

Muriel Siebert High Water Women Campaign for Financial Literacy

The High Water Women Foundation is a charitable organization founded in 2005 by senior women in the Hedge Fund Industry. Their mission is to empower women and youth in need by creating powerful volunteer opportunities that leverage the talents and aspirations of professional women.

An exciting program provides financial literacy programs for teens in New York. We attended the first of four classes at the Fort Washington Public Library in upper Manhattan on November 8.

Fruit juices, grapes and bright yellow and orange cupcakes perked up the childrens' interest.

So too the first question Elanor Brand, a High Water staff member and literacy volunteer, asked. Who is interested in money? Too a one, the twenty 12-14 year old teens chimed in "I am."

Whatever your age or background, money interests, because you have to satisfy wants and needs, Elanor pointed out. She then distributed a sheet on which the kids could evaluate a pet choice for hypothetical teen, Lee. Given that Lee's elderly grandmother lives in the house and sleeps all the time, and that Lee has a tough academic schedule, which pet best suits him? The categories are 'quiet', 'fun', and 'easy-to-care-for.'

Almost to a one, the kids succumbed to their want -- a dog. Neither quiet nor easy-to-care for. Only Bryon, who skewed young, chose a sensible rabbit. How many times a day do we have to sort out wants and needs?

Kids were shown how to budget with goals and then to record their expenditures for a week and come back with budgets. It will be interesting to see how many iPad minis show up. No one could agree on whether the new hot item on the block was a want or a need, but in the heat of desire many inventive saving plans maybe created.

High Water has sensibly created the program with lots of give and take, and in small units. Who would imagine that a financial literacy classroom would be so lively? High Water is doing an indispensable job so well.