

Family Savings Newsletter

April 2006

FSA Case Manager: Harriet Gibbs

FSA Volunteer & Editor: Marleen



**North Hills
COMMUNITY
OUTREACH**
People Helping People
1975 Ferguson Road
Allison Park, PA 15101-3235

Hours
Monday - Friday: 9 to 4

Phone:
(412) 487-6316

Fax:
(412) 487-9784

Harriet's E-mail:
hzgibbs@nhco.org

Marleen's E-mail:
marleenk@verizon.net

FSA "Fun Facts"

Budgets, Budgets, Budgets: Any worthwhile financial plan starts with a budget. This dreaded activity is always worth the effort. The FSA program requires a budget to be submitted by every saver.

When your budget is returned, we plug your household expenses into a comparison table. This table then reflects how your spending categories compare with other consumers nationally. We send the results back to you; allowing you to adjust where YOU see fit.

Please remember: A completed returned budget is one of the requirements to receive your **MATCHING FUNDS**.

If you need another budget form, please call Harriet during business hours, or Marleen after hours at 412-366-7113.

NHCO Services:

- ◆ Financial Workshops
- ◆ Energy Assistance
- ◆ Ask the Attorney
- ◆ Food Pantry
- ◆ Employment Assistance
- ◆ Scholarships
- ◆ Volunteer Opportunities

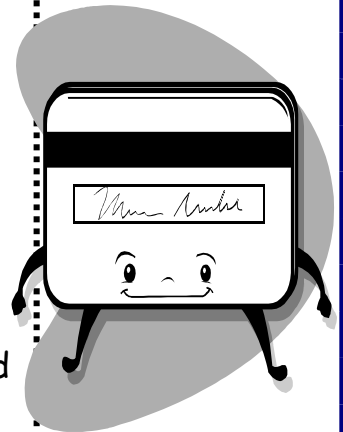
Referral Services:

- ◆ Community Auto
- ◆ Credit Counseling
- ◆ Financial Workshops

Debit Card Fees

Swiping your debit card at the checkout register could lead to additional fees. Debit card fees are becoming very common.

Sign-it-don't-PIN-it: A fee is assessed if you treat the purchase as a debit and use your PIN to authorize the transaction. Press the "credit" key, sign your name on the receipt and no fee is charged.



Add Positive Information To Your Credit Report

If you're trying to repair or build your credit history, don't forget to take credit for unreported financial history. The Fair Credit Report Act allows you to add information to your report when limited information leads to a poor credit score or credit rejection. Send a letter to the credit bureau asking that it contact the creditor and ask for approval to list the account.

When applying for a loan, banks and credit unions allow you to submit your history with utility companies, rent payment history and other financial transactions (like your good deposit history with the FSA savings program).

DID YOU KNOW?

**Dispute errors
on your credit
reports at
least 60 days
before you
plan to buy.**

HOME OWNERSHIP FUNDING PROGRAMS

Pittsburgh Home Ownership Program (PHOP)

Urban Development Authority of Pittsburgh

up to \$3000 for low income households www.ura.org/PHOP.html

See map for included areas: www.ura.org/pdfs/PHOPMap

PARTICIPATING LENDERS

Dollar Bank, FSB 412-261-8010

Howard Hanna 412-967-9000

Parkvale Savings 412-373-7200

Sky Bank 412-818-6086

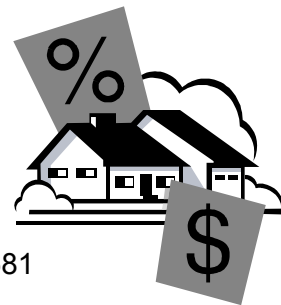
West Penn Financial 412-391-3200

Fidelity Savings 412-367-3300

National City of PA 800-806-7681

PNC Bank 412-768-8494

Washington Mutual Home Loans 800-882-4687



Title I, through HUD:

For current funding financial institutions, check with your Homeowner's class resource person.

