

ARKANSAS



The Arkansas Credit Union League (ACUL) turned to the National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) program to help high school teachers prepare their students to become financial savvy graduates. In July 2011, the league in conjunction with the Student Loan Guarantee Foundation of Arkansas (SLGFA) trained 32 teachers and eight credit union participants around the state to teach money management skills to students in grades 9 through 12.

The train-the-trainer workshop covered the basics of budgeting, investing, good credit, bad credit, insurance, and analyzing career and employment benefits over a two hour period. Reta Kahley, President of ACUL and Courtney Nickles, Executive Director of the Texas Credit Union Foundation, taught the workshop. Kahley had been certified as a NEFE trainer when she was the vice president of a credit union in Texas and has since taken a NEFE refresher course. She is a firm supporter of the NEFE program and has been trying to introduce it into Arkansas schools during the ten years she has been at the helm of the league, but success has been limited.

During a conversation with her twin sister Rita Toland who is the Policy and Compliance Division Manager with SLGFA, Kahley learned that SLGFA would be modifying its mission due to legislative changes. Beginning July 1, 2010, SLGFA expanded its mission to include equipping students with the tools they need to finish their education with a limited amount of debt and with the necessary financial skills for the future. SLGFA created a subsidiary logo to better identify its mission of Teaching Educational Access and Money Management (TEAMM SLGFA). From this conversation, a partnership was launched between SLGFA and the Arkansas Credit Union Foundation to more effectively move the NEFE curriculum into Arkansas schools.



The first step was to have the NEFE curriculum approved by the Arkansas Board of Education as meeting its financial education requirements. This accomplished, Kahley and Bonnie Hartz, SLGFA's College Access and Debt Management Advisor, developed the train-the-trainer workshop. Hartz works closely with high school counselors. "As a result," says Kahley, "she is able to bring credibility to the league and to bring the NEFE program into schools. It's a big win for everyone."

The partnership is expanding into other directions, as well. An upcoming financial education workshop has been planned for McClellan Magnet High School in the Little Rock area for students and their parents. Despite being located in an economically stressed area of the city, the school can boast of many academic achievements. Kahley and Hartz believe the school can serve as a good pilot for trying a fast moving series of financial educational sessions, such as tips for buying a used car, managing a checking account, developing a financial plan, and financial aid information. League staff and credit union executives will help teach the sessions.

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