

Middle School Students Learn Money Tips



Students in Mrs. Schwebel's Middle School math class listen to a presentation on teenage money tips.

By Patricia Abbott

Dollars and cents don't mean a lot when you are 14. Checkbooks, bank statements, credit cards and bills are years away...or are they?

Not according to South Plainfield resident Sanyika Calloway Boyce, author of the book *Teen Money Tips*. Her recent visit to the Middle School and Mrs. Schwebel's tenth period math class proved that now is the time for youths to begin learning how to successfully handle money.

After a detailed lesson on the basics of banking, it was time for some fun. Sanyika asked the students how many planned on attending college.

insurance or use public transportation? There were approximate monthly payments to consider as well.

The list of decisions continued. From food and personal grooming to shopping, Internet service, entertainment, laundry, gas, pets, cleaning supplies and money matters—bank fees, savings etc. The students had fun “guesstimating” expenses. While discussing monthly phone charges, one student thought an average bill would be \$250 while others suggested \$36-\$80. Most of the youths did not opt to live frugally, choosing their own apartment, live sports events, new cars and satellite TV, all this while attending college and working.

The last three lines on the list began what was to become a serious reality check for the students. They totaled up their listed monthly expenses. With that rather large dollar amount in front of them they were asked, “How much money will you need to earn per hour to support yourself?” and “How many hours per week will you be able to work and go to college?” Most of the youth were startled to find they would have to work long hours at possibly menial jobs just to pay their bills. It was time to rethink their choices.

Sanyika's visit to South Plainfield Middle School was her first opportunity to work with middle school students. Her reaction to this new audience was simple and to the point. She said, “I really enjoyed it, the students were really bright and have great ideas about what they want to do in the future.”

Student Jordan Leporino said, “I don't know about the other kids but for me this was a great experience. She shared one of her own experiences with us about mistakes she has made. I learned so much in those three days. This presentation showed me the value of a dollar and I know it will help

me in the future.” Another student thought everyone in the school should have the chance to read the book.

Sanyika grew up in Calvert County, Maryland. She graduated Calvert High School in 1991 and Norfolk State University with a BS in Communications in 1995. She majored in Communications with a concentra-



Sanyika Calloway Boyce, author of the book *Teen Money Tips*, gives Middle School students a taste of financial reality.

tion on Public Relations. Her big dream was to move to New York City and work for a magazine or PR firm. She shared with the students an experience that literally changed her life and career. When Sanyika graduated from college she found herself \$15,000 in debt. Finding a job was not the solution. She said, “I was denied several jobs because many that I applied for came with an expense account or some sort of money management responsibility. I had no idea that my credit report would have anything to do with my employment chances.”

She sought information and help

but found that most financial advice was established for adults.

With much perseverance she worked through battles with creditors and money management issues. She began helping friends by sharing her hard won information. This, she said, sparked the idea to write books and speak to teens, college students and working adults in a real-world, down-to-earth way about money, credit and debt. Sanyika chose to self-publish. She established Smart Concept Books Publishing in 2001. Her first book was “Crack Da Code, What Every College Student Need to Know About Money, Love & The Dream Job.”

Students often email her with “progress reports” and updates of how they used the information in her books or the knowledge they gained from a live presentation. Sanyika has many success stories and testimonials to her credit. Most often they share their success in getting a high interest rate reduced on a credit card or how they paid off a bill.

For more information about Sanyika Calloway Boyce visit: www.financialfitnesscoach.com. Her books can be purchased at www.teenmoneytips.com or www.smartconceptbooks.com.

Sanyika's new “student only” website, www.studentmoneytips.com, is a resource offering money tips, video clips, links and a student forum to connect with other students. Her goal is to get 5,000 students registered to the site by the end of the year.