

Scrimp and save

Written by Amanda Crane
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As everyone clamps down on spending in the new year, here are ways to watch your money



Everyone is looking for ways to save money these days.

A national recession and uncertain financial future has left local consumers searching for ways to save a few dollars.

More than two-thirds of Americans are now living paycheck to paycheck in 2012, according to results from a survey conducted by the American Payroll Association. Their findings show that 65 percent of Americans living paycheck to paycheck in 2006 increased to 72 percent in 2010 in the wake of the recession.

Haughton resident Michelle Cook said she was tired of living paycheck to paycheck and decided it was time to change her financial situation.

"I'm pretty good with a budget and saving, but I was working every single day and had nothing to show for it," Cook said. "It seems like the price of everything is going up and our paychecks are slowly going down."

Cook said she's at a point in her life that she will do anything to save money. She began taking her lunch to work on a regular basis, clipping coupons and enrolled in Financial Peace University, a 16-week program established by financial expert Dave Ramsey that teaches

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consumers how to spend and save money wisely.

Though it's a long and extensive course, Cook said the results have been worth it. Last month alone she was able to save \$200 from collecting loose change out of her purse. The key to Ramsey's program, Cook said, is learning to be in control of the money you make.

"You have to tell your money where to go," Cook said. "If not, you spend it all and have nothing to show for it."

Coupons have been a favorite method of saving money for Bossier City resident Brandy McCain.

Her coupon knowledge and money saving techniques have caught the attention of local consumers as well as the national audience through television appearances and her Facebook page, Cost Cutters by Brandy.

As a wife and mother, McCain knows the value of crunching numbers and saving money whenever possible.

"Couponing is still a very popular trend," McCain said. "Many people are in debt and looking for easy ways to save. Clipping coupons has helped many people."

McCain said there are other ways to utilize the products that accumulate from coupon use. By trading products for services, McCain said it's an easy way to save even more money

"Trading has increased a lot in these last few years," she said. "It helps everyone because you have a service or specialty that may be of help to someone and vice versa."

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Cook recently started using a technique she tried once before – the envelope system. She takes her monthly income and divides it into separate categories – bills, emergency cash, medical expenses, personal.

Although results haven't come overnight, Cook said it's nothing a little patience and perseverance can't fix.

"It's hard, but it's worth it if you really want to do it," Cook said. "If it's not a priority, it's never going to happen."

Money Saving Tips from Couponer Brandy McCain

- Local newspapers have many great coupons.

- Clip and save all coupons.

- Always apply for a store loyalty card and use it.

- Take advantage of discounts. "You would be surprised of the stores that support our military, police and fire. Some businesses such as River Cities Express Carwash in Bossier City also give an infrequent discount — a nurses discount!" said McCain. "Ever heard of senior citizens discount? All you have to do is ask!"