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FREE

Church members graduate from financial literacy program

These are tough economic times, but one roomful of people is now ready to tackle the challenges of today's economy with greater knowledge and confidence and the determination to support each other through these hard days.

On Saturday, December 13, Boston Missionary Baptist Church in Roxbury, hosted a graduation of an exciting program designed to equip its participants with the knowledge of how to manage money wisely and build strong financial futures for themselves and their families.

Led by Rev. Dr. Soliny Vedrine, Boston Missionary Baptist Church has a congregation of approximately 800 Haitian families. The 19 smiling graduates had completed a class, conducted in Haitian Creole and English, in the Moving from Debt to Assets program, which was run by the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO). State Senator-elect Sonia Chang-Diaz and State Representative Linda Dorcea Forry were on hand to offer their congratulations to the graduates and stress the importance of the lessons learned in the program during the current economic conditions.

This class was sponsored by Citizens Bank and the Citizens Bank Foundation, which was represented at the graduation by Marlena Carter-Diaz, Manager of the Mattapan bank branch, and Rulx Marseille, Teller at the same branch. This is the fifth Moving from Debt to Assets program offered at Boston Missionary Baptist Church, each conducted in Creole and English. Overall, since its start in 2005, 418 people have graduated from GBIO's Moving from Debt to Assets program, in which half the groups have been run in languages other than English. Moving from Debt to Assets includes a combination of classes, one-on-one financial counseling, peer support groups, and cash grants to qualified participants.

In his speech at the graduation, Keke Fleurissant, the owner of Keke Financial Group and a long-time leader in GBIO, stated, "The lessons of Moving from Debt to Assets were always important, but now they are absolutely essential for our survival through these rough times:

- Make sure you have a budget and stick to it!
- Cut spending – Remember to distinguish between



WANTS & NEEDS

- Invest in yourself – Save for your future!
- Use credit wisely, as a tool - Don't get caught in the credit card trap.

As one program graduate said in her speech at the Graduation, "Money is power, you can't live without it. Pay

yourself first, take control of your money, learn how to manage your money. Believe me, if I can do it, you can do it also!" GBIO is a broad-based organization, made up of 66 churches, synagogues, unions, and other institutions, which works to bring together, train, and organize the communities

of Greater Boston, across all religious, racial, ethnic, class, and neighborhood lines, for the public good. Founded in 1998, its primary goal is to develop local leadership and organized power to fight for social justice.