First Front Door: see website www.firstfrontdoor.com (lists program and banks)

HOME REPAIR FUNDING PROGRAMS



PENNVEST Individual Sewage System Repair Program: Sewage System Loans

This assistance is available to eligible homeowners who do not have access to a public sewage system and need to repair or replace their individual on-lot sewage disposal system. All assistance to homeowners under the On-lot Funding Program is in the form of loans at an interest rate of one percent. The monthly payment also includes a .75 percent servicing and insurance fee. www.phfa.org/consumers

Contact: Allegheny Mortgage Company Terry Johnston, 800.728.3505

Home Improvement Loan Program (HILP) Urban Redevelopment Authority

Provides affordable home improvement financing to income eligible City of Pittsburgh homeowners.

5.99% APR - no equity required

PARTICIPATING LENDERS

Dollar Bank, FSB 800-242-2265

Parkvale Savings 412-373-4838

Or call the Urban Dev. Authority, Jean Gill at 412-255-6672

www.ura.org/hilp.html

National City Bank 412-442-5491

PNC Bank 412-762-0472

Pittsburgh Home Rehabilitation Program (PHRP) - 0% loan - Urban Redevelopment Authority

- Repair or replace public sidewalk
- Matching grant for exterior improvement
- Accessibility grant for homeowners with disabilities
- Lead hazard reduction work

Details and downloadable application at www.ura.org/phrp.html

For more information call Dollar Bank at 412-261-7502 or URA at 412-255-6666 and ask for a PHRP Loan Application.

CRA Home Improvement Loan - Citizen's Bank

1% APR for loan amounts up to \$1000. Please note: Even \$1 over \$1000 takes the loan to 6% and up.

Call Kathleen Kelley (412) 487-7600

Pennsylvania Affordable Apartment Locator: www.phfa.org

Lists affordable housing options throughout Pennsylvania and offers information about apartment locations, rental prices and subsidies, accessibility features, amenities, current vacancies, contact information, and the status of a property's waiting list.

Saving on Gas (From Pat Veretto, Your Guide to Frugal Living)

- 55 miles per hour is still the most efficient speed for most vehicles.
- Jump-starts at a green light waste gas that pours through your system unused.
- Take your foot off the accelerator as soon as you see a red light ahead, coast to a stop.
- "Revving" is stressing the engine, especially if the engine is cold, and wastes gas.
- Idling - Don't sit still for more than two minutes with your engine running. It takes less gas to start the engine again than it does to idle longer than that.
- Keep the tires on your car inflated to the manufacturer's recommendations. Check the pressure when the tire is cold - that's the right reading.
Pressure when cold = 29 pounds - Manufacturer's recommendation = 32 pounds
Pressure when hot = 32 pounds - Add 3 pounds = 35 pounds
When the tire is cold again, the pressure will be 32 pounds.
- Keep your car serviced (i.e. air filter, spark plugs, timing) it results in better mileage.
- Don't carry extra baggage! The more pounds you haul around, the more gas it takes.
- Air conditioning is a super drain on your engine's efficiency. Most advice says that at low speeds and stop and go traffic, it costs less to drive with the windows down, but on the highway, using an air conditioner is cheaper.
- Take your foot off the gas completely for at least a few seconds before shutting off the engine; otherwise, you're shooting (wasting) raw gas through the system.
- Track gasoline prices at local stations from price reports provided by consumers.
www.gaspricewatch.com



It might help to remember that at \$2.50 a gallon, a wasted pint of gas costs you about 30 cents. If you waste a pint a day (and that's not hard to do), that's \$9 a month. In a few months or so, you could save enough to get a "free" tank of gas.

Thrift Stores

St. Vincent de Paul: Designer clothes, furniture, bedding, household items & knickknacks:

Butler Store
228 Greater Butler Mart
Butler, PA 16001
724-287-0232
M-Sat: 9 a.m. - 8 p.m.



