



AMERICAN PORTFOLIOS FINANCIAL SERVICES, INC.
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American Portfolios Senior Executive Brings Thought Leadership Skills to Fifth Graders Through Poetry

HOLBROOK, N.Y.—(Aug. 25, 2017) – Vice President of Marketing & Corporate Communications Melissa Dolber Grappone of [American Portfolios Financial Services, Inc.](#) (AP)—a privately-held, independent broker/dealer that services financial advisors across the country—recently presented 16 fifth grade students at R.D. Seymour School in East Granby, Conn., with their published poetry exchanges, which they co-authored with Grappone and Writer/Health Club Owner Don Foxe just one day prior to the last day of school, and their advancement onto middle school.

What began as an initial book of poetry exchanges published in April 2017 entitled “[Seasons of Henka Suru](#)” between Grappone and Foxe—college friends from 30 years prior who reconnected on Facebook—evolved organically into something more. The first book’s publication and announcement through social media caught the eye of Grappone’s grade school friend, fifth grade teacher Cathy O’Keefe, who expressed her interest in using the poetry exchange format for her class. Elevating this beyond O’Keefe’s wildest expectations, Foxe and Grappone proposed allowing each of her students to respond to one of the poems from “Seasons of Henka Suru” they most connected with and counter it with a haiku response from either one of the authors. The end result? A second collection of poetry exchanges—“[Haiku Seishin](#)”—as the first published work by these 16 budding poets.

“I am so grateful to Melissa Grappone and Don Foxe for doing this with us,” commented O’Keefe. “When the offer was made to engage the students in this poetry exchange, it literally put tears in my eyes. It’s a memory they’ll have for the rest of their lives.” Before faculty and parents, the children recited their poems, then listened for the first time to the counter responses read by O’Keefe and Grappone. “The children beautifully mastered the art of writing this ancient Japanese form of poetry, tapping their senses and experiences in response to nature and the seasons in just three lines, while adhering to a prescribed number of syllables per line,” said Grappone, reflecting on the experience.

Grappone’s project is in keeping with an ongoing initiative as part of AP’s Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to mentor and nurture future thought leaders in business and beyond. Not unlike its involvement in Virtual Enterprises International (VEI), a non-profit organization that provides experiential learning programs to schools across Long Island and beyond, students are developing 21st-century skills in entrepreneurship, global business, problem solving, communications, personal finance and technology.

“The ability to develop and articulate critical thinking using both the spoken and written word is an essential skill needed for anybody—young and old—pursuing educational, professional and/or personal aspirations throughout their life,” said Grappone. “Moreover, what better way than to exercise a young mind using a creative process for students to react to their perceptions and others of the world around them.”



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Included in “Haiku Seishin” are anecdotes and commentary from authors Grappone and Foxe, as well as a workbook with instructions on mastering the art of haiku. When asked what his expectations were for publishing “Haiku Seishin,” Foxe replied, “It is my hope that just as the fifth grade students from R.D. Seymour School did, more people will discover the spirit of haiku, engendering a renewed interest in poetry, writing and connecting to others without emojis or shorthand.”

“[Haiku Seishin](#)” is available online through Amazon and Kindle in both printed and ePub versions. A [video presentation](#), produced by AP’s in-house media production studio, which highlights the “Haiku Seishin” project is available for viewing on the [American Portfolios YouTube channel](#).

About American Portfolios

Headquartered in Holbrook, N.Y., American Portfolios Financial Services, Inc. (APFS) is a full-service, independent broker/dealer and member firm of FINRA and SIPC, offering a complete range of financial services, including personal financial and retirement planning, securities trading, mutual funds, access to investment research, long-term care planning, insurance products and tax-free investing. Fee-based asset management is offered through its sister subsidiary, American Portfolios Advisors, Inc., (APA), an SEC Registered Investment Advisor. Both entities, along with technology entity American Portfolios Advisory Solutions, LLC, collectively reside under the legal entity American Portfolios Holdings, Inc. (APH). Full-service securities brokerage is available through a clearing firm relationship with Pershing, LLC, a BNY Mellon firm, the securities of which are held on a fully disclosed basis. The company currently serves 792 independent investment professionals located in 363 branch locations throughout the nation. It was named Broker-Dealer of the Year* (Division III) by *Investment Advisor* magazine in 2015 and 2016, as well as one of the top five Best Small/Mid-Size Company to Work for in the state of New York for 2016 and 2017 by the New York State Society for Human Resources Management (NYS-SHRM) and the Best Companies Group (BCG).

**Based on a poll of registered representatives conducted by Investment Advisor magazine. Broker/dealers rated highest by their representatives are awarded “Broker/Dealer (B/D) of the Year.”*

About Melissa Grappone

Melissa Dolber Grappone is a founding member of the senior management team at American Portfolios Financial Services, Inc. since its inception on Sept. 10, 2001, fortuitously one day prior to 9/11. She heads up the firm’s corporate communications and marketing area. Grappone is particularly proud of her strong advocacy for AP’s sponsorship and mentorship of Virtual Enterprises International (VEI), an experiential learning program for high school students across the country that trains bright young men and women to be future business leaders by running their own virtual businesses. She received her bachelor’s degree in journalism, with a specialization in advertising and public relations, from the University of South Carolina, and her MBA from Hofstra University. Grappone is a lifelong resident of Long Island, N.Y., where she lives with husband, Gary, and daughter, Faith.



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About Don Foxe

Don Foxe is a member of the Academy of American Poets, the Alliance for Independent Authors and the Southern Independent Book Sellers. His [Space Fleet Sagas](#), a series of adventure and intrigue novels set in Earth's future, are achieving critical acclaim from reader-review sites like Readers' Favorite, Book Viral and Onlinebookclub. Foxe lives in Bluffton, S.C., with wife, Sarah. They own Beach City Health and Fitness in Hilton Head Island, S.C.

- [Donfoxe.net](#)
- Facebook.com/donfoxe@don_foxe
- Blog, and other creative stuff at: [foxeography.com](#)

About Cathy O'Keefe

Cathy O'Keefe has been an educator for the last 10 years in the East Granby School District in East Granby, Conn. Prior to working in education, O'Keefe was a registered dietician for a division of Marriott. She received her bachelor's degree in human nutrition and foods at Virginia Tech, and her master's degree in education at University of Hartford. O'Keefe resides in Southington, Conn., where she lives with her husband, Matthew. She has two college-aged daughters.

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