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MONEY WISE

Valuing People | Valuing Money

Managing in Tough Times

FAMILY FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

JANUARY 2011

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:
NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

Many people start the new year with good intentions making this year different. A New Year's resolution is simply a goal that individuals set for themselves and family members to follow for the next 12 months. People often make New Year's resolutions which focus on improving health, reducing stress, or saving money. Unfortunately, good intentions alone will not lead to change; to be successful you need to develop a plan that will outline how you will make this year different.

Ways to Achieve Your Financial New Year's Resolutions:

- Post your goal in a visible place; it will serve as a daily reminder.
- Determine what steps you must take to accompolish your goal.
- Identify the obstacles which may limit your success.
- Take the opportunity to learn from these obstacles.
- Track your progress.
- Recognize small accomplishments, which add up quickly.
- Do not feel discouraged if you need to rework your game plan.

Written by: Jennifer Hunter

Source: O'Neil, Barb. Got Financial Resolutions? Develop a Plan, Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension. Retrieved on November 28, 2010 from http://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw/message/message

A New Year's resolution is simply a goal that you set for youself and your family to follow during the next 12 months.

Going Green during the New Year

Three, two, one…Happy New Year! Resolving to go green during the new year is one resolution that not only benefits the environment, but can also save you money.

Reduce

Ask yourself "Do I really need this?" before purchasing an item. Buying items that you may not use, or buying too much of any one item, hurts the environment and your pocketbook.

Reuse

Reuse is essentially any action that extends the life of a product and keeps it out of the waste system.

•Margarine tub, coffee cans, and glass jars can be washed and put to other uses.

•Newspapers and magazines can be used for packing material and as gift wrap.

•Old, worn-out clothes can be cut up and used as cleaning and polishing rags.

Recycle

Recycling turns waste materials from the products we purchase into new products and packaging. To close the recycling loop, we not only need to recycle, we also need to purchase items made from recycled materials. For more information about local recycling programs in your community, contact your Solid Waste Coordinator.

Rot

Composting is nature's way of recycling, where organic materials are decomposed by bacteria, fungi, worms, and insects. Compost can be used to reduce the amount of chemical fertilizers applied on your soil by providing some of the same nutrients.

Written by: Ashley Osborne

* For more information on Going Green during the New Year, please contact Ashley Osborne, (859) 257-2505.

FAMILY
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
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Gift cards ***are one of the most popular holiday gifts.***

Getting the Most from Holiday Gift Cards

Many of us may have added a new gift card to our wallet sometime over the holiday season. Sometimes the “rules” associated with gift cards can be a mystery, leading to many gift cards left unused. To get the best use out your gift card, it is important to understand the new rules for gift cards in 2010 Credit Card Act, which applies to all gift cards sold after August 22, 2010.

Store cards, as well as gift cards with a credit card logo, such as Visa or Master-Card, are covered under the new regulations. The good news is:

- your gift card will no longer expire in three, six, or 12 months.
- your gift card will be good for at least five years from the date of purchase.

Even if your card expires, you may still be able to spend any remaining funds on the card by requesting a replacement card from the issuer. The new card should be issued free of charge.
Read the gift card or its packaging closely: any fees such as an inactivity fee or processing charge must be disclosed on either the card or the packaging.

The new law also places limits on the fees that the issuer can charge. Typically, you can still be charged a dormancy fee if you have not used your card within one year.

Finally, make certain that you know what type of card you have since the new rules only apply to gift cards. There are other types of prepaid cards that are not included in the legislation, such as reloadable prepaid cards or store rebate or promotional cards.

Written by: Jennifer Hunter

Source: What You Need to Know: New Rules for Gift Cards, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. Retrieved on November 28, 2010 from http://www.federalreserve.gov/consumerinfo/wyntk_giftcards.htm.

Make Saving a Habit

The most successful savers are those who stick to a plan, take advantage of savings opportunities, and avoid financial traps. Use this checklist to see how your savings habits stack up.

1) Do you know your net worth, that is, the dollar amount representing all your assets minus your debts?

2) Do you have a personal spending plan with specific goals and plans for achieving these goals?

3) Do you have a personal spending plan that allows you to save enough money to achieve these goals?

4) Do you have credit card or payday loan debt? If so, are you reducing this debt?

5) Do you spend less than your income and save the difference?

6) Do you have sufficient emergency savings to pay for unexpected expenses?

7) Are you saving enough for retirement?

8) Do you save for retirement at work through a 401(k) or other contributory plan?

9) Outside of work, do you save automatically through regular pre-authorized transfers from a checking account to a savings or investment account?

10) Do you save a portion of tax refunds, gifts, bonuses, or other financial windfalls?

Source: www.americasaves.org

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