Pridemore helps with money lessons at Erin School

By Sarah Mann Times Press Editor

It's never too soon to learn how to budget and Erin School students are well on their way to being responsible spenders and savers, thanks to a governmental guest.

Rep. Don Pridemore (R-Hartford) made an appearance May 9 at Erin School to help the First Bank Financial Centre of Hartford teach second-graders an important lesson about fiscal responsibility.

"We're trying to teach kids a little bit about money and what happens if you don't have enough," he said.

Pridemore was the guest of First Bank's assistant branch manager Christa Gavin. Gavin, through the bank, strives to provide community outreach programs to help people learn how to manage money wisely. This is the second year that she has organized presentations at Erin School, and Wednesday marked the first time that Pridemore attended such a session.

"We're glad he's able to participate with us this year...to help stress how important financial literacy is at any age," Gavin said.

Pridemore started the program by reading "The Penny Pot," a storybook by Stuart J. Murphy and Lynne Woodcock. The book follows a young girl named Jessie to the fair, where she spends money on ice cream and does not have enough to get her face painted. She must save up to buy that service.

"It's a matter of priorities, even at this age," Pridemore said of the book's moral.

The kids took to it readily and jumped at the chance to answer questions about what they had just heard. They also discussed the role of consumers and producers, and even gave examples of when they had acted as a consumer (buying clothing, for instance) or a producer (selling lemonade or Girl Scout cookies).

The day was a way for students to understand the financial concepts that they were learning about in social studies apply to the real world, said second grade teacher Stacia Benedict.

"This is a great way to tie it to the community," she said, adding that her students have a better understanding when they see how their money works in the real world.

The children also completed worksheets where they illustrated what it is to be a consumer or producer, and practiced counting money by coin denominations.

For Gavin, these events are a way to get kids thinking about the role they and their money play in society.

"We enjoy teaching them about choices and being producers and consumers," she said.