

Money Tips for Tough Financial Times

With the economy still struggling, so are many Minnesotans. People are looking for ways to make their dollar go further or for information about agencies or services to help. The city receives a variety of questions from residents about housing, foreclosures, health, human services and money matters. Some resources to help you find reliable information is provided in this newsletter.

Your Money

MyMoney.gov is a U.S. government website dedicated to teaching Americans about basic financial issues. Designed to be a one-stop shop, it includes financial information from 20 federal agencies. Resources on www.MyMoney.gov provide information to help you more wisely buy a home, balance your checkbook, or invest your money. Topics include budgeting and taxes; credit; financial planning; home ownership resources; kids; paying for education; privacy, frauds and scams; responding to life events; retirement planning; saving and investing; and starting a small business. A "My Money" toolkit can be viewed online or you may call 1-888-MYMONEY to order a free copy.

Another website that contains a variety of information to help families survive these tough economic times is **Families in Tough Times** at www.extension.umn.edu/ToughTimes. It was developed by the University of Minnesota Extension Center for Family Development.

Your Credit.

Do You Know What's On Your Credit Report? Get One Free Each Year. Federal law allows you to order one free copy of your report from each of the nationwide consumer reporting companies (**Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion**) every 12 months.

The Federal Trade Commission enforces the Fair Credit Reporting Act with respect to consumer reporting companies. A credit report includes information on where you live, how you pay your bills, and whether you've been sued or arrested, or have filed for bankruptcy. Nationwide consumer reporting companies sell the information in your report to creditors, insurers, employers, and other businesses that use it to evaluate your applications for credit, insurance, employment, or renting a home.

The **only** official site you can order your free annual report from all three credit companies can be accessed by:

- ⇒ Visiting the website www.annualcreditreport.com
- ⇒ Calling 1-877-322-8228
- ⇒ Or filling out the Request Form and mailing it to: Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281. The form and more information is available at www.ftc.gov/credit.



Your Housing

It is important to promptly seek assistance if you are having problems with mortgage payments, utility bills or home maintenance because more options will be available to address the issue. The following housing resources will help you make better choices.

Foreclosure Information

Foreclosure prevention workshops and counseling services are available. For more information, contact the Community Action Partnership of Suburban Hennepin County (CAPSH) at (952) 933-9639 or www.capsh.org, or the Minnesota Home Ownership Center at (651) 659-9336 or www.hocmn.org.

Tenants may contact HomeLine for tenant information & advice- Call (612) 728-5767 or visit www.homeline.org.

For more info, please see the *Foreclosure Brochure* on the City website at www.cityofbrooklyncenter.org.

Property Tax Payments & Info

Hennepin County Tax Information- Call (612) 348-3011 or visit www.hennepin.us.

Section 8 Rent Assistance

Housing- Metro Council HRA- Call (651) 602-1428 or visit www.metrocouncil.org.

Emergency Energy Assistance/Utility Payment

- CAPSH– visit www.capsh.org/energyassistance or call (952) 930-3541
- MN Dept of Commerce Office of Energy Security– visit www.energy.mn.gov or call (651) 296-5175

Energy Efficiency

Learn ways you can reduce your utility costs and improve the comfort of your home through the following resources.

- Energy efficient bulbs, appliance rebates, and other energy saving information can be found on the Xcel Energy website at www.xcelenergy.com, click on “Residential”, then “Save Energy and Money”.
- **Request an Energy Audit of your home for \$25** through CenterPoint Energy and receive \$25 of weatherization materials. Call (612) 321-5011 or visit CenterPointEnergy.com/energyaudit.
- Replace your showerhead with one free **low-flow showerhead** through CenterPoint Energy at www.centerpointenergy.com/saveenergy.
- **Check for Rebates for replacement of high efficiency heating and water systems** through CenterPoint Energy at CenterPointEnergy.com/rebates.
- For information about possible tax credits for energy efficient appliances, siding, insulation, roofs, windows/doors, and alternative energy visit:
 - Energy Star Website at www.energystar.gov or
 - Minnesota Office of Energy Security at www.energy.mn.gov.

Before hiring a contractor, you can check their service record at the Minnesota Better Business Bureau at www.minnesota.bbb.org or call (651) 699-1111.

Your Health & Well-Being

Remember to take care of your physical and mental well-being during these times of economic stress. Here are some budget-friendly ways to help keep yourself in good shape.

- Make time for social time and fun with friends and family. Positive relationships are good support systems.
- Exercise– take a walk or bike through your neighborhood or city trails, or visit a park.
- Attend *Holly Sunday* and other city recreation events. Many events are free, while others are low cost.
- Join the Brooklyn Center Community Center, which offers inexpensive memberships (no initiation fees, no long term contracts).
- Sign up and participate in various Community Center sports, arts, senior, exercise and water classes. Prices are reasonable and friends and family from other cities can also participate. Please see the Recreation Brochure on page 13 for more information.

Save Money on Prescription Drugs

The City Council approved a program to make free Prescription Discount Cards available to residents. The program is sponsored by the National League of Cities (NLC) and administered by CVS Caremark. The discount cards offer average savings of 20 percent off the retail price of commonly prescribed drugs and are accepted at 59,000 participating retail pharmacies across the country.

The cards can be used any time prescriptions are not covered by insurance. Residents and family members can use the cards regardless of age, income level, or existing health coverage. Discount cards are easy to use– just show the card to the participating pharmacies when purchasing medications.

Cards are available at Brooklyn Center City Hall and Community Center. For assistance with the program, residents can call toll-free 1-888-620-1749 or visit www.caremark.com/nlc. For more information, please visit the city’s website at www.cityofbrooklyncenter.org.

Emergency & Crisis Services

In cases of immediate emergencies, call 911.

For information about crisis and urgent matters:

- United Way– Crisis, Counseling, Help- Call 211
Calling from Cell Phone (651) 291-0211
- CEAP (Community Emergency Assistance Program)
Visit www.ceap.com or call (763) 566-9600.