

# Getting Noticed

by Brandon Pugh and Nancy M. Porter, Ph.D.

Any parent knows it takes a lot to get a teenager's attention these days. When it comes to personal finance, the same is true of the public at large.

That's why the South Carolina Credit Union League has launched three new initiatives. One brings the message of personal finance to classrooms statewide. The other two reward noteworthy messengers.

## Personal finance in *The State*

*The State* is South Carolina's largest newspaper, with a circulation of about 400,000. In collaboration with South Carolina credit unions, Clemson Extension Service, and the National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE), the league is running 20 weekly financial education features using NEFE's High School Financial Planning Program (HSFPP).

The full-page features, which cover 10 topics adapted from the HSFPP, will run in two series (20 total installments) during the 2002-2003 school year as part of *The State's* Newspapers in Education (NIE) program. NIE is a non-profit program that provides newspapers free of charge to schoolteachers as supplemental resources. Subjects range widely, but this effort represents the first comprehensive treatment of personal finance.

The NIE program includes promotion through in-house ads, direct mailings to teachers, e-mail notices, mass faxes, and Web site details. With an established network of high school contacts, the agreement is an invaluable opportunity to reach teenagers statewide. But it had other benefits as well.

"The timing of the project proposal was impeccable," said Steve Fowler, league executive vice presi-

dent of governmental affairs and public relations. "It gave us a way to accomplish two objectives at once. A state legislator had just attempted and failed to pass an anti-predatory lending law. The NIE project allowed us to build public awareness of what credit unions were doing to combat predatory lending. And it also enabled us to show schools and teachers that credit unions were there for them as a resource."

As a direct result of the NIE series, 25 teachers at 18 schools requested a total of 30 HSFPP instructor manuals and 904 student guides in September 2002.



Steve Fowler (left) presented the South Carolina league's first Financial Literacy Educator of the Year award to Sue Dillon.

## Recognition for financial literacy champions

To reward people in the forefront of youth financial education and encourage others to follow, the South Carolina league launched two recognition programs it intends to repeat annually. The first—the Financial Literacy Ambassador of the Year—recognizes the credit union volunteer who has done the most for financial literacy in the state. The winner of the inaugural award is Erin Timmons, membership development officer for Palmetto Citizens Federal Credit Union in Columbia, S.C. Timmons



The first installment of the NIE series in *The State*, South Carolina's largest newspaper.

has a solid track record of youth financial education and worked with nine area high schools in 2001.

The first Financial Literacy Educator of the Year Award went to Sue Dillon, career prep coordinator at Spring Valley High School. By the end of the 2001-2002 school year, she was using the HSFPP in 13 schools, with multiple teachers in several of them. Besides presenting Dillon with a certificate of recognition, Fowler gave her a check at a teachers' conference for \$1,000 from the Carolinas Credit Union Foundation.

"The other teachers really sat up and took notice of the money award," said Fowler. "And I knew we'd given it to the right person when Sue used the opportunity to endorse the NEFE program and encourage everyone in the audience to get involved." \*

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