



...a brighter tomorrow

THE CONSUMER ADVOCATE

Spring 2014

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Thank You

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Spring into Summer with a Garage Sale!

With summer quickly approaching, it's time to clean out your closets, dressers and/or basement with an annual spring cleaning!

Mostly everyone has items tucked away in storage or items they simply don't use anymore sitting around their home. Your annual spring cleaning can be the time to de-clutter your living space and give you an opportunity to earn a little extra money by selling gently used items you are no longer using by holding a garage sale.

Use the following tips to hold a successful garage sale:

- * Get organized. Start preparing for your garage sale a few days in advance
- * Determine how you will display items. Do you need/have blankets or tables to set your items on?
- * Think about including neighbors and have a multi-family garage sale. Or, tell your friends and family to bring over items they are interested in selling so you have company and a more diverse selection of goods!
- * Advertise! Make signs. Use bright colored poster board with large dark lettering to draw attention to your garage sale. Decide where you will hang your signs a few days before
 - Consider advertising your garage sale on social media websites (at not cost) or place an ad in a local town paper or website (may include a nominal cost). If you have brand name items you are selling, consider adding a few pictures to your ad
- * Experts recommend starting your garage sale as early as 8AM
- * Product placement is important. Place your more saleable items closer to the street to attract customers that are driving by
- * Set up and clearly label an area where you have items that are "FREE" to attract customers. Remember, customers who take free items, are often more inclined to purchase items as well
- * Organize the items you are selling. For example: all kitchen items should be in the same area and separated from children's items
- * Set prices. Shoppers want to know how much you want for an item without having to ask. Group same priced items together and mark them with a sign or individually label items with prices.



Spring into Summer with a Garage Sale (cont.)

- * Be prepared to negotiate your prices
- * Make sure you have fives, singles and coins so you can easily make change for customers
- * Do not keep your pets out, even if they are friendly they may scare parents and kids
- * Do not invite potential customers into your home to look at un-advertised items

After the garage sale, determine what you are going to do with the funds earned. Consider using the money earned to add to your regular payments on outstanding debt (DCC recommends sending additional funds towards credit card bills with the highest interest rate), participate in a low cost summer activity with your family or the like.

Then, determine what you are going to do with all of the items that were not sold. Perhaps, some of your items are worth storing for next years garage sale or consider using another venue, such as a reputable website like ebay or Craigslist to sell unsold items. Before posting an item for sale on any website, be sure you fully understand the terms and conditions of the hosting website. Otherwise, consider donating remaining items to a reputable charity.

Garage sales are a great way to generate a little extra income, but remember, you do not have an unlimited number of saleable items so garage sales will not provide continuous income.



Debt Counseling's Success Stories

DCC periodically receives letters from consumers we educate as well as from clients paying down their credit card debt through our Debt Management Program. Often, they share their stories of financial burden which has been successfully turned around with our help. DCC welcomes these narratives as they are great encouragement for those who are just starting out. Below, find is a sampling of notes we have received from clients who are on their way to financial freedom.

"I just want to thank you for your help over these years. After four and a half years, I finally paid off all my credit card debt thanks to your program. Through this program, I have been taught how to live within my means. I have limited what I spend on groceries, entertainment and clothes. Your counselors were always there to answer questions, give me tips on how to further reduce my expenses and incorporate savings. I am proud to tell you that for the first time in my life I have \$400 in savings! I cannot thank you enough for all you have done. I was even approved for a car loan and my credit score climbed to 685. Thank you!!!!"

~Katie, PA

"I am very happy to have found DCC and cannot thank you enough for your help. Since joining DCC I was able to become completely debt free and purchase a beautiful home. Before speaking with DCC, I was in a panic and very skeptical of companies like yours. After research, DCC was by far the easiest and most



competitive company to work with. You saved me several hundred dollars per month and got my debt paid off!!! I also need to mention that you helped me accomplish my goal of becoming debt free without hurting my credit. My credit has improved greatly. Many thanks to DCC and your awesome staff. You are wonderful!"

