

Keefe Tech students learn about spending, budgeting

By Jonathan Phelps/Daily News Staff

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FRAMINGHAM — Catherine Liranzo, a senior at Keefe Regional Technical School, took on the role of a professional accountant Friday morning, bringing in \$3,206 a month.

The role was part of a simulation to teach students about financial decisions, including savings, spending, and budgeting. This is the first time the school has hosted such an event.

Liranzo, 17, of Framingham, said she had to figure out her expenses for an entire month. She decided on a three-bedroom apartment.

“I moved in with two other girls so we split the rent,” she said.

Other expenses in the financial simulation included transportation, utilities, food, insurance and luxury expenses. Uncertainty was thrown into the mix when students had to spin a wheel with unexpected bonuses or expenses, such as house repair, speeding tickets or car repairs.

Liranzo got \$350 more from a tax refund, but lost \$1,500 with an unexpected pregnancy.

“I think it’s very realistic and it shows how quick money can go,” she said. “It teaches you how to spend your money wisely. It is easy to get rid of but you have to work hard to get it.”

Business technology instructor Margaret Ellis said the school received a \$5,000 grant from the Massachusetts State Treasurer’s Financial Education Innovation Fund to host the “Reality Check” Fair. TD Bank threw in an extra \$1,000.

The program included three class sessions for all seniors on decoding a paycheck, budgeting and credit. The goal is to get the students financially ready for the real world, Ellis said.

“I think it is important for them to realize what their priorities should be with their spending,” she said. “It’s good to learn with pretend money, not real money.”

She said volunteers from the Framingham Rotary Club and local businesses advised students on how to make appropriate financial decisions based on their monthly income. The event featured representatives from TD Bank, Needham Bank, Align Credit Union and Metro Credit Union.

Each student received a mock paycheck based on a fake salary and career. Their credit was based on attendance records, Ellis said.

“Some students questioned why their credit is so bad,”

Rotary Club member Nelson Zide of Framingham manned the “Wheel of Fortune” part of the event. Some students could get an unexpected bonus of \$500 or have to pay for a \$700 car repair.

“I think the kids are having fun, but they are learning something,” Zide said. “Some students are really questioning why they came in negative.”

Senior Jon Rouser, 17, of Marlborough, said he wanted a Ford Mustang. As a landscaper, he brings in \$2,654.

“When I did I ended up broke,” he said. “The insurance was so bad.”

He went through the fair several times trying to lower his monthly costs. He ended up being able to afford an XBox, Netflix and a large dog as luxury items.

“It was surreal,” he said. “It was eye opening.”

The 2015 Keefe Tech “Reality Check” Fair was initiated by the Framingham Rotary Club with the assistance of the Business Professionals of America, Keefe Tech Chapter.

While Liranzo, who is in the school’s business program, had \$231 at the end of the month, that won’t always be the case because she received a one-time \$350 tax refund. That puts her in the red.

“According to the ledger, I’d have to get a second job,” she said.

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