

The Penny Pincher

July 2003

A Newsletter from Garden State Consumer Credit Counseling, Inc.

Garden State Receives HUD Approval

Source: Becky Winters

IT'S OFFICIAL!!! We are pleased to announce that as of March 19, 2003, our agency successfully completed the requirements and was approved as a HUD Certified Housing Counseling Agency. HUD serves as a resource to maintain and expand homeownership and rental housing. This certification provides assurance that our housing counselors have knowledge of a variety of HUD housing and community programs, including pre-purchase and default counseling. As with our debt management and credit counseling, Garden State offers workshops and individual counseling to anyone in need. Our agency also works with lenders toward default prevention and new housing programs for the community. As part of the program, clients are informed in detail of housing that is available, based on their eligibility and how they can apply for housing, including the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved in the housing transaction.

In conjunction with default counseling, Garden State will provide referral information and resource information for help in areas of expertise. Our goal is to help community members plan and achieve housing, with the use of housing programs, and additionally help those who are struggling,

due to the economy or other reasons, keep their homes. There is NO fee associated with this service. Our agency is committed to ensuring a positive housing counseling plan that will have an impact in our community. If you or someone else feel they could benefit from this service, please do not hesitate to contact our office. We are here to help. ♦

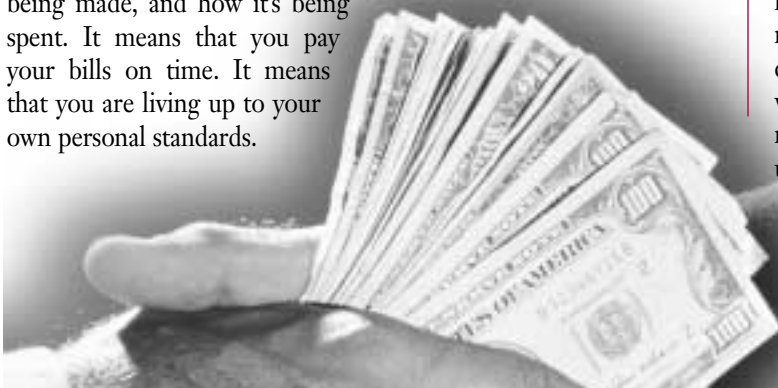


7 Strategies To Show Me The Money

Source: www.betterbudgeting.com

The bottom line is simple...you can be in control of your finances. But you must first be in control of your choices. Here are some steps to help you get control of your finances...

1 Determine your level of integrity about money. Are you being honest with yourself and with your partner (if applicable) about your personal finances? Do you spend money and then hide the evidence? Do you find yourself trying to justify how the money was spent? Having integrity with your money means that you feel comfortable and honest with how it's being made, and how it's being spent. It means that you pay your bills on time. It means that you are living up to your own personal standards.



2 Determine your relationship with money. Ask yourself: Are you spending money to impress or control people, buy love or to give yourself a rush? Some people end up with nothing at the end of each month because they refuse to take responsibility for how they spend or invest it. Some people never use any of their money to enjoy their lives. By knowing where your money is going, you will be able to make decisions based on what is actually happening in the present, instead of fears or doubts that you have left over from past experiences.

3 Create awareness about your money. How much do you make? How much do you spend? Do you have a budget? Do you know how your cash flow is? Do you know where you are spending your money? Do you know your net worth? Do you know how much your credit card interest rate is? Are you shocked at the end of the year when you see how much you earned, yet can't identify where the money has gone? Do you have savings in case of emergencies or unforeseen circumstances? Are you insured?

4 Identify the differences between REAL expenses, and the "going-broke-saving-money" monster. Where is money being spent but not appreciated? The GBSM monster sucks up money for items that look too good to pass up. Would you tear up \$500 and throw it into the garbage? Of course not. Yet you

(Continued on Page 11)

Credit Counseling Complaints Surge

Source: *Herald News*

GARFIELD, NJ - Diana Palmer doesn't mind being broke. She sees a light and a silver dollar at the end of the tunnel. In two years, Palmer, who requested her maiden name to be used, will be done repaying her \$7,000 credit card debt and be free of creditors' pestering - without filing for bankruptcy.

Garden State Consumer Credit Counseling, a nonprofit, credit-counseling group in Freehold, helped her to tighten her belt. They fashioned a budget for her to follow and introduced her to a financial lifestyle she could afford. However, Palmer's success with a credit-counseling agency is rare.

In 2002, complaints to the Better Business Bureau about some fraudulent credit agencies increased nearly sixfold to 1,480 from 261 in 1998. Aggressive firms that masquerade as nonprofit organizations - failure to make their clients' payments on time and lying about their fees - are mushrooming, according to a report recently released by the Consumer Federation of America. "Deceptive practices and outright scams are on the rise," said Deanne Loonin, an attorney with the National Consumer Law Center in Washington. "Meanwhile, most state and federal regulators appear to be asleep at the switch."

Yet, a bankruptcy bill approved by the House on March 19, and waiting to be introduced in the Republican-controlled Senate, could soon give credit-counseling agencies more power than ever.

The bill, pushed by 200 credit card companies, retailers and banks, would require debtors to receive credit counseling before they can be eligible for bankruptcy protection. What the bill doesn't mention, however, is that some of these companies stand to profit from people who don't file for bankruptcy. "The vast majority of funding comes from creditors," said Travis Plunkett, legislative director for the Consumer Federation of America. "Anyone in the industry will tell



you that there is a potential conflict of interest."

