

Family Issues

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Family and Consumer Sciences**

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Family Issues is published six times a year. This newsletter provides current information in the areas of family development, leadership skills, nutrition, food safety, money and time management.

Financial Security: Managing Money in Tough Times



More Americans feel additional stress and anxiety about their financial future. Talk of rising consumer debt, falling housing prices, rising costs of living, and declining retail sales bring up worries about the nation's economic health.

Money is often on the minds of most Americans. In fact, according to the American Psychological Association's 2007 Stress in America survey, money and work are two of the top sources of stress for almost 75 percent of Americans. Add to the mix headlines declaring a looming economic recession, and many begin to fear how they can handle any further financial crunch.

Learning positive money management techniques can help you and your family adapt to tough economic times. Experts from several states have developed a new consumer eXtension website that addresses over 30 financial issues. You can access the information at <http://www.extension.org>. Under the Resource Areas on the right "Family" is listed, double click on Personal Finance. The Personal Finance page has a Resource Area on the left with the *Managing Money in Tough Times* information, again double click and you will see a wealth of topics for your use.

Beverly Healy
Extension Educator

Credit Card Universal Default Clauses Translate to Increased Costs



The credit crisis may now affect you in ways you never dreamed of because Universal Default clauses are increasingly being used by creditors. The Universal Default provision, generally buried in the fine print of your credit card agreement, basically says that if you are more than 30 days late on any payment to anyone, the interest rate on your credit card could shoot up and your credit score may be damaged.

More than one-third of major credit card issuers now say they act on these clauses regularly. A recent survey found that a staggering 39 percent of credit card issuers said they apply the rule to customers, even if they had no late payments on their own card. However, many consumers are still unaware of the dangers because they either don't read or don't understand the credit card agreement.

Gerri Detweiler, author of personal finance books and articles says, "These default clauses are getting scarier by the minute. If a credit card offer includes a universal default clause, you need to know what you're being set up for. If you're one day late on any payment to any creditor, you could be subject to a default rate as high as 29.99 percent on many others." Some major lenders don't mention Universal Default in their initial credit offers, but often add it a few months later with a "notice to cardholders" included with their monthly statements.

It doesn't necessarily take being late on big-ticket items such as a car or a mortgage payment to trigger the default clause. It could be for something as innocuous as an overlooked \$30 phone bill or a forgotten \$20 book club subscription. Creditors periodically check your credit file and if you're late paying any other bills, not just theirs, the default clause can be used. Low interest rates enjoyed at the beginning of a credit relationship could, in many cases, double or triple.

What can you do to avoid unexpected spikes in your credit card interest rates?

- If you have a large credit balance, make sure it's at a low fixed rate—with no universal default risk tucked away in the fine print.
- Monitor your accounts carefully and examine each bill when it arrives to check its due date.
- If you decide to dispute a bill, act promptly to work it out with the lender. Don't wait until your account is sent to a collection agency.
- Keep accurate lists of your credit cards, balances, limits, interest rate, and payment due dates.
- Contact the card company and ask to have your due date changed so that it falls at a convenient time of the month for your lifestyle.
- Consider paying bills when they arrive instead of when they are due.
- Consider paying your bills automatically and electronically each month, either by computer or through a banking arrangement.

Source: Burt, Bill. Universal Default Rules Explained. Bankrate.com. Retrieved 11/14/08 from <http://www.bankrate.com/brm/news/credit-management/20040120a1.asp>;
Richard, P., 11/14/08, Credit Card Holders Beware: Because Universal Default is Now in Stealth Mode. Institute of Consumer Financial Information E-News #08-23.

Give the Gift of Life: Be An Idaho Organ Donor



According to the Idaho Donor Registry, thousands of people are suffering from terminal, end-stage organ failure and waiting for life-saving transplants. Not enough organs are donated. Every day, ten more people are added to the organ transplant waiting list. Many die while waiting for the gift of life. Organ, eye and tissue donation represents a gift of life from one individual to another. Almost anyone can be a donor at the time of death, no matter what their age or medical condition. Registering your organ donor wishes relieves the family of making this decision.

The mission of the Idaho Donor Registry is 1) to ensure that all those who want to donate can document their wishes and provide the organ, eye and tissue agencies the proper documentation to carry out each individual's wishes, and 2) provide educational materials on the benefits of organ, eye, tissue and living donation.

You can register to be an organ donor when apply or renew your Idaho driver's license or identification card. You can also download registration forms from the Idaho Donor Registry website <http://www.yesidaho.org/>. Your questions or concerns can be answered by contacting the registry.

Idaho Donor Registry
230 South 500 East, #290
Salt Lake City, UT 84102

Phone: (866) 937-4324
Email: info@yesidaho.org



You could qualify!

Did you work in 2008? You may be eligible for the Earned Income Credit (EIC) – even if you don't owe income tax.

If you worked in 2008:

- Did you have one child living with you? Did you earn less than \$33,995*? You can get an EIC up to \$2,917.
- Did you have more than one child living with you? Did you earn less than \$38,646*? You can get an EIC up to \$4,824.
- If you had no children living with you, did you earn less than \$12,880* in 2008? Were you between the ages 25 and 64? You can get an EIC up to \$438.

You could get a CTC refund too!

Many families that earned more than \$8,500 may qualify for the Child Tax Credit (CTC) refund – up to \$1,000 for each qualifying child under age 17.

File a Federal Tax Return to get the EIC and CTC: Get Free Help!!!

- VITA – Volunteer Income Tax Assistance – helps people fill out returns for free.
- For a site near you, call 1-800-829-1040

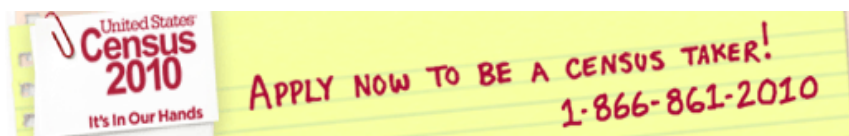
Boost your take-home pay! Eligible workers with children can get some of the EIC in their paychecks. To get the Advance EIC, get Form W-5 from your employer, or call 1-800-TAX-FORM.

* Income limits for married workers are \$3,000 higher

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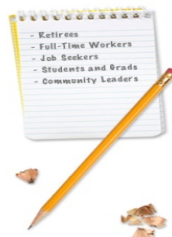


U.S. Census is NOW Recruiting – A Great Way to Earn Extra Money

The U.S. Census Bureau is recruiting temporary part-time census takers for the 2010 Census. The pay is good, the hours are flexible, and the work is close to home.

Census taker jobs are excellent for retirees, college students, persons who want to work part-time, persons who are between jobs, or just about anyone who wants to earn extra money while performing an important service for their community.

- Address Listers (enumerators), Crew Leaders, Crew Leader Assistants
- Pay starts at \$10.50 per/hr plus mileage reimbursement
- Work hours range from 20 - 40 hours per week
- For more information visit <http://www.census.gov/2010censusjobs/index.php>
- U.S. Census Bureau is an Equal Opportunity Employer
- Bilingual applicants encouraged to apply



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