

## **Teens learn how to budget, handle bank accounts, credit cards**

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By Ann Belser, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Want to get a teenager's attention? Offer food and money. Along the way, he or she might learn something.

That was the tactic taken by Neighborhood Housing Services and Federal Home Loan Bank and it worked. Young people aged 16 to 19 showed up at the Carnegie Library of Homestead on five successive Tuesday evenings for the program called "My Money, My Life." At the last session, on Oct. 18, each walked out with \$100 in the bank and plans for the future.

Most said they will keep the money in the bank, add to it, and watch it collect interest.

Ron-Dah May, 19, of Munhall, who attends high school through the Western Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School, appreciated the class, especially learning about credit cards and "what not to do."

Now, with a \$100 head start, she said, "I have to start thinking about savings and checking accounts and how to put away money."

Ms. May's 11-month-old daughter, Da'Raesah toddled around the room as her mom finished the program. Once Ms. May finishes high school she wants to study fashion merchandising.

Ann T. Killian, from Federal Home Loan Bank, said that the idea of the program was to get the students in the door with the promise of cash and hope that some of the lessons sink in.

Federal Home Loan Bank has raised \$430,000 to continue the program for five years, educating as many as 20 young people at a time about how to save and how to spend money.

Eric Dickerson, deputy director of community investment for the bank, said the money is coming from his bank (\$100,000), The Heinz Endowment (\$100,000), five local banks (\$130,000) and federal Community Development Block Grants (\$100,000).

"The goal is to educate 1,000 students over five years," Mr. Dickerson said.

A new class started the program Tuesday at the Braddock Carnegie Library.

The program, which is targeted at low-income teenagers, teaches financial goals, budgeting, checking and savings accounts, investing, loans, credit cards, credit reports and insurance. The three-hour evening classes also include dinner.

Last week, Emily Keebler, program manager, acted out, along with associate Roy Banner, a scene about an instant loan agency, and pointed out high interest rates charged by check cashing stores and the rent-to-own stores.

Ms. Keebler showed the students that a three-month \$300 loan from an instant loan company could end up costing more in interest, or \$324, so the borrower winds up owing a total of \$624.

"We want you to use a bank," Mr. Banner said.

When the teaching was done, and a chicken dinner was finished, it was time for graduation, which included a certificate and the \$100. Instead of the money being given out in cash, representatives from National City Bank, Sky Bank and PNC Bank were on hand to help students open accounts into which the money was deposited.

Christian Poston, 18, of Munhall, a senior at Steel Valley High School who wants to go to medical school, finished the program with a new-found skepticism about credit cards.

"I didn't really know about interest rates. I was thinking about getting one, but that really changed my mind," he said.

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