Companies that issue credit cards have historically paid credit-counseling agencies 15 percent of the debt they recover from borrowers, the Consumer Federation of America reported. For credit counselors, that translates into a \$2,100 "creditor contribution" for every \$14,000 of debt - the nation's average, according to Garden State data. In recent years, creditors have reduced their "contributions" to an average of 8 percent, hindering the industry's ability to provide proper financial counseling and sustain itself. "We would not be able to stay in business without contributions from creditors," said Dianne Giarratano, Director of Education with Garden State Consumer Credit Counseling. "We don't charge any fees."

Preparing Your Teen For Their First Summer Job

By: *Gina McCullough*

Summer is in full swing and for many teenagers, that means they are preparing for their first job. Summer jobs, if viewed properly, can provide your teen with much more than pocket money. This is your opportunity to lay the foundation for the work ethics they can carry throughout their lives. Summer employment offers your child the opportunity to gain valuable employment skills, foster responsibility, meet interesting people and help build their confidence. Regardless of the type of summer job, from scooping ice cream, to working in the mall, your teen will acquire knowledge, new skills and possibly discover new talents they didn't know existed. However, preparing for that first job can be a frightening experience. Think back to your first summer job. Mine was as a lifeguard at the local pool. I was so nervous the first day, even though I had been going to that pool since I was a baby. I was nervous about my bosses, what was expected of me, would I get along with the people I would be working with? Most importantly, would they like me, and in this specific case, what if someone drowns and I forgot all my

training? I remember talking to my parents about my fears and it really helped. Below are some suggestions on how to help your child prepare for their first summer job.

- Talk to your teen to make sure they are ready to take on the responsibility of a summer job. If they are not ready or not interested, they will not be motivated to work. If you feel strongly about your teen working, attempt to negotiate with them. Maybe they can start by doing volunteer work or only working part time.
- For adults who have been in the workforce for some time, basic employment skills are something we can take for granted. If your teen has never worked before, those skills haven't even been acquired. Before your teen starts working, take the time to explain the importance of professional behavior and a good work ethic. These two characteristics are important at any job level. Discuss issues such as: dress code, punctuality, the proper attitude, good

But some counseling agencies, which act as for-profit groups despite their nonprofit status, charge for their services, as well as receive donations from creditors, according to the Consumer Federation of America. “It’s been a concern for us that some agencies don’t tell people who are really too far gone that they should file for bankruptcy,” Plunkett said.

The credit-counseling industry remains largely unregulated and the bankruptcy bill does not include funding to monitor or investigate potential fraudulent activity that could make matters worse for consumers, Plunkett said. “Without funding, the Department of Justice won’t be able to keep the shoddy operators off the list,” he said.

More than 1.5 million Americans declared personal bankruptcy in 2002 - more than any other 12-month period in history. Bankruptcy legislation has been the subject of debate since 1997. The road to a Senate passage of the bill is bound to be significantly more challenging. But, if approved, the bill would dramatically alter the bankruptcy code.

Under current law, almost all people are able to eliminate their debt in bankruptcy court while keeping their property. Under the bill, only people living in dire poverty will be able to discharge their debts completely. A formula known as “means testing” will require people living above bare sustenance to repay all or part of their debts under a five-year plan administered by the bankruptcy court, said Michael S. Kopelman, a bankruptcy attorney and an authority on bankruptcy in New Jersey. Kopelman maintains that “means testing” is inadequate because it requires people to pay a portion of their debt based on the average salary from previous years. “If someone is unemployed, his income now is zero,” Kopelman said. “How is he going to pay?”

Proponents of the bill, such as Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, trumpet it as an introduction to a new era of “personal responsibility.” “It’s not just the credit card companies that run into a loss when some-

one files for bankruptcy,” said Dustin Vande Hoef, Grassley’s spokesman. “Everyone else ends up paying a higher interest rate when someone doesn’t pay a debt.”

Representatives from the American Banking Association agree. “Often, people would go through bankruptcy without understanding the ramifications involved,” said Catherine Poulley, association spokeswoman. “People make mistakes, and the industry understands that.”

The bill is not designed to hurt low-income or middle-class Americans, Poulley said. Rather, it seeks to force the 10 percent high-income bankruptcy filers to live up to their debt obligation, she said. The 10 percent of the bankruptcy market is running a debt estimated between \$3 billion and \$4 billion, she said. The total U.S. household debt has reached a staggering \$7.5 trillion, as tens of millions of working people rely on debt to finance a higher cost of living, particularly for medical and education expenses, Garden State Credit Counseling reported.

U.S. Sen. Jon Corzine, D-New Jersey, one of the bill’s staunchest opponents, argues that it fails to curtail the unscrupulous credit giveaways of credit card companies. “There is little in the bill to curb predatory or abusive lending practices,” Corzine said, adding that the bill’s timing couldn’t be worse. At present, 8.4 million Americans are unemployed. That reflects a 2.5 million increase compared with 2000, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. “Now is not the time to do something that would create more financial hardship for people,” Corzine said.

Kopelman took the criticism a step further, calling the bill anti-American. “Although there are some bad apples, many of the people who come to see me don’t want to file for bankruptcy, but don’t have any other choice,” he said. “They are going to make the bankruptcy court into a collection agency.”

As she struggles with her budget, Palmer, who filed for bankruptcy once before, said she learned her lesson the hard way. “If I can’t buy it for cash,” she said, “I don’t want it.” ❖



interviewing skills and workplace ethic. Instilling these behaviors at a young age will make it easier for your child when they embark into their first full time job. Your child may not understand the importance now, but will definitely thank you for the skills you taught them later.

- Sit down with your teen and talk about their interests. By this point in his/her life, your teen has a pretty good idea of what they want to do after high school. If they haven’t found a job yet, they can focus on one that fits their future plans. If they enjoy history, a job at a local museum would be helpful. If they want to pursue teaching, a job at a summer day care program may be of interest to them. This type of summer work will be helpful in confirming their future plans, as well as, give them useful experience.

