waters.

While her speech was picked up by satellite and covered by reporters from Bloomberg News, Dow Jones, Reuters and Market News International, Gardner directed his speech to the hundreds of future financial leaders gathered for the forum.

The once-homeless Gardner warned students that with the current turmoil in the financial world and the housing market crisis "we're about to create a new class of homeless – the white-collar homeless."

And he asked them to consider his experience: "How do you become homeless, working on Wall Street with a baby tied to your back?" Gardner asked the crowd. "Was it drugs – no. Was it alcohol – no. It was life."

Eschewing the podium and striding across the confetti-covered stage from the closing bell ceremony, Gardner challenged the students to understand that the circumstances of life can turn the tables quickly even on hard-working people with educations and jobs.

A former employee of the troubled Bear Stearns investment banking company, Gardner said it hurts seeing the toll on the
people who work there who are out of jobs and who he said have seen "their nest eggs evaporate."

"It's like watching the house you grew up in burn down," he said.

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