

## Tools to last a lifetime

Next to language literacy, mastering financial literacy probably looms as the most important ingredient necessary to achieve the American Dream. That's the belief of **Jessika Lazala**, a graduate of the High School of Commerce in Springfield who's now a senior at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth.



**JESSIKA LAZALA**

On Oct. 12, Lazala, accompanied by **Jennifer Connolly**, president of **Junior Achievement of Western Massachusetts**, spoke at the Statehouse in Boston as part of Financial Literacy Day. She may not like public speaking, but Cries & Whispers hears Lazala, an alumna of four years of Junior Achievement's financial literacy and entrepreneurial programming, made quite an impression with her message to educators and legislators.

"I feel it is extremely important to start teaching students about financial literacy at a very young age," she said on behalf of the MassSaves Coalition. "I first learned about budgeting, saving and investing when I joined Junior Achievement. I also had the opportunity to teach younger students about money and savings, and the difference between wants and needs as a JA High School Hero. Today, I am asking our legislators to support financial literacy education and implement standards and objectives on personal finance in order to equip students with the knowledge they need to become self-supporting."

She and Connolly also met with staff members for state Sen. **James Welch**, D-Springfield, and state Rep. **Michael Finn**, D-West Springfield, to support MassSaves' effort to get legislation passed to instruct the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to authorize the implementation of standards and objectives on personal finance literacy.

Lazala was a finalist in the Junior Achievement of the USA national student business plan competition during her senior year at Commerce.