

Credit union branch opens at Forest Hills High School

Kelly Urban :



SIDMAN, Pa. – Students at Forest Hills High School are getting a leg up on their financial education.

On Tuesday, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held at the high school for the new student-built and student-run credit union branch.

The opportunity was brought to the school thanks to a partnership between The Challenge Program Inc. and G.A.P. Federal Credit Union, and it's giving students the chance to learn about financial literacy.

“The superintendent and Challenge Program approached us and offered us this opportunity and we were able to get it together, and next year we’ll be here in full force for

the entire school year,” said Sharon Lehman, loan officer and mortgage servicing rights (MSR) with G.A.P. Federal Credit Union.

“For those students who come and work at the kiosk, we can offer them employment opportunities at the credit union with part-time work over the summer.”

Students are learning various aspects of banking.

“We show them what a loan payment looks like and what a deposit looks like,” Lehman said. “We have a couple members who work here at the school and they have come and done business, so we’re able to show students what cash looks like in a financial institution and how you properly give it out.”

She said seniors in the business math class are working with her in the kiosk Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays during lunch periods.

“It’s all about educating them about the credit union and how easy it is to open an account along with learning about job opportunities,” Lehman said.

“I hope they hear what I’m saying, and it’ll help them to get through life. If I can give them one financial tip that they’ll remember, then I’ve done my job.”

Senior Emily Schrengost said she’s learned a lot working in the kiosk.

“Sharon taught us how to write checks, checking numbers and how to put them in, and it was very fun,” she said. “I didn’t know how to do that.”

She said she plans on opening an account with the credit union.

“I think other students should open an account because it’s very beneficial,” Schrengost said.

Senior Bella Vranich said she’s learned more about writing checks, balancing a checkbook, budgets and saving for college.

“I learned about saving money because I’m a spender, and she taught me how to budget,” she said. “It’s a cool thing going on throughout the school. I could definitely see myself opening an account because it seems like a good opportunity.”

High school Principal Rebecca Roberts said the program plays into the career readiness curriculum and Future Ready Ranger.

“There’s a lot of opportunities here for these kids now and then we look at future employment,” Roberts said. “Students are utilizing what they learn in the classroom down here at the kiosk. They have the opportunity to do their banking right here with us.”

Jillian Tocco, communications manager with The Challenge Program Inc., said its mission is to partner in business education and help students be motivated for their future.

“It’s a great opportunity for G.A.P. to come in here and teach financial literacy and partner with the kids to give them opportunities to practice what they learn and give them job opportunities,” she said. “We want students to learn developmental skills that will help them in the future.”