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Vermont honors students for their money smarts

by Josh O’Gorman, Vermont Press Bureau

MONTPELIER — Today’s students are tomorrow’s leaders, and it’s never too early to put them on the right financial track.

Students from around the state gathered Thursday to be honored for their efforts to learn about and promote financial literacy during an event organized by the state treasurer’s office.

“You are our future government leaders, our future leaders of industry,” said State Treasurer Beth Pearce. “It’s important to us and it’s important to the state because you are on your way to being productive citizens who will contribute to the economy.”

Pearce was honoring the students for achievements in two financial education efforts. Now in its seventh year, the “Be Money Wise” poster contest invites Vermont students in grades 3-12 to design posters on a theme, which this year is “Think ... before you spend.”

Judges awarded prizes in elementary, middle and high school categories, with the first-place winners and their schools each receiving a prize of \$100.

At the high school level, 12th-grader Julian Kelly from Montpelier High School took the top prize. Brittany Savage from Fair Haven Union High School took the third-prize award.

First prize at the middle school level went to sixth-grader Esther Mackenzie from Middletown Springs Elementary School. Second prize went to Dakohta Sanderson from Windsor Junior/Senior High School, while Adelle Woodcock, from Grace Christian School in Bennington, took third place.

Schools increasingly put more emphasis on financial literacy.

Both Fair Haven Union High School and U-32 High School in Montpelier have made completion of a financial literacy class a requirement for graduation.

Lt. Gov. Phil Scott was at Wednesday’s event, where he read a proclamation on behalf of Gov. Peter Shumlin that declared April to be Financial Literacy Month.

“It’s our job to show our children why it’s critical to have these skills, and to show them how to apply these skills,” Scott said to the parents in the audience.

“When we teach our students how to properly manage their money, we’re truly investing in their future success,” he said. “The hope is that, by teaching our children the true value of a dollar, they will grow into fiscally responsible adults and pass those same values on to their own children.”

Twenty students also received \$250 savings accounts for participating in another program through the state treasurer’s office called “Reading Is an Investment,” which promotes both financial literacy and reading literacy through classroom and library instruction and through a personal reading program.

Now in its fourth year, the curriculum was taught in 130 schools across the state, with the winners chosen at random from among more than 4,100 students who completed the program.

Those winners included Jaedon Beardsley from Barnard Academy; Thane Gill, Gabe Kadric and Tori Scott from Ferrisburgh Central School; Clare Monahan from Manchester Elementary School; Chase Stokes and Alixis Williams from Mary Hogan Elementary School in Middlebury; and Austin Bunn from Readsboro Central.