

Financial Literacy: Do you make the grade?

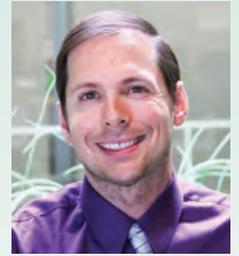
(Chris Dlugozima, GreenPath education specialist from our New York City region, recently was interviewed by NY1- Time Warner News about personal finance. The article below has been edited for length.)

When it comes to being financially literate, Americans think they are making the grade. In a recent survey conducted by the **National Foundation for Credit Counseling**, 59 percent of those polled gave themselves an A or a B on their money know-how. However, Chris Dlugozima of GreenPath Debt Solutions says when he actually starts to quiz people, those grades falter.

“Have you seen your credit report? Do you have a written budget that you actually follow? At least anecdotally from the groups that I serve, it seems that (59 percent) number is a lot less,” says Dlugozima.

In fact, that same NFCC survey found that 60 percent of respondents don't operate with a budget. But even if you are in the minority that has one on paper, Dlugozima says that's only half the battle. You also have to stick to it, which can only be done by actively tracking what's coming in and what's

going out -- not just the big fixed expenses like your mortgage or rent, or student loans, but everything you spend money on.



“Like your groceries, clothing, and entertainment. That's why it's so important to track your budget, to be realistic about what you are spending and recognizing if you might be overspending in a particular area,” says Dlugozima.

Making a budget shouldn't be too difficult. Lots of apps and programs will guide you through it. However, if you would like more personalized help, that is available too.

He adds that a counselor from a reputable, nonprofit organization will be confidential and compassionate. In addition, he stresses that seeking help does not necessarily mean handing over control.

“Plenty of organizations will offer free services just to give the advice, just to sit down with somebody for an hour and help them formulate a plan, even if it is one that they ultimately will handle on their own,” says Dlugozima.

In other words, be your own study buddy so that you really can earn that “A” in financial knowledge.

(If you would like to learn more about your credit report and score, log on to www.greenpathref.com>How We Can Help>Credit Report Review.)



GreenPath programs featured in libraries across the United States

GreenPath is partnering with the National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) to bring free financial education to libraries across the country.

GreenPath has scheduled more than 30 programs at libraries in six states (New York, Florida, Wisconsin, Georgia, Michigan, and Texas) in April, May and June. This initiative will provide consumers with reliable, unbiased financial information and tools at convenient public library locations.

“At GreenPath, we think it is vital to go into the communities we serve to provide personal finance programs,” said GreenPath President and CEO **Jane McNamara**. “These free library programs are another way we can help people better understand budgeting, credit reports, identity theft prevention, and more.”



To learn more about GreenPath's library programs, free online webinars and other community educational opportunities, click on to GreenPath's Calendar section. Or log on to www.greenpathref.com>Community>Calendar.

Webinar Wednesdays in May



GreenPath will host two webinars in May. These hour-long, online programs are taught by GreenPath education specialists. The webinars are always free and informative without a sales pitch. There's also

plenty of time for Q&A at the end of the program.

12 Money Mistakes You Can't Afford to Make – Wednesday, May 6 at noon ET.

We all make mistakes in life, and money is no exception. Learn some ways to learn from your mistakes, as we share

some of the most common pitfalls when it comes to the almighty dollar.

The Psychology of Spending – Wednesday, May 20 at noon ET.

Ever wonder what prompts you to spend? Why is it so hard to get through some stores...or websites...without spending money? And why, oh why, is it so tough to stay on your budget? Come to the “Psychology of Spending” Workshop to learn why you do what you do...and how to stop!

Sign-up for any of these personal finance webinars by logging on to www.greenpathref.com/resources-tools/webinars.

GreenPath Reviews on ConsumerAffairs.com

If GreenPath has helped you, consider sharing your story on *ConsumerAffairs.com*. Here's a recent submission:

From L.: “GreenPath helped me a whole lot on how to get my finances together. No matter how many times I called or asked the same question because I couldn't understand, they never got short with me or felt like, ‘Okay, this lady is getting on my

nerves.’ It was a good experience for me and it was a good time when I needed them.”

Log on to www.consumeraffairs.com/debt_counsel/greenpath.html to tell us your story! So far, more than 110 clients have shared their experience.