- Allow your teen to be responsible for all aspects of the summer job, from finding it to handling it once they are hired. For example, if your teen needs to call out sick, have them do it. Employers are understanding of a parent’s involvement to their teen’s jobs (i.e. supplying the rides to and from if the teen does not have a license). However, a parent should only become directly involved with their teens employer if there is a safety hazard or if they feel their child is being harassed or discriminated against in the workplace. ❖

Money Savers...Keep Your Cool for Less

Source: www.tbriiftymamma.com/moneysavers.htm

Kee Your Cool for Less...Its summer again and the mercury is rising. Running the air conditioning 24-7 can really increase your utility bill. Try the following five suggestions to keep your home comfortable and your costs manageable.

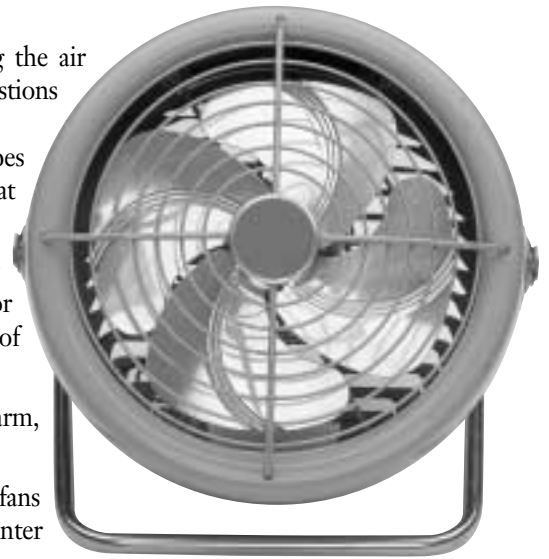
1 Leave windows open at night to collect cool night air. In the morning, shut the drapes and block as much incoming sun as possible. You may feel like you live in a cave, but at least it's a cool cave. If you need some light, lounge on the lawn and leave the heat outside.

2 Plan summertime meals. Using the oven generates a lot of heat in your kitchen. Try eating more dinner salads, cool fruity desserts, quick stove-top recipes, and outdoor grilling whenever possible. When you do bake, cook in batches. You can make 4 loaves of banana bread while your casserole is cooking and freeze the excess.

3 Turn the air conditioning off while you sleep. If your bedroom tends to get too warm, hang a damp sheet in front of a fan for a cool breeze.

4 Install ceiling fans. Moving air is a lot less stifling, even if its warm air. You'll find the fans to be a good investment in the winter as well. Turning on a ceiling fan during the winter will force warm air down that has risen to the ceiling.

5 Plan to play in the water. Conserve water by swimming in community pools or local lakes rather than splashing in the sprinklers. For young children, host a "Pool Party" in the bathtub. Put a few inches of tepid water in the tub, dress the kids in their swimming suits and serve popsicles. Use beach towels to dry off. ❖



13 Inexpensive Ideas for Date Night

Source: www.ivillage.com

- Go on a walk at sunset.
- Find your area's historical landmarks via the local tourist bureau. Get the booklets and maps from the bureau, then spend the afternoon touring and learning about your city.
- Drive outside of town and pick wildflowers together.
- Go for a bike ride.
- Visit your local zoo and take a picnic or snacks to avoid shelling out money at the snack bar.
- Visit local crafters in their studios. Watching an artisan create pottery or blow glass can be fascinating. Your local arts counsel, school or college will most likely be able to help you locate artists.
- Take a road trip to a nearby town that you've never explored. Small towns are great for this but you can even visit another neighborhood in your own city that you've never visited. Spend the afternoon strolling around town, having a drink at a local coffee shop or café and otherwise touring. Make the most of it by chatting with locals and find out why they like their area or town.
- Read aloud to each other. You can read a play with each of you playing different parts, or a favorite novel, poem or short story.
- Attend a theater performance put on by your local college or community group.
- Rummage through a flea market. Even if you don't go home with anything, picking through the treasures can be hours of fun. It's also a great place to pick up inexpensive gifts for birthdays or Christmas.
- Attend a lecture put on by a local group or college. Local newspapers typically list these every week.
- Go out for coffee and dessert instead of dinner. It can be very romantic to share a piece of cake or pie or other treat.
- Go to matinees versus evening shows - they are frequently half price. A bonus: It's often easier to find friends or family members who can baby-sit during the daytime. ❖



Budget Bar-B-Ques...

By: www.thrifty-mamma.com/familyactivities.htm

Hosting a summer party can be great fun for the family, but how can you feed your friends without busting your budget? The biggest expense is usually food. Most people will offer to bring something when invited to a party, so be sure to take them up on it! Make your gathering a potluck and not only will you save on grocery costs, but you'll get to sample your friends' specialties. Or, you could host a BYOB (bring your own burger) party. You supply the fixin's, side dishes and drinks, but the most expensive ingredient (the meat) is supplied by the guests. Frugal food for Bar-B-Ques: Hot dogs (we buy 'cheap' brand for \$.69/pound), in-season fruit salads, corn on the cob, powder mix drinks (imitation Kool-Aid - 10 packets for a dollar!) for the kids, homemade popsicles (also made with the imitation Kool-Aid), iced tea for the adults, bulk-bought pretzels, homemade brownies with a dollop of ice cream for dessert. Cheap Fun: Host your party at a local park and make use of tennis courts, baseball diamonds, and basketball hoops for pick-up games. If you are at home, save the lawn watering for your summer party and turn on the sprinklers during the early evening for the kids

to run through. Rent a funny video (or better yet, borrow one from your library) for the kids to watch while the adults enjoy the cool evening. ❖



Dieting On A Budget

Source: www.ivillage.com

BRING LUNCH. A delicious homemade salad will save calories and dollars. If you are used to spending as little as \$5 a day, you can save over \$1,500 a year (based on a five-day week). You can buy a new wardrobe with that money.

