

Rock band mixes in financial literacy at school assembly

By Scott Stewart / World-Herald News Service | Posted: Thursday, October 29, 2015 12:15 am

COUNCIL BLUFFS - Driving down West Broadway, motorists can see several banks – a service for which Council Bluffs cannot be accused of having too little access.

But those clunking down Broadway in an older model car, or a brand new but likely unaffordable one, also pass at least 10 businesses offering payday loans, not to mention rent-to-own stores and others catering to those who may be struggling financially.

A national touring band stopped by Thomas Jefferson High School on Tuesday afternoon to play some rock-and-roll tunes and deliver a message about financial literacy focused on “breaking the chain” perpetuated by predatory lenders, high-interest loans and a lack of saving for the future that traps many people in poverty.

TS Institute, the nonprofit arm of TS Bank, sponsored the performance by Gooding along with the Council Bluffs Community School District. The band will play at Abraham Lincoln High School on Friday after stops in the Nebraska communities of Wahoo and Lincoln.

Gooding’s financial literacy tour “Funding the Future” began with a rock performance and was followed by personal stories and preaching the importance of sound financial decisions. Students from all grades at T.J. attended the assembly in the school’s gym, although some classes were testing during the afternoon.

Described as “The Coolest Financial Adviser in America” by The Wall Street Journal in August, the band’s guitarist, vocalist and mononymous namesake Gooding told the students of Thomas Jefferson he was there to talk about money, discipline, greed and love, and he wanted the students to avoid some of the mistakes he had made with finances.



DNP Rock music 1

Gooding, vocalist and namesake of the band he tours with, speaks to Thomas Jefferson High School students about financial literacy during the band's stop in Council Bluffs Tuesday. The three-piece rock-and-roll outfit was brought in by TS Institute, the nonprofit arm of TS Bank, and the Council Bluffs Community School District and performed a number of songs along with Gooding breaking away to address the student body about financial literacy.

“I’m not saying money is bad,” he said. “I’m saying a lack of knowledge about money is bad.”

Giving examples of famous actors, athletes, musicians and lottery winners, Gooding argued that simply having a lot of money isn’t enough, because many people have blown through fortunes to find themselves without, and many more yet have dug themselves into holes financially, even in pursuit of positive ends like attending college.

“We’ve got to break the chain,” Gooding said. “That’s why we want to talk to you guys at your age.”

Zero isn’t the bottom when it comes to personal finance, he cautioned.

Credit cards, payday loans and other traps can grow a small amount of debt to astronomical proportions, dragging down credit scores along with a person’s future by ending marriages, preventing the purchase of homes or otherwise disrupting lifelong dreams.

“Control money, or it will control you,” he told the gathered T.J. students, many of whom began engaging in side conversations, earning the occasional scolding from Gooding, who reminded those paying attention that they’ll be the ones the other students will someday be asking for jobs or other assistance.

“If you don’t have the knowledge about this, you’re not saving, and you’re not breaking the chain,” he added.

“If more is coming out than is coming in, you’re going to suffer.”

Gooding’s message encouraged students to start saving, perhaps opening an individual retirement account so dollars can begin to compound interest that – coupled with an average return from the stock market in a conservative mutual fund – should grow to hundreds of thousands of dollars by age 65.

Students were encouraged to check out the Yellow Jacket branch of TS Bank operated at their school to open an account, and they were told to be wary of businesses putting up the facade of a bank to disguise loans with awful terms, including interest rates as high as 1,300 percent.

“They want you to think they are banks, but they’re not banks,” Gooding said. “Imagine how much money these people are taking out of our communities.”

Debt cards were also encouraged, because students couldn’t dig themselves into much of a hole like they can taking hundreds or thousands of dollars worth of lines of consumer credit.

“You do not need 10 credit cards,” Gooding said. “You need one credit card, and you need to pay it off.”

When he enrolled in college, he said he fell for some of the freebies given out to students when they apply for a card, a practice that’s come under more scrutiny in recent years. Those students with jobs

should also watch out for pay cards, such as those offered by Walmart and Taco Bell, he said.

Instead of a normal checking account at a bank, those cards often charge \$1 to check balances and \$5 to just make a deposit, Gooding said.

Those fees add up to a billion-dollar industry, siphoning off money from many people with little extra to spare.

“It makes absolutely no sense they are allowed to do this,” Gooding said.