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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Teens Experience Real World Financial Scenarios at VyStar Credit Union Reality Fair at Enmarket Arena**

**Savannah, GA.** - VyStar Credit Union held a Reality Fair at Enmarket Arena Saturday, July 13, from 9:00 am to 12:30 pm. This free large-scale simulation event was designed to equip approximately 200 teenagers (ages 13–18) and their parents with essential money management skills for real-world financial challenges. Participants in the Reality Fair received a new identity with a career, an income, a credit score, and instruction on how to create a monthly budget. They then visited a variety of booths where they were presented with real world monthly expenses like housing, groceries, transportation and some unexpected events like a broken dishwasher or an emergency room visit. The teen participants had to figure out how to cut expenses or earn more income to have money left over at the end of the month.

The exercise generated eye-opening experiences about the importance of budgeting, building emergency savings and prioritizing needs over wants. “I learned that not everything is as cheap as we might have thought it was as a teenager,” said Participant Zoe Daniels. “I’m learning how to budget my money more.” The Reality Fair is geared to teach teens that learning financial planning now will help them for their future and it helps parents have money conversations using these experiences. Saturday’s Reality Fair was one of hundreds facilitated over the last decade in educational environments reaching thousands of students as part of the credit union’s Financial Fitness educational programming aimed at empowering youth to enhance their money skills.

Several area non-profit organizations that include financial education in their programming brought members to participate in the event. “We had about two dozen kids who came here today to take part in this amazing event, and we are encouraging them to take full advantage of the learning opportunity,” said President of 100 Black Men of Savannah Harold Ogelsby. “We find that not only are the younger individuals lacking the knowledge but also the parents. So simple things like how to balance your checkbook, the importance of having a good budget, having an emergency fund and not only do the kids learn but also the parents so it becomes a family and a generational change in the way they practice their finances.”

At the end of the simulation, the parents and teens participated in a wrap-up discussion on how they navigated their assigned scenarios. Teens shared it was often a challenge making decisions about whether to buy a new or used car or covering their expenses when they had spent money on extras like vacations and concert tickets. “They had to make lifestyle choices based on their career, their finances, and on their credit score,” said VyStar Vice President of School Programs Michael J. Rathjen. “It is a great way for them to feel the peace that comes with having those resources and making sound decisions or the stress that comes with what many face of not having enough money to make it through the month. It is a powerful way to bring the learning to life.”



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In addition to interactive financial education events VyStar has 18 High School Branches to provide work-site experience and internship opportunities to students. Through the in-school programs VyStar has delivered financial education training to over 130,00 students to prepare youth for their financial future. VyStar recognizes the importance of teaching students these vital skills now, to set them up for success later in life. VyStar representatives were on site to assist students with opening a youth account to learn how to manage their money in a safe way. All participating students also received two ticket vouchers valid for Monster Jam coming up in September at Enmarket Arena.

To access the latest financial tools and resources for every stage of life and a list of resources for students along with future Financial Fitness events and initiatives go to [vystarcu.org](http://vystarcu.org).

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*VyStar Credit Union is the second-largest credit union headquartered in Florida, with over 80 branches and now serves more than 975,000 members with assets of over \$14 billion. VyStar is the top mortgage lender in Northeast Florida and a major employer in the region with over 2,500 employees across the communities it serves. VyStar membership is open to everyone who lives or works in the 49 contiguous counties of Central to North Florida, 29 Georgia counties, and past and present military members and their families all over the world. For more information, visit [vystarcu.org](http://vystarcu.org), and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X \(Twitter\)](#), and [LinkedIn](#).*

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