DRINK WATER. If you switch your favorite drink from soda and sugary juice to water, you will pump up your metabolism and bloat your bank account. If you used to spend \$2 a day on soda, you'll save \$600 a year (based on a five-day week). That could send you on vacation.

Learn how to go **BULK SHOPPING** on a diet. With low-fat meats, buy the biggest pack and freezer-bag it in portions. Also, buying frozen vegetables instead of always buying fresh can save money, and they still maintain most of the vitamins. (Be careful which veggies you choose; some don't maintain their flavor.) Lose the costly low-fat cookies and desserts. Go for the fruits, applesauce and low-fat puddings instead.

GO GENERIC! Buying the "store" or generic brand can save a bundle. In many instances, the store brand is actually a name brand with a store label. The container or packaging may not be beautiful, but does it really matter?

GET SUPERMARKET SAVVY. When you want to budget yourself, you need to make a list before you go to the grocery store. Make the list contain healthy items such as vegetables and fruit juices. When you shop, you must stick to those items only. ❖

Does Food Affect Your Mood?

Source: Tracey Owens

It's the morning and you feel grouchy. Research now indicates that it could be something you ate or didn't eat that can affect the mind and body.

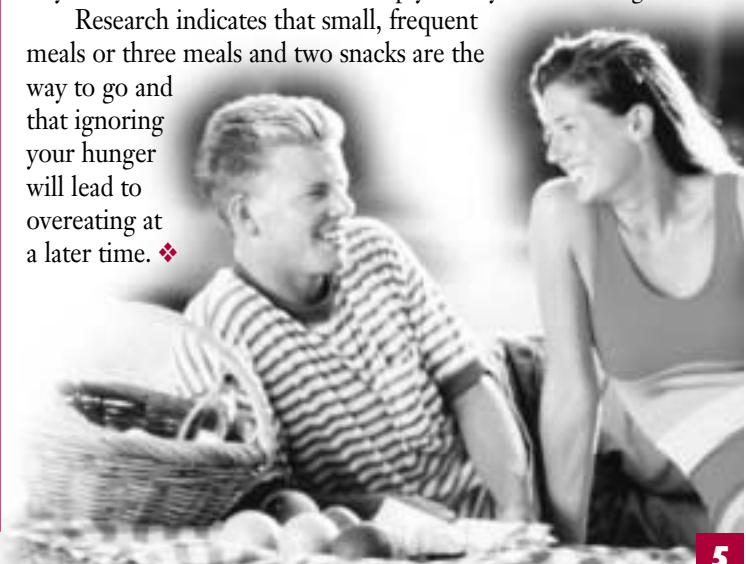
As kids, many of us were told that breakfast was the most important meal of the day. According to an article written by Joy Short, Assistant Professor and Director of Undergraduate Programs in nutrition and dietetics at Saint Louis University, it is. She says that we need a high-carbohydrate breakfast to help our brains function properly. "Our bodies have a limited storage capacity for carbohydrates," Short says. "After the overnight fast, which is basically what happens when you're sleeping, you've pretty much run out of these stores."

Despite the no-carb rule of most diets, lack of carbohydrates can have a negative effect on your mood. A study published in the *Medicine Science Sport and Exercise Journal* in 1991, found that a diet very low in carbohydrates led to anger, depression and tension in a group of trained cyclists. The chemistry and biology behind this is complicated. Some researchers believe that carbohydrates can improve a person's mood by releasing serotonin, chemicals in the brain that can decrease appetite and help us feel calmer.

There are plenty of healthy ways to get carbohydrates in the

morning. A bowl of oatmeal, orange juice and a granola bar, whole-grain toast, whole-grain bagels and high-fiber cereals are good choices. It is a good idea to add sources of protein, such as milk or yogurt, to your breakfast because it will help you stay satisfied longer.

Research indicates that small, frequent meals or three meals and two snacks are the way to go and that ignoring your hunger will lead to overeating at a later time. ❖



Summer Vacations: Fun In The Sun or Family Budget Buster?

Garden State Consumer Credit Counseling Offers Advice for Consumers Planning Summer Vacations

Source: Garden State Consumer Credit Counseling Staff

June 6, 2003: Summer is here again. Time for picnics, barbecues, lazy days and family vacations. But along with the heat, your family's expenses can soar when it comes to planning a summer getaway. Avoid breaking the bank by considering some basic saving tips that can help your vacation memories last forever, but not your credit card bills.

"Oftentimes, families don't realize that even a weekend trip can be surprisingly expensive," says Joel Greenberg, president of Garden State Consumer Credit Counseling (GSCCC), a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit credit counseling and debt management agency. GSCCC counselors routinely work with families in San Diego County and around the nation to effectively manage their debt and credit concerns, and offer counseling about money management and the wise use of credit. "Adults and kids look forward to a summer trip all year long, but a few days of fun can be one of the biggest drains on the family's annual budget. By using some creative saving and spending strategies, consumers can still have a great time while leaving their financial health intact."

Vacations mean big bucks. The Travel Industry Association of America estimates that Americans will spend \$2,000 on a summer vacation this year and 43 percent of adults, ages 18 to 34 say they will spend more money on summer vacations this year than last. Unfortunately, many will put nearly half or all of these expenses on their credit cards and will not be able to pay off the balance right away.