Sharpsburg Store
900 Main St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15215
412-781-2020
M-Sat: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Penn Hills
10736 Frankstown Rd.
Penn Hills, PA 15235
412-247-4157
M-Sat: 9 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Goodwill: In addition to clothing, household items, and furniture, Goodwill now offers:

- ★ Computers and equipment store: 2628 East Carson Street on Pittsburgh's South Side.
Some items also at www.shopgoodwill.com. (Touted to be better than Ebay)
- ★ Retail store: 7221 McKnight Rd., 15237 Hours: Mon. - Sat.: 9 - 9, Sun.: 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.
 - 3rd Saturday monthly: Super Saturday Sale, all donated clothing sells at 50%. (on 22nd in April)
 - Tuesdays are Senior Days (over 55) = 30% discount > 10% discount on all other days.

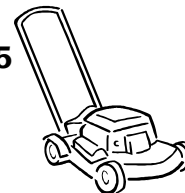


Thriftique (South of Pgh): Large Expanded Furniture Department, House wares, designer clothes

7400 1/2 Church Street, Swissvale, 15218 - 412-271-0544 - Open M - Sat 10 am - 6 pm, Sun 11 am - 4 pm

Treasure House Fashions: Quality women's fashions in sizes 2 to 26. Nothing over \$25

8035 McKnight Rd (Andre Plaza- by Northway Mall), Phone: (412) 364-3256
Hours: Tues 11-6 pm, Wed 11-6 pm, Thur 11-8 pm, Fri 11-4 pm, Sat 11-4 pm



The Toll Of Vices On Family Finances (source: Bankrate.com)

Giving up the brew: A little tipping can be good for the old cardiovascular system -- in moderation. How much would a two-beer-a-day habit cost your household over time? Here's the breakdown, assuming a cost of \$4 for a bottle of domestic beer with tip:

Weekly: \$56 Monthly: \$240 Annually: \$2,920

The booze blues: If you prefer a couple of call drinks at your local watering hole -- say, margaritas with Jose Cuervo tequila or Absolut ginger martinis -- your daily tab for two drinks would be \$12 including tip, according to Bankrate's three-city survey. Well drinks may run you less.

Weekly: \$84 Monthly: \$360 Annually: \$4,380

Surrendering cigs: Shareholders of cigarette companies have made tons of money. You'll save if you kick the habit, not only on smokes but health-care costs. Here's what a smoker pays out for a pack a day, which Bankrate prices at \$5:

Weekly: \$35 Monthly: \$150 Annually: \$1,825

The daily grind: A Starbucks double tall latte can't be faulted on health grounds, but the coffee grounds can be pricey.

Weekly: \$28 Monthly: \$120 Annually: \$1,460

FOOD: Most American's #1 Vice! Total your family's consumption of all food and beverages, including lunches and dinners out of the home. Don't forget the kid's snack and soda purchases at school and for social activities! Economists recommended budget for food is **13% of income**.

(This does not include cleaning or paper supplies, or non- edibles)

Family Size	Monthly Income	Recommended 13% food budget	13% budget weekly
1	\$1633	\$212	\$53
2	\$2200	\$286	\$72
3	\$2766	\$360	\$90
4	\$3333	\$433	\$108

Amount Spent over Budget weekly	Monthly Vise \$s	Annual Vise \$s	Same amount invested monthly at 4% interest: savings bond, mutual fund, or CD
\$10	\$40	\$520	\$530.53
\$20	\$80	\$1040	\$1060.06
\$30	\$120	\$1560	\$1591.58
\$40	\$160	\$2080	\$2122.11
\$50	\$200	\$2600	\$2652.64

