Students on track for success at Reality Store

BY DEBBIE HIGHTOWER

TRINITY — An April 5 Reality Store exercise among Archdale-Trinity Middle School students gave them the opportunity to experience what life is like while juggling a career, family and financial responsibilities.

“I want the organic,” said Victoria, when confronted with premium, retail or minimal grocery options.

Communities in Schools and Archdale-Trinity Chamber of Commerce coordinated the activity which is a financial literacy exercise for eighth-graders.

“We were trying to teach the

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kids the difference between a debit card and a credit card,” said volunteer Wanda Beck of Bank of North Carolina. “Most of them didn’t know.

As they entered the ATMS gymnasium they were given a profile including job title, monthly income, marital status and number of dependent children. During the exercise they deposited their monthly paycheck into their bank account before visiting various reality stations to pay for housing, utilities, transportation, groceries, clothing, childcare, insurance and entertainment.

As in real life, the money often ran out before they could visit all their stations, some had to adjust their spending habits and expectations.

“It’s scary at first but once you get hold of it you realize it’s not easy,” said Sierra Miller.

Payton VanZee finished the April 5 Reality Store experience with just under $500. This was the first time that the financial literacy event took place at ATMS.

Lorretta Wise shows a Reality Store participant options for Entertainment and Dining Out. Students had to decide which purchases to make so their paychecks would last through all the stations.

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In an anonymous survey taken after the experience, other eighth-graders recorded their impressions.

“I realized how expensive it is to have children and how important it is to stay in school so I can get a better paying job.”

“It’s not that easy to get what you want, because you and your family’s needs come before your wants.

I think this was a better way of learning about the world and how to be prepared.”

Weathmore High School Career Development Coordinator Misty Wolfe, on hand during the exercise, is hoping the activity helped students understand why they need educational training before they get to high school.

“I want them to realize the value of education in terms of their income career goals and their ability to support a family,” she said. “We have numerous career-technical programs at the high school and if they can get the desire here, I can find a career category they would be suited for and they can get on track to become successful.”

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