Consider this scenario: If an average family of four spends approximately \$4,400 on vacation, put all vacation expenses on a

credit card with a 17% APR and made just the minimum payments each month (approximately 2%), it would take 38 years to pay off. In the meantime, they would accrue over \$9,847.38 in interest charges, more than doubling their original expenditures. Think of it as an extra vacation they missed out on.

To avoid these summer budget busters, GSCCC offers the following vacation savings tips:

Save, save, save. Open a special savings bank account and put money into it each time you get paid. At home, start a "vacation fund" for the whole family by collecting everyone's loose change at the end of the day and putting it into a sealed jar. Clean out your garage and closets and make some extra money by holding a garage sale. Skip on buying the daily specialty coffee and bagel each morning and put the extra three or four dollars in a drawer at your office desk. Saving money up front will help you avoid putting vacation purchases on a credit card.

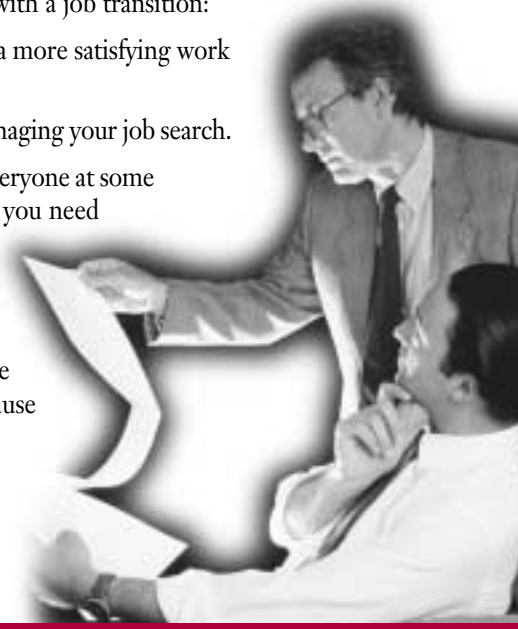
Realize that every dollar counts. If taking a big summer trip is a priority for your family, determine early on, where compromises can be made in other areas of your family's monthly budget. Look for things that can be eliminated or reduced. Pack a lunch instead of eating out. Carpool with a friend or ride your bike to work. Cancel your gym membership and

The Emotional Side of A Job Transition


Source: Tracey Owens

During the time of a job transition, people may experience any combination of reactions: shock, denial, anger, sadness, guilt, anxiety, fear, relief and excitement. Any normal person can expect to experience at least a few of these. People have described a job search as a roller-coaster ride - a time of lows and highs. Here are some strategies for dealing with a job transition:

- **Stay positive** - do not panic. Life is changing, not ending and this may eventually lead to a more satisfying work situation.
- **Think of yourself as having a new job now**, rather than being jobless. Your new job is managing your job search.
- **Be easy on yourself** - a job transition can happen to anyone and has happened to almost everyone at some time in his or her life. Take care of your physical, mental and emotional health. Do what you need to handle the stress.
- **Do not keep your search a secret** especially from your family and those close to you. The more secretive you are, the harder it will be for anyone to help you.
- **Refrain from criticizing** your former company, boss or colleagues especially when you are talking to prospective employers or other contacts. This will always work against you because it raises questions about how well (or poorly) you deal with difficult situations.
- **Stay busy** - do not isolate yourself. Look around and notice how many other people have been through this same situation. Talk to them, share your feelings and ask how they worked through them.




work outdoors. Avoid spending on credit except for true emergencies. Being conscious of where you are spending your money allows the savings to really add up quickly.



Do your homework. Take advantage of the Internet to find information about discounts on hotels, airfare, tours and other entertainment. If you research all the different possibilities ahead of time, you will be amazed at the discounts that are out there. Some popular travel guides will help you compile an itinerary and make sure you get the most for your vacation dollar. Also, be sure to ask about possible discounts for students, seniors or auto club members. It never hurts to ask.

Plan ahead. Make sure you make your travel arrangements early. Airline tickets are much cheaper when booked several months in advance as compared to last minute. If you pay for airfare and lodging ahead of time, you will be able to spread out your major expenses and budget more accurately for incidentals such as taxi fares, toll bridges and subway trips.



Entertainment does not have to be expensive. Those helicopter rides, bus tours and shows can put you several hundred dollars in a hole, so why not be creative when it comes to activities away from home? Take long walks on the beach or hike a mountain trail. (Kids love these thrifty adventures!) Box up your lunch and take it with you while you're sightseeing to avoid overpriced tourist traps. Look for coupons or special promotions for discounted prices on otherwise expensive activities. There are several ways to save a buck if you take some extra time and get creative.

Think out of the box. Instead of a lengthy and expensive vacation, take a quick weekend trip to a closer destination. Instead of buying expensive airline tickets, hop in your car and go to a nearby beach, mountain or desert. Explore nature and go camping instead of paying for a hotel. Check out local state parks rather than expensive theme parks. You don't need to travel far from home to "get away from it all". Some attractions also have special deals for local residents, so be sure to check these out.

Learn to be flexible. To achieve a dream vacation on a limited budget, try traveling in the off-season, when you may be able to save up to 50 percent on airfare and hotel accommodations. Also, be more flexible with your travel schedule. The days of the week on which you travel can make a big difference in rates for everything from rental cars to hotel rooms, so be sure to ask about special weekend and weekday rates when booking reservations. Consider inviting another couple or family to join you so you can split expenses like gas and lodging.