<http://www.financialcalc.com> - Savings Calculator

Saving Money on a Food Budget

1. USE STORE ADS TO DESIGN YOUR MENUS. SHOPPING AT MORE THAN ONE STORE IS OFTEN WORTH THE GAS COST.
2. PREPARE A SHOPPING LIST AND STICK TO IT. IF IT IS NOT ON THE LIST, DON'T BUY IT.
3. BRING A CALCULATOR TO COMPARE "UNIT" OR "COST PER SERVING."
4. TRY TO SHOP AT LARGE SUPERMARKETS INSTEAD OF SMALL NEIGHBORHOOD STORES, GAS STATIONS, OR DELIS.
SUPERMARKETS HAVE A LARGER FOOD SELECTION AND USUALLY HAVE LOWER PRICES.
5. BUY STORE BRANDS OR GENERIC BRANDS WHENEVER POSSIBLE. THEY COST LESS AND HAVE THE SAME INGREDIENTS.
6. CLIPPING COUPONS "MAY" SAVE YOU MONEY; COMPARE THE PRICE PER SERVING AGAINST STORE BRANDS.
7. IF YOU HAVE ENOUGH STORAGE SPACE, BUY LARGE OR ECONOMY-SIZE ITEMS WHENEVER POSSIBLE.
8. PURCHASE FOODS IN BULK WHEN THEY'RE ON SALE. FREEZING SALE PRICED VEGETABLES AND FRUITS SAVES A LOT.
9. BUY EXTRA AMOUNTS OF MEAT, FISH, OR CHICKEN WHEN THEY'RE ON SALE. DATE AND FREEZE THE EXTRA OR PREPARE A DOUBLE PORTION MEAL AND FREEZE THE OTHER HALF; WHICH SAVES YOU BOTH TIME AND MONEY LATER.
10. AVOID GROCERY SHOPPING ON AN EMPTY STOMACH. YOU'LL BUY MORE THAN YOU NEED. EMPHASIZE NUTRITIONAL VALUE. LOW-COST FOODS THAT ARE HIGH IN PROTEIN INCLUDE EGGS, MILK, CHICKEN, AND BEANS. OTHER INEXPENSIVE FOODS THAT ARE GOOD SOURCES OF VITAL NUTRIENTS INCLUDE RICE, BREAD, CEREAL, PASTA, OATMEAL, AND FRUITS AND VEGETABLES (FRESH, FROZEN, OR CANNED)



The FDIC Links Consumers To Bank Rating Services

All U.S. banks and federally insured credit unions are rated by BauerFinancial Inc. No bank can elect to avoid this rating or influence the independent rating system. www.bauerfinancial.com

Rating Star System: **5 = Superior** **4 = Excellent**
 3½ = Good **3 = Adequate**
 2 = Problematic **1 = Troubled**



We search with these criteria: 5 or 4 star rating, free checking, free savings, no monthly fees, free online banking, free telephone banking, Bill Paying services, and minimum balance requirements NOT over \$100.

As of 3/24/2006, only two FDIC insured banks within the NHCO service areas met the criteria:

5 Star - **Dollar Bank** www.dollarbank.com

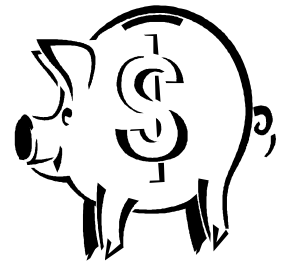
Free Checking (Minimum balance required to open is \$50.00)

Free Passbook Savings (the one with no minimum balance requirement - Two PS are available)

Free Dollar Bank ATMs (non Dollar Bank ATM's accrue a fee per use)

Free Online Banking- w/ online Bill Payment Service

Free Telephone Banking



4 star - **West View** www.wvsbank.com

Free Checking - Val-u-Cheque (Minimum balance required to open is \$50.00)

Free Passbook Savings (Minimum balance required to open is \$50.00).

ATM/VISA Check Card available (carefully read fees regarding)

Free Online Banking- w/ Free online Bill Payment Service

Free Telephone Banking

All savers should compare "Account & Fee Statements" prior to opening an account.

All banks assign fees to ATM usage to some degree (usually free - IF GUIDELINES ARE FOLLOWED). Personal banking habits would have to be changed to avoid additional fees.

Higher Credit Scores = Lower Payments

The higher your credit score, the less you pay to buy on credit - no matter whether you're getting a home loan, cell phone, a car loan, or signing up for credit cards.

