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Bailout Game Makes Christmas Waves

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By: Jim Meyers

In 1935, during the Great Depression, a new board game involving financial wheeling and dealing hit the market. It was called Monopoly, and it went on to become the most commercially successful board game in U.S. history.

Now, in the midst of a recession, comes another board game involving financial wheeling and dealing, called Bailout! The Game.

The difference is that in Monopoly, the goal is to acquire as much money and property as possible, while in Bailout! the aim is to acquire the most debt — and qualify for a government bailout.

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The motto of the game is: When you lose, you win!

The game was developed by Shari Sopourn, a homeschool mom, and her husband Jordy, with input from their two daughters. They were inspired by the news that dominated the headlines last year, including the fall of Lehman Brothers; the \$85 billion bailout of AIG, the world's largest insurer; and Bank of America's coerced takeover of Merrill Lynch.

Bailout! The Game combines comedic parody of the current financial crisis and strategic game play.

The game was a big hit at the 2009 Chicago Toy & Game Fair, and was introduced earlier this year on Fox News Channel's "Fox & Friends."

Made by Liberty Street Games, Bailout! is now available for sale on the Internet, and sales have been strong as the Christmas season approaches.

Each player in the game is the chief financial officer of a bank that is hanging on by a thread. The goal is to win a bailout by acquiring the most debt. Along the way players invest in the volatile stock market, engage in hostile takeover attempts, fuel the housing market fire by granting loans to unqualified buyers, and take other steps to drive up debt and undermine the bank's stability in the hopes of a bailout.

"People initially think it's a gag gift or joke, but once they experience the game and strategy involved, they get hooked," said Shari Sopourn.

The game's Web site is www.bailoutthegame.com.

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