



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

By Gary Ogle | Crawford County Now

Fourteen Bucyrus seniors got a rare opportunity Wednesday morning to have a Q-and-A with the top fiscal officer in Ohio. State Treasurer Josh Mandel and members of his staff dropped in to get a first-hand look at a financial literacy class that is now a state mandate for every graduating senior.

The requirement is open-ended in that the information can be taught any time during their high school or even junior high years as long as they have the credit prior to graduation. If schools choose, the state also provides a variety of resources for the classes at no charge to school districts. Those options include online or Web-based classes and the traditional paper materials.

Mandel discussed why personal financial literacy is important in the state's overall health and economic recovery.

"I think it's important for the kids and grandkids of Ohio to have tools in their tool belts when it comes to managing finances," Mandel said. "A lot of young people once they graduate high school, graduate college, run into financial troubles. It's important that we educate people on the front end so they can avoid getting into financial trouble on the back end."

First Federal Community Bank in Bucyrus is underwriting the program called EVERFI at Bucyrus, Buckeye Central and Colonel Crawford. Brad Murtiff of First Federal his bank saw both the value and need of helping consumers be more financially savvy by the time they graduate.

"We found that as a community partner there's no better time to reach people," Murtiff said. EVERFI is a computer curriculum. "I think it's an interesting thing we never had access to. It's exciting."

Mandel's comments to Bucyrus students focused on the advantages and perils of credit.

"There's nothing wrong with having a credit card as long as you manage it responsibly," Mandel told the students. "Where people get in trouble is where they bite off more than they can chew."

While credit and debt are parts of the curriculum, it also stresses various ways to save and instructs students on other items such as variable interest rates in an effort to help them avoid becoming victims of predatory lending practices.

That's crucial, Mandel said, noting that the economic depression was fueled in large part by the mortgage crisis and record foreclosure rates.

"A lot of the economic downturn in Ohio and throughout the country were motivators for ensuring we maximize the financial literacy program," Mandel said. "We're doing everything we can here in Crawford County and throughout the state to ensure that the next generation of Ohioans has good financial education so they can make good financial decisions later in life."



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Murtiff, who is a member of the Bucyrus city Schools Board of Education, said that played a large factor in his bank's decision to play a key role in making the financial education available to area high school students.

"We wanted to be proactive in building a foundation," Murtiff said. "What this program does is help you in the baseline knowledge and make those good decisions."

Mandel noted the state also has financial education programs that are specifically designed for adults.

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