See the chart for an example on a \$150,000 30-year fixed-rate mortgage:

As you can see in the chart using March's national rates, a person with a credit score of 760 or better will pay \$222 less per month for a \$150,000 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage than a person with a credit score below 620 – **that's a savings of \$2,664 a year. It literally PAYS to improve your credit score!**

Your Score	Your interest rate	Your monthly payment
760 - 850	5.9%	\$890
700 - 759	6.13%	\$911
680 - 699	6.3%	\$929
660 - 679	6.52%	\$950
640 - 659	6.95%	\$993
620 - 639	7.49%	\$1,048
Actual Rates - Updated Daily		

Free Credit Score Estimator

www.bankrate.com/nltrack/

No internet? Call Marleen at 412-366-7113- figures will be put in over the phone.

CLASSES

Family Services of Western PA: To Register: 412-661-1670

East Liberty Office, The Village of Eastside (near Shop'NSave), 6401 Penn Ave, 2nd Floor, Pittsburgh 15206

"Money Smart" Financial Literacy Classes, free

Thursday, May 4	9 AM – 12 PM	Thursday, July 6	9 AM – 12 PM
Wednesday, May 10	1 PM – 4 PM	Wednesday, July 12	1 PM – 4 PM
Thursday, May 18	5:30 PM – 8:30 PM	Thursday, July 20	5:30 PM – 8:30 PM
Thursday, June 1	9 AM – 12 PM	Thursday, August 3	9 AM – 12 PM
Wednesday, June 14	1 PM – 4	Wednesday, August 9	1 PM – 4 PM
Thursday, June 15	5:30 PM – 8:30 PM	Thursday, August 1	7:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Nazareth Housing Services:

May 2, 9, 16, 23 (Tues) Mt. Nazareth, 285 Bellevue Rd, Pgh 15229 412-931-3510 ext 1300
Sept 26 & Oct 3, 10, 17, 24 Elder Ado - PNC Homebuyers' Club 412-381-6925

Good Sense, Northway Christian Community: 12121 Perry Hwy, Wexford 15090, 724-935-6800

May 16 & 23 Tuesdays, 6 - 9:30 pm, Room 390
July 13 & 20 Thursdays, 6 - 9:30 pm, Room 360
August 8 & 15 Tuesdays, 6 - 9:30 pm, Room 360
Sept. 10 thru Oct 15 Sundays, 9 - 10:30 am, Room 360 6 sessions

Dollar Bank - FREE HOMEBUYING WORKSHOP

Thursday, May 4, 2006 6:00 p.m. Millvale Borough Municipal Building
501 Lincoln Avenue, Millvale, PA

- Counselors will be on hand to show you how. You will learn about:
- Grant Money for closing costs (\$ to \$ match for closing costs)
- Mortgage options with no down payment
- Programs to help public housing residents, section 8 tenants and renters
- Counseling programs for those with less than perfect credit
- A free credit report evaluation
- Contact Nancy Noszka at 412-821-2777 ext. 43 or via e-mail at nancy@millvaleborough.com
(let Ms. Noszka know you are an FSA participant from NHCO)

North Hills Community Outreach: Home is a Business (our SBA developed class)

Apr 29 & May 6 New Location: Bayne Library, 34 N. Balph, Bellevue
8:30-2:00, Lunch is provided. Call Harriet at 412-487-6316 to register by April 27, Thurs.

.....



FUN

NHCO Family Fair: 1 - 5 pm, May 20

Ross Township Municipal Building: Entertainment, informational booths (childcare, healthcare, educational opportunities, spine and posture screenings, chair massages, etc.), children's activities and food samplings.

The event is FREE and open to the public. Donations to the food pantry are welcome.

- 1:30 PM - Presentation on tobacco use prevention and cessation
- 2 PM - NH Junior High Freshman Girls Choir
- 2:30 PM - Martial Arts Center of Pittsburgh self-defense presentation
- 4 PM - Bill Toms, Tom Breiding (acoustic)

Call Harriet Gibbs at 412-487-6316 to participate as a volunteer, food vendor, or agency vendor.