

Telling the CU Story to a New Generation

by Suzi Young and Erica Tobe

They could have chosen basketball, kayaking, or dancing. Instead they wanted to learn about credit unions.

“Money Talks – Are You Listening?” Part I

A diverse group of eight 14-to-17-year-olds learned what credit unions are and what they represent at the 4-H Exploration Days at Michigan State University in June 2007. They also discovered credit union leadership and career opportunities.

Michigan Family Involvement Council members teamed up with Michigan State University Extension staff to plan and offer the two-part financial education session called “Money Talks – Are you Listening?” The group started with a tour and scavenger hunt at Option 1 CU in East Lansing. Matt Beard, Option 1’s community development coordinator, led the activities. Afterward, the teenagers were able to answer such questions as “Who is the Option 1 CU target member?” and “What products



Natalie McLaughlin (left), Community Financial CU in Plymouth, Mich., led students in an exploration of personal finance challenges during Exploration Days.

and services has Option 1 CU created for members aged 19 and under?”

Next, Henrietta Kreft, NuUnion CU employee and Michigan Family Involvement Council member and Suzi Young taught “Credit Union 101,” a brief introduction to the principles and history of the movement. The teenagers also viewed a World Council of Credit Unions’ video about international credit union initiatives. The rest of part one of the session offered interactive activities, led by Erica Tobe, designed to get the young people thinking about what it means to be a leader.

Part II

The next morning, the students returned to Option 1 CU for part two of the session, the examination of an important societal issue—job loss in their local communities. (At the time, Michigan had the highest unemployment rate in the nation.) Students formed teams to assume credit union leadership roles to devise potential responses. Each youth team developed a plan that included possible hurdles or obstacles, major players and partners, costs to the community, and the desired reversal of the job loss trend. Later, as each team reported to the full group, the teenagers provided thoughtful analyses of the reality of job loss in Michigan. They presented great ideas for how a credit union could address the problem in state and local communities.

The session concluded with Bryan Dahl of the Michigan Credit Union League providing an overview of current credit union programs in the state. He led a discussion of how the students could become more involved in their local credit unions’ efforts.

Students rated the credit union session highly. In post-session evaluations, the teenagers cited learning about credit unions and the financial solutions they offer as the program’s highlights. They enjoyed visiting Option 1 CU and learning firsthand about what goes on “behind the scenes.” They agreed that the session was well worthwhile. On a five-point scale, each teenager rated “Money Talks – Are you Listening?” as a 4 or 5. ■

For more information about this event, contact Suzi Young (syoun@cpfederal.com), financial education supervisor at CP Federal Credit Union in Jackson, Mich. and chair of the Michigan Credit Union League Family Involvement Council, or Erica Tobe (tobe@msu.edu), program leader, Michigan State University Extension.

About 4-H Exploration Days

4-H Exploration Days is an annual state youth development conference that attracts up to 2,500 participants from 83 Michigan counties each June. Exploration Days give youth aged 11 to 19 a chance to develop valuable skills, make new friends, get involved in fun activities, and pick from among more than 180 hands-on learning sessions. The theme of this year’s conference was “Set Your Sights for Success.”

Exploration Days aim to develop responsibility, independence, accountability, decision-making, time management, and teamwork skills. Teenage participants have access to the Michigan State University campus and its resources. Exploring potential leadership opportunities helps students identify potential career paths, which this year featured the credit union movement.

Resources

- Tales From the Vault: The True Story of Credit Unions—comic book—cuna.org (search “Vault”)
- Guide To Money: Getting a Good Start—handbook for teenagers—cuna.org (search “Guide to Money”)