



THE CONSUMER ADVOCATE

Summer 2008

...a brighter tomorrow

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Thank you!

Citigroup, for your generous and unwavering support that helps significantly fund our operations and educational efforts throughout the year.

Chase, for your kind funding, which will support our latest educational project, "The Key to Financial Literacy."

GOALS! Why You Need Them!

Is there something that you would like to eventually have or accomplish someday? Would you like to purchase a home? Pay off credit cards? Save for a family vacation? Start an emergency fund? Buy new shoes? Whatever it may be, have you ever thought of it as a real financial goal? Many people have goals they just don't spell them out or even write them down. However, it's a lot harder to be successful if you don't define success! Recording this information is important to help you determine when you have succeeded. You need to know when to celebrate right?



When evaluating your financial goals, consider what is important to you, what would you like to accomplish or achieve. The more specific your goal is the easier it will be to attain. Setting a goal to save \$100 by next month is surely a lot easier than just deciding to save some money by next month. If you saved \$100 but the following month you would certainly feel a sense of accomplishment knowing you reached your goal. Would you feel the same if you saved \$23?

How can you get started?

1. Identify your goal. What are you saving for? Do you want to start an emergency fund or save for a family vacation? Believe it or not writing the goal down is half the battle, suddenly a hope or thought just became a real attainable goal. Be aware of the words you use to record your goal. Writing "buy a car that doesn't break

down" can be a lot less motivating than "purchase a safer car". Remember the point of a goal is to motivate, so keep it as positive as possible!

2. After you have written down your goal it is important to ask yourself if it is reasonable. While it is important to set goals to motivate yourself, you do want to be sure that your goal is something you realistically can reach. If your salary is \$50,000 it probably wouldn't be a good idea to save to buy a \$100,000 car.

3. Goals should be measureable! Set a timeframe for your goal. Is it a short-term goal that can be reached in within one year? Or is it a long-term goal that can take longer than five years to reach? This will help you determine when you have succeeded and achieved your goal! The more specific the better, for example save \$50

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each week, for a total of \$200 each month, to save for a \$1,200 vacation in 6 months.

4. How are you going to achieve your goal? Come up with a plan and identify any possible problems. Being proactive can help you to avoid any roadblocks that may get in the way of your success. Is it your friend's birthday next month and you are afraid the extra expense may not allow you to save? Identifying the problem early on can help you come up with a solution. Maybe you can cut back in eating out the month before so that you can

purchase your friend a gift without compromising how much you are saving each month for your goal. This step is one of the most important in succeeding. The more time you spend developing your plan and preparing for roadblocks the fewer things that will get in your way.

5. It's a lot easier to reach your goal if you keep your eye on the ball. Whether you post pictures of the vacation on your refrigerator or at your office, it is important to surround yourself with your goals. It will remind you what you are working for and keep you on track. Every day when you walk into the kitchen if you see a picture of (fill in the blank), it is going to make you want to succeed even more! Don't forget to tell people about your goal. The more supportive people you tell, the easier it will be to stay on track.

6. Once you have reached your goal, congratulations! Give yourself credit for your hard work! Take note of anything that worked or didn't work and anything different you would do next time!

What is important to you? Have you considered writing it down and making it a real goal? Why not follow the steps above and give it a try!

8 Tips to Spend Less and Keep Your House Cool

The recent price increases of most necessities has caused many to break a sweat, but the good news is that keeping your home comfortable this summer shouldn't cause you to lose your cool! Follow these steps to keep your air conditioning bills low.

1. Close window blinds, drapes, and shades to keep the sunlight out!
2. Replace incandescent bulbs with fluorescents, believe it or not they use about one fifth of the energy and heat!
3. Avoid using the dryer whenever possible. Take advantage of the heat and hang your clothes and towels out to dry!
4. Hand dry dishes instead of using the dishwasher's heated dry cycle.
5. Plan your meals ahead of time so you can use the microwave or grill instead of the conven-

tional oven.

6. Use fans! Whether you have air-conditioning or not, air movement of only one mph can make the temperature feel three or even four degrees colder!

7. If you have an AC unit, check the model's SEER number. Central Air units should have a number of 13 or higher, and window units 11 or higher. Any number below means that you could be paying a lot more than you should!