See the potential elsewhere. If you are planning a trip abroad and are open to "roughing it" a little...backpacking, walking and bicycling can be a great way to tour the country. Hostels, are popular with young adults and are considerably less expensive than hotels. Even if you are interested in more traditional lodging, paying for a motel (rather than a fancy, big-name hotel) will save you cash, especially if you're planning on being out sightseeing (away from your room) for the majority of your days. Some countries have government-run accommodations that are well priced. ❖

For more information on services offered by Garden State Consumer Credit Counseling, including free budget consultation and credit analysis, call 800-99-BILLS (24 hours a day, seven days a week) or visit www.gardenstateccc.org.

Creating Your Resume

Source: Tracey Owens

For many people, beginning a job search may seem like a daunting task. A resume is often the first impression a future employer has of you.

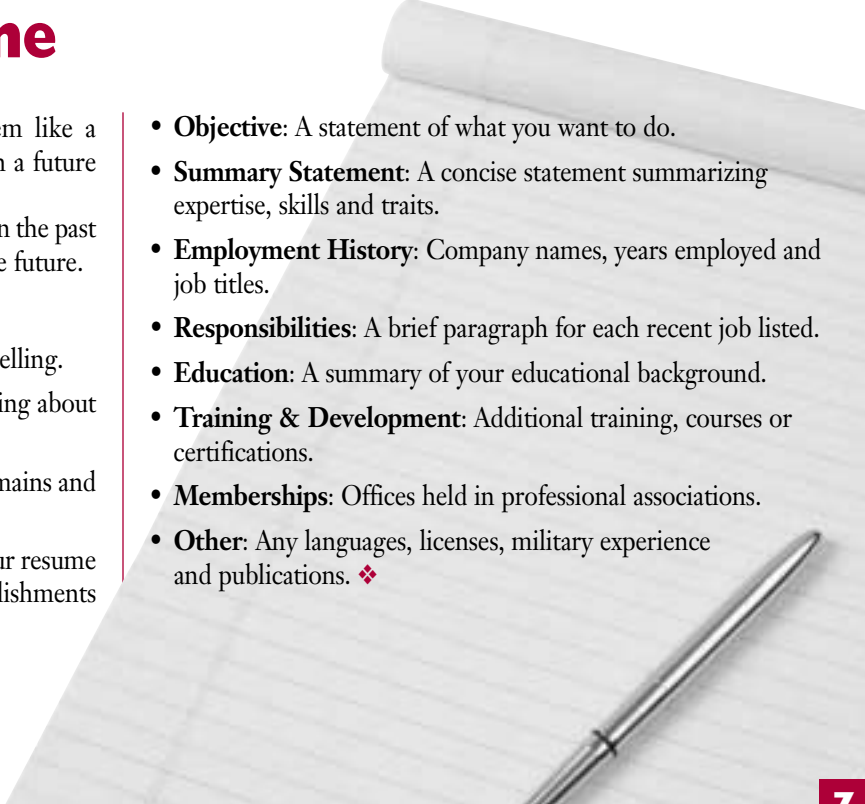
A resume presents an overview of what you have done in the past and implies what you can do for a potential employer in the future.

A resume serves many purposes. It is:

- **A sales brochure** - you are the product your resume is selling.
- **A calling card** - it is an overview, should not tell everything about you, be no more than two pages and easy to read.
- **A reminder** - after an interview, an impression of you remains and the resume helps the interviewer remember you.
- **A way to direct an interview** - the way you structure your resume can direct the interviewer's attention to specific accomplishments and experiences.

All resumes should contain certain information including:

- **Heading:** Your name, address, phone and email.

- 
- **Objective:** A statement of what you want to do.
 - **Summary Statement:** A concise statement summarizing expertise, skills and traits.
 - **Employment History:** Company names, years employed and job titles.
 - **Responsibilities:** A brief paragraph for each recent job listed.
 - **Education:** A summary of your educational background.
 - **Training & Development:** Additional training, courses or certifications.
 - **Memberships:** Offices held in professional associations.
 - **Other:** Any languages, licenses, military experience and publications. ❖

Out Of The Mouths Of Babes

Source: Sharon Hussain

As the deadline for this issue of the newsletter approached, I struggled for an appropriate topic to write about. I decided on an article about how we don't have cable TV in my household and how we are just fine without it. As I began choosing my words, the reactions of those that I share that bit of news with came flooding back to me. The shock of horror that I can possibly raise a child in a cable-free, Nintendo-less, Game Boy-devoid household rang in my ears as I tried to type. How could I possibly convey that, rather than being deprived, my son is flourishing. As I struggled with the issue, the little guy walked in and asked what I was doing. When I told him I was writing my article for the newsletter, he told me he wanted to write one, too. He told me that he wanted to write an article about how he gets allowance and why that's a good thing.

He dictated and I typed. After about two sentences, I had an idea...why not do an interview with him. Who better to tell whether this is working out or not but the little fellow, himself. He warmed to the idea immediately and proceeded with the seriousness of anyone with something important to say through the media. The following is an abridged version of our interview. The ideas are Ronald's alone and aside from a little grammatical tweaking and deleting of the irrelevant stuff, nothing has been changed. I asked, he answered. I typed and learned that what I'm doing is working.

Sharon: How old are you?

Ronald: I am seven years old.

Sharon: Do you get an allowance?

Ronald: Yes, I do. I agree with my mother that money is very important and you shouldn't waste it. Allowance teaches you the quality (value) of money.

Sharon: How long have you been getting an allowance?

Ronald: I have been getting an allowance for about three years.

Sharon: What do you do with your money?

Ronald: I save a lot of it. Now and then, I help pay for some things with my family. I really like to be a helping hand.

Sharon: Do you think it's a good idea to give a kid an allowance?