~Gregory, CA.

Want to share your story? Email Carly Wardwell, Education Director at cwardwell@debtcounselingcorp.org

Do You Know.....You Can Add a Personal Statement to Your Credit Report!

Have you checked your credit report recently? If not, now is the time to do so. Every consumer is entitled to one free credit report from each of the credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian and TransUnion) every 12 months. To obtain a copy of your credit report visit www.annualcreditreport.com or call 877.322.8228.

Debt Counseling Corporation recommends that you set a reminder so you don't forget to review your credit report on an annual basis. Please note: the credit report is free, however you must purchase your score from each credit bureau for a nominal fee.

In an effort to explain a poor credit history i.e. series of late payments towards creditors, bankruptcy, collection accounts, etc. every consumer has the right to add a 100 word personal statement to their credit report. The statement can be used to clarify an unresolved dispute, explain why you filed for bankruptcy, explain negative items on your credit report and the like.



Do not write your personal statement when you are angry. Before sending your personal statement to the credit bureaus ask friends or family to review the statement for you. You want to make sure the statement is conveying the information you want it to and does not have a negative tone.

If you requested your credit report over the internet, you can add the personal statement to your credit report online. Be sure to write down all the information necessary so you can access your credit report at a later time. After you prepared your personal statement, sign back into your credit report and on the top menu bar, select the icon that says "Your Personal Statement". This will bring you to a webpage where you can add the statement.

Or, if you prefer, you can write your personal statement and mail it to each of the credit bureaus directly (address information is available on each credit bureau's website). When sending your personal statement via mail, be sure to include your full name, current mailing address (and any other addresses for the past two years), social security number and date of birth.

Your personal statement will stay on your credit report until you remove it, so don't forget about it! You can remove your personal statement in the same way it was added, either online or via mail.

***Please note:** Adding a statement will not improve your credit score and may not help you obtain credit.

Many creditors electronically evaluate credit reports and never actually see the credit report. Therefore, the creditor will not see the personal note you added. However, if a creditor is conducting a manual review of your credit report (meaning someone is looking at your credit report), the potential lender may be more willing to extend you credit after learning the reasons negative information was reported in your credit file.

If you have any additional questions or concerns about credit or any other area relating to personal finance, please contact one of our Certified Credit Counselors at 888.354.6332. **We're here to help!**

Celebrity \$ense

"You can only become truly accomplished at something you love. Don't make money your goal. Instead, pursue the things you love doing, and then do them so well that people can't take their eyes off you."

~ Dr. Maya Angelou



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Spotlight on the Community

This past winter, Debt Counseling Corporation's Education Team travelled throughout Nassau and Suffolk Counties in NY and conducted several workshops entitled, Identity Theft: It Can Happen to You for employee groups through our **Program EFFECT** (Employees Financial Freedom Educational Credit Training). These workshops helped to bring awareness about identity theft, the fastest growing crime in the United States, to the community. Consumers who participated in these workshops learned about the five different types of identity theft: financial, social security, medical, criminal and child related. They also learned about the variety and ease by which perpetrators acquire their victims personal information. Participants were also educated about the ways they can prevent themselves from becoming a victim and what to do if they are victimized.

If you are interested in hosting a workshop at your place of employment or at a community group you belong to, please contact DCC's Education Director, Carly Wardwell at 631.582.4300 to schedule your event! All workshops and their corresponding educational materials are provided free of charge. Please note: live workshops are primarily conducted in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, NY. DCC is available to conduct workshops throughout the country using technological means.

What's New at DCC

Debt Counseling Corporation was once again voted a top winner (in the division of credit counseling) of the **2014 Best of Long Island** awards.

Debt Counseling Corporation filmed its fifth season of our financial education television series. This program, entitled Saving Money...It's Not as Hard as You Think will air on Cablevision's Public Access Channel every Thursday at 9:30PM April through September 2014.



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The mission of Debt Counseling Corporation 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.