



From left, Karen Taylor Bass, Kimberley Smith and Kimberley Allers conduct a Break the Cycle money-management workshop at Springfield Gardens HS.

Blinging it all back home

BY NICHOLAS HIRSHON

LIFE IS ALL ABOUT the "bling" for many high school students, who covet cash and jewelry but ironically know little about money management.

Enter Break the Cycle, a workshop that travels throughout the city using dynamic techniques to teach students the importance of financial responsibility.

The program's most recent stop was on Feb. 27 at Springfield Gardens High School, and it will educate students in Bayside and Cambria Heights during the next academic year.

"They understand the cultural icons and they'd like to make a lot of money, but they just don't know how," said Michael Robinson, the admissions diversity officer at Columbia Business School and a workshop guest lecturer.

Business pros like Robinson and Karen Taylor Bass, whose media company runs Break

Program teaches students to save

the Cycle, try not to preach. Rather than using boring textbook examples, the experts discuss how famous entertainers like Jay Z and Diddy became rich by having multiple sources of income.

Students can also connect with Kimberley Smith, a recent college graduate who grew up in St. Albans and is now a regional community affairs representative for the Delta Funding Corp., a Break the Cycle sponsor.

Smith, 23, could easily have fallen into debt while going to John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Instead, she planned well and paid off all her student loans on time.

Her message to teens: Pay more than just the basic minimums on credit card bills

because you might otherwise ruin your chances of getting a mortgage.

Kimberly Allers, a senior editor for personal finance and careers at *Essence* magazine, also advises students to think long term — a lesson that served her well during her early years in St. Albans.

At Springfield Gardens High School, which will close in June because of poor test scores and student-initiated violence, last month's Break the Cycle visit opened the teens' eyes to saving for the future.

The students' written evaluations speak volumes.

Taichi Johnson, 18, said the workshop "made me focus more on my future."

Kendo Hammond, also 18, rated its effectiveness as excellent and said he learned to save money.

Break the Cycle plans to visit many more high schools in 2007 and 2008, including Cardozo and Campus Magnet in Queens.