Ronald: I do. It is very important to teach children the quality (value) of money, so when you give them an allowance, they won't feel that they are very rich. You should teach them that they only get a little bit of money each time.

Sharon: Why is it important for kids to understand that there is only a limited amount of money?

Ronald: It is important because they need to understand that they get money little by little. As you go along, you should teach them not to spend so much money when they grow up. My mother taught me this.

Sharon: Do you think you will be responsible with money when you are a grown-up?

Ronald: I think I will. I understand very well that you shouldn't waste money. Money is very important. That is why you shouldn't waste it. You should only buy things that you need, like food or clothing. If you spend too much on toys and other expensive things, you won't be able to pay your bills and other important things you need your money for.

Sharon: Do you get everything you want?

Ronald: No. When you are a child, you will not always get everything you want. It is good that you won't get everything because your parents will know that you shouldn't waste money on toys and other things that children want.

Sharon: Do you think you are having a good childhood?

Ronald: Yes, I do because I have good parents that teach me the



Timeless Tips

Source: *Woman's Day Magazine* or www.womansday.com

Smart Strategies

quality (value) of money. Another reason I am having a good childhood is because everything my family teaches me, I will be able to teach other people.

Sharon: Do you feel that you are missing out on things that other parents give their children or do with their children?

Ronald: No, I don't because other parents give their children everything they want and take their children everywhere they ask to go. That is very bad. My uncle and aunt give my cousins a lot of toys and they are becoming spoiled and I love them very much. I do not want them to get spoiled. They are playing too much with the things that their parents have bought for them. My oldest cousin is playing too many video games and is not having a good education. He goes to high school and you have to be very good at high school to go into college. College is very important.

Sharon: Why is a college education important?

Ronald: A college education is important because many jobs that you want to work at will only let you work if you have a good college education. Many people do not have a good college education and they cannot get a job.

Sharon: Since you get an allowance, will you help pay for your college?

Ronald: Yes, I will. I will use the money I have and the scholarship money I will get at the end of the bowling league that I am in.

Sharon: How much time do you spend at home playing Nintendo and watching cable TV?

Ronald: I do not play Nintendo and I do not watch cable TV, because I do not have either of them. Both of them cost a lot of money. I said before that you should not waste money. There is only one channel on our TV because it is free.

Sharon: What do you watch on that channel?

Ronald: The channel I watch is PBS (public television). Some shows I enjoy on that channel are: Arthur, Clifford (The Big Red Dog), Zoom and Cyberchase. My favorite is Antique Roadshow. I am very happy with my one channel. When I tell people about it, they get shocked. They think you are supposed to have over 50 channels.

Sharon: Since you don't spend any time playing Nintendo and you don't watch too much TV, what do you do for fun when you are at home?

Ronald: I play with my friends outside, watch videos, cuddle with my mother and read. I love reading! That is what I do most often.

Sharon: What are your favorite books?

Ronald: I like reading mystery series books. My favorite two series are: The Boxcar Children and Encyclopedia Brown.

Sharon: What was your favorite time in your childhood so far?

Ronald: I invented Ronookies. They are a kind of cookie. I didn't know if they were going to be good or not. I was in for a big surprise when they were the best cookies I ever had so far. I really love baking! (Look for Ronald's Ronookies in our "Recipe Corner")

Sharon: I would like to thank you for a great interview.

Ronald: I would like to thank you for interviewing me. It has been very exciting. Thank you very much!

- **Keep a small bag packed** with enough medicines and cosmetics for a trip so you don't get caught short when you have to pack in a hurry.
- **Before you take something apart** to fix it, take an instant photo of it so you'll know how it goes back together.
- **Label or mark storm windows** when you take them down, so you'll know which one goes where when you replace them.
- **Have a backup plan** for what you'll do if the children are sick or your babysitter is late.
- **You absolutely have to remember something** but don't care to tie a string around your finger - wear your watch on the other wrist; the change will remind you of the task!
- **Buy two of everything you use regularly** so you'll never run out. When the first one is used up, put the item on your list for the next trip to the store.
- **Feel a draft**, but don't know where it's coming from? Walk around the house with a lighted candle; when it flickers, you've found the spot.
- **A good way to split foods** between older kids: One slices, the other gets first pick.
- **When making lots of sandwiches** for a picnic or trip, use a cutting code to tell them apart-e.g., cut turkey diagonally, ham vertically.
- **Keep some safety pins** on your key chain so you'll always have one handy.
- **When you're introduced to someone**, repeat his or her name immediately in the conversation and use it again when you say goodbye.
- **Wash windows** horizontally on the inside and vertically on the outside. If they streak, you'll know which side to redo.
- **If you're going on your first camping trip**, practice putting up and taking down the tent before you leave home.

If you have any helpful hints or tips that you would like to share with our readers, please write to:

GSCCC Newsletter

225 Willowbrook Road, Freehold, NJ 07728

or e-mail us Newsletter@GardenStateCCC.org

The Recipe Corner...(inexpensive delicious recipes)

Source: www.betterbudgeting.com/frugalrecipes

Ronookies

(An original recipe created by Ronald, age 7)

Source: Sharon Hussain

Ingredients:

- 1 cup butter (2 sticks softened)
- 2 1/4 cups white flour
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. Vanilla
- 1 tsp. Baking powder
- 2 tsp. Cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp. Salt
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tbsp. honey

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 355 degrees. Combine the dry ingredients in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, cream the butter and sugar. Add the eggs, vanilla and honey. Mix on high until thoroughly combined. Pour the liquid contents into the dry ingredients and mix on medium until combined. Frequently scrape down the sides of the bowl to thoroughly mix the dough. Drop, by teaspoon, onto a lightly greased cookie sheet or a dry sheet covered with parchment paper. Leave room between them, as cookies will flatten out during baking. Bake for approximately 10 minutes or until edges are just beginning to turn golden brown. Remove from oven. Take off cookie sheet and allow to cool. Enjoy! Recipe makes approximately 24 cookies. This is lots of fun to do with kids.