8. If you don't already have an AC unit, consider purchasing one with an ENERGY STAR label. This label indicates it is more energy efficient!



Start Planning Your Summer Vacation!



Don't let high airline costs and gasoline prices deter your summer travel plans! The vacation of your dreams may be right around the corner! Whether you are planning a fun-filled family extravaganza or a romantic getaway for two you may not have to travel as far as you think. No matter where you live in the United States each and every

state has something different to offer. This summer consider traveling locally and learn about the culture in your neck of the woods!

Don't know where to look? Visit your state's information or visitor's center to find tourist attractions, historical sites, festivals, concerts and more. You can also visit a local hotel or bed and breakfast and collect brochures they distribute. You may be surprised at what you find. The internet is another great place to look. Some state tourism sites have a

section of everything you can do for free! If you are still having trouble finding a place of interest, visit your local library or flip through the yellow pages and get creative! Does your state have a unique species of birds or flowers? Does your state have National Parks or museums? Take the family on a trip and make the most of what you have! To find your state Tourism Department: <http://www.2chambers.com/>.

If your travel plans do involve driving, which inevitably they will, web sites such as <http://fuelcostcalculator.com> can help you figure out how much money it will cost to drive from one destination to another. This calculator takes into consideration the type of car that you drive and the distance from one city to another. These types of websites can help you plan ahead so you know how much money to save!

Celebrity \$ense

"If you want to feel rich, just count all of the things you have that money can't buy."

- Unknown

Did You Know?

Do you feel as though you are literally carrying the weight of your debt on your back? Do you feel as though your debt is actually making you sick? Well, you may be right. Did you know that studies have shown debt can be detrimental to your health?

Many people are aware of how stress negatively affects your health, and there is no question that dealing with debt is stressful. But do you know what else debt take a toll on?

According to www.bankrate.com and a study by Paul K. Lavrakas at Ohio



State University, individuals that are struggling with stress specifically resulting from credit card debt are at an elevated risk to suffer from a heart attack, insomnia and other emotional disorders. The study also found that an individual's debt-to-income ratio is associated with higher levels of impairment, meaning the more debt you have the more it can affect you! Sounds pretty alarming, right? The good news is the sooner you get started and formulate your plan to get out of debt, the better you will feel! And apparently the healthier you may be too!

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Spotlight on the Community

As always, DCC has kept busy throughout the summer months! DCC would like to welcome two new partnerships, the YMCA William Floyd Project Mastic Leaders Club and the Senior Center at the North Shore Jewish Center in Port Jefferson Station. DCC traveled to the YMCA Leaders Club to conduct two concurrent workshops, one for the center's teens and one for their parents. These workshops focused on preparing and saving for college. This July, DCC will meet with the Seniors of the North Shore Jewish Center to discuss credit cards and current scams to be aware of. Credit Counseling was also provided for hospital employees at Elmhurst Hospital.

This summer DCC has been invited back to work with the Girl Scouts of Suffolk County. DCC will conduct fun, age appropriate workshops with the campers at Camp Edey and Camp Sobaco on savings and finances.

DCC continues to provide financial education for the Displaced Homemakers at the Economic Opportunity Commission of Nassau County, the Suffolk County Department of Labor, and the women of the Suffolk County Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

DCC has been featured in the Long Island newspaper Newsday and can also be seen in a special on WNBC News!

What's New at DCC

If you reside in the Long Island area, you are also invited to our monthly in-house seminars to take advantage of our *Educational Incentive Program*. If you attend a monthly seminar and are enrolled in our DMP, your monthly maintenance fee will be directed to a creditor of your choice in the following month, to help pay down your debt faster. Mark your calendar for our upcoming seminars.

June 24, 2008 at 12:30pm – Saving For Retirement

July 29, 2008 at 12:30pm – Survival Guide for New College Students

Seating is limited, so reserve your seat today! Contact Ms. Backes at 1.888.354.6332, ext. 316.



The mission of Debt Counseling Corp. is to educate the general public about debt management options such as budgeting, refinancing, and a debt management program; to provide consumers consistent, superior, individualized service; to provide each consumer with the tools they need to develop and modify a budget which will allow them to maintain a dignified lifestyle.

Debt Counseling Corp. is also committed to assisting the creditors with collecting consumer debt by helping avoid bankruptcy whenever possible and eliminating their financial burden.