Barbecue Cups

Ingredients:

- 1 lb ground beef, browned and drained
- 1/2 c. barbecue sauce
- 1 T. minced onion, optional
- 1 T. brown sugar
- 1 can refrigerator biscuits
- 3/4 c. grated cheddar cheese

Directions:

Add barbecue sauce, onions and brown sugar to the browned and drained ground beef. Press biscuits into greased muffin pan to form cups. Spoon beef mixture into the cups and top with grated cheese. Bake at 400 degrees for 10-12 minutes.

Pistachio Salad Dessert

Ingredients:

- 1 small box Jell-O Instant Pudding, Pistachio flavored
- 1 regular sized can crushed pineapple (do not drain)
- 1 c. mini-marshmallows
- 1 c. chopped nuts
- 1 small container of Cool Whip
- Green food coloring

Directions:

Put un-drained can of crushed pineapple into a large bowl, add dry pudding mix and combine well. Add marshmallows and nuts. Fold in Cool Whip. Chill in fridge for several hours overnight.

If you have an inexpensive and delicious recipe that you would like to share, please write to us at
GSCCC Newsletter, 225 Willowbrook Road, Freehold, NJ 07728
or e-mail us at Newsletter@GardenStateCCC.org



Useless Facts

Source: Gina McCullough

(taken from various sources on the Internet)

- Lyndon B. Johnson was the first president of the United States to wear contact lenses.
- Guinea pigs and rabbits can't sweat.
- Honeybees have hair on their eyes.
- Walt Disney named Mickey Mouse after Mickey Rooney, whose mother he dated for some time.
- Sharon Stone was the first Star Search spokes model.
- The Taco Bell dog is a girl. Her name is Gidget.
- Lawsuits filed by California inmates cost the taxpayers more than \$25 million in 1994.
- Pittsburgh is the only city where all major sports teams have the same colors: Black and gold.
- In New York State, it is still illegal to shoot a rabbit from a moving trolley car.
- In some smaller towns in the state of Arizona, it is illegal to wear suspenders.
- Donald Duck comics were banned from Finland because he doesn't wear pants.
- Coconuts kill more people in the world than sharks do. Approximately 150 people are killed each year by coconuts.
- In the movie, "The Wizard of Oz", Toto's (the dog) salary was \$125 a week, while Judy Garland's salary was \$500 a week.



- The estimated number of M&M's sold each day in the United States is 200,000,000.
- An apple, onion and potato all have the same taste. The difference in flavor is caused by their smell. To prove this - pinch your nose and take a bite from each. They will all taste sweet.
- The first letter Vanna White ever turned on the game show, Wheel of Fortune, was the letter "T".
- Jim Henson coined the name "Muppet". The word was made from the combination of the words "marionette" and "puppet".
- Since the beginning of the modern Olympic Games, only two countries have competed in every single one (Greece and Australia).
- No war has been fought where both countries had a McDonald's.
- Clans of long ago that wanted to get rid of unwanted people without killing them, used to burn their houses down - hence the expression "To get fired."

7 Strategies

(Continued from Page 1)

throw away the same amount of money on magazines you subscribe to but never read, phone services you don't use, gym memberships you don't attend. Couldn't you use that \$500 a year on something that might actually bring joy to your life or help secure your future? Don't continue a mistake. Now that you have identified and corrected any of the problems previously listed, you are ready to move into establishing a base from which you can use your money as a tool to get what you want. Make a plan, stick to it.

5 If you are in a marriage or business situation, negotiation is the key. Both partners must agree on how much and how the money is spent. Dr. Phil McGraw of "Life Strategies" says that all decisions between partners require 2 Yes's and 1 No. If either party disagrees with a purchase, it doesn't happen. Negotiate what you spend and how you spend it.

6 Define a specific, measurable goal. Don't settle for "save for down payment". Decide how much you need, when you need it by and how much you need to save each week to get there. Next determine how that will be saved, either by automatic withdrawal, writing out a check, etc.

7 Spend less than you make. Understand that it is not a money problem...it is a lifestyle problem. You must set up your lifestyle to support whatever goal you want.

The Penny Pincher

If you have any comments or suggestions for future newsletters, please write to:

225 Willowbrook Road
Freehold, NJ 07728
email: newsletter@gardenstateccc.org

Editor: Jaime Regen

Proofreaders: Becky Winters, Diane Giarratano
and Gina McCullough

"The Penny Pincher" does not assume responsibility for any advice given. It is up to the reader to determine if advice is safe and suitable for their own situation.

The Penny Pincher Newsletter
GARDEN STATE CONSUMER CREDIT COUNSELING, INC.
225 WILLOWBROOK ROAD
FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Garden State **CONSUMER CREDIT ★ ★ ★ COUNSELING** | **1-800-99-BILLS** *A NON-PROFIT CORPORATION*



You Can Get Out Of Debt !

If you are not already receiving GARDEN STATE CONSUMER CREDIT COUNSELING's FREE newsletter, The Penny Pincher... Please fill out the following form and return to: GSCCC Newsletter, 225 Willowbrook Road, Freehold, NJ 07728 .

NAME: _____
STREET: _____
CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____
E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

Please send me all future issues of **The Penny Pincher**
...Or e-mail us at Newsletter@GardenStateCCC.org