Summer 2012

Educational Opportunity Center



My name is Luke Haverland and I’m the new Education Specialist at Douglas Cherokee’s EOC program, serving Hamblen, Claiborne, and Hancock counties. I graduated from Hancock County High School in 2004 and received my B.A. in History at Maryville College in 2009. This area has always been home to me. The culture and values of East Tennessee are as unique as the nature that surrounds us. I have long said that, given the choice, I would live within 20 miles of Clinch Mountain for the rest of my life, and I thank Douglas Cherokee, the EOC, and TRiO for making that future possible. I look forward to working with the people of the area and I will do everything I can to aid any participant’s transition to higher education.

**MEET OUR NEWEST EDUCATION SPECIALIST!**

WELCOME ABOARD LUKE!

**WE ALL HAVE DREAMS. BUT IN ORDER TO MAKE DREAMS COME INTO REALITY, IT TAKES AN AWFUL LOT OF DETERMINATION, SELF-DISCIPLINE, AND EFFORT. – JESSE OWENS**

PLACE LOGO OR

COMPANY NAME HERE

**EOC SCHOLARSHIP**

The **EOC 2012 Scholarships** are funded by contributions from businesses, agencies, and personal donations. These scholarships are open to *EOC participants* from any college, university or technical schools (that are enrolled Fall 2012).

Program participants in all seven counties may apply, if they meet the following criteria: (Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Hamblen, Hancock, Jefferson and Monroe)

* Must be **19 years old or older** to apply
* Must be accepted this Fall 2012 at a college, university, or technical school (we verify enrollment before checks are distributed)
* Your eligibility for our program and the number of EOC services you have received this year will affect whether or not you are a finalist for the competition.
* Must complete an application, and essay and send 2 professional references (college instructors, former teachers, business leaders).
* **Entries postmarked after September 28, 2012 will not be considered.**

**You can access the EOC Scholarship information on our website at** [**www.eoc-dcea.org**](http://www.eoc-dcea.org)

**TAKE THE CHALLENGE TO GET OUT OF DEBT** (About.com)

From digging yourself out of [credit card debt](http://www.bing.com/search?q=credit+card+debt&FORM=MSMONY) to finally paying off that home mortgage, many financial goals can seem overwhelming and even out of reach -- but they don't have to be. The truth is you can significantly improve your financial situation through a combination of smart planning, creativity and motivation.

For guidance, we asked personal finance experts from around the country to share their favorite money challenges anyone can take on to help solve a variety of common financial hurdles. In some cases, the experts have tested the method for themselves and share their personal stories.

Here are some challenges to try today, plus tips to help you achieve success.

**Challenge: A 40-day no-shopping spree**

Do you think you could go 40 days without shopping? J. Money, the writer behind the personal finance blog [Budgets Are Sexy](http://www.budgetsaresexy.com/), once did for Lent, and it saved him between $300 and $400.OK, he didn't cut out essentials such as groceries, but he did stop buying things like clothes, coffee, gum, snacks and knickknacks -- or as he puts it, "anything that was a 'want' over a 'need.'" "The No. 1 thing that helped me throughout the process was simply not walking into any stores at all," he says. "It seems pretty obvious, but it took me at least a week or two to realize that every time I walked through those doors I was immediately putting myself into tempt-land. As soon as I avoided them altogether, it got much easier. "J. Money also suggests steering clear of online sites such as Amazon, which can lure you into buying things you might not need.

Go ahead and give this challenge a try or, if 40 days seems too harsh, see if you can cut down trips to the mall to just once a month.

**Challenge: Slash your monthly bills**

David Bakke, an editor for the personal finance website [Money Crashers](http://www.moneycrashers.com/), managed to climb out of $30,000 of debt in part by slashing his monthly bills. "I called my cable, Internet and cellphone providers to inquire as to how I could save by trimming features or downgrading my plan, and I got rid of my home [landline telephone](http://www.bing.com/search?q=do+you+need+landline+telephone+service&form=MSMONY)," he says. Bakke also "drastically reduced" his utility bill by dropping his thermostat by 3 degrees in the winter and raising the temperature of his home in the summer. "I adjusted to this change by adding extra layers of clothing in the winter and wearing shorts and a T-shirt around the house in the summer," he says. You can challenge yourself by following Bakke's tips and exploring additional ways to reduce your monthly bills. "I was surprised to see how much I could save on my monthly bills by putting forth just a small amount of effort," Bakke says.

**Challenge: Pay extra on your mortgage**

Want to pay down your mortgage faster? Do some calculations and figure out how much additional you can afford to pay each month. J. Money has decided to devote [$2,000 extra](http://www.bing.com/search?q=extra+mortgage+payments&form=MSMONY) to his monthly mortgage payments with the goal of paying off his home in less than 10 years. "I'm six months into it so far and doing well," he says. What's his secret? "My goal is to mainly pull it off by taking on more projects and gigs to create more income," he says. But he doesn't mince words on just how challenging this challenge really is.

"It's crazy hard sometimes -- not only bringing in the money, but also not spending it on other more exciting things like upgrades or stuff for our new baby coming down the line," he says. "But I keep focusing on the end goal here of having zero major expenses in 10 years, and that has kept us motivated along the process so far." Not everyone has an extra $2,000 each month, but if can make at least one or two extra payments in a year, then you will be able to pay off your home faster with less accruing interest.

**Challenge: De-clutter your home, and sell your old stuff**

If you need some extra motivation to declutter, consider the fact that it can help you save money -- and earn money too. "Clutter is a huge money waster," says Erin Huffstetler, the [Frugal Living guide](http://frugalliving.about.com/) for About.com. "It causes you to buy replacements for things that you already own but can't find and takes up valuable space in your home." Huffstetler suggests tackling the mess one room at a time until you have it all under control. Then, sell anything you no longer need to put some extra cash in the bank. "Books, movies, video games, clothes, collectibles and antiques can all fetch a good price and free up a lot of space in your home," she says. Some good resources Huffstetler recommends for selling your old stuff include [BookScouter.com](http://www.bookscouter.com/) for books, [SecondSpin.com](http://www.secondspin.com/) for movies, [GameStop](http://www.gamestop.com/) for video games, and resale shops such as [Once Upon A Child](http://www.onceuponachild.com/), [Clothes Mentor](http://www.clothesmentor.com/) and [Plato's Closet](http://www.platoscloset.com/) for clothes.

**Challenge: Build your emergency fund**

It's always a good idea to have money stashed away in case of unexpected events, but many of us don't have enough (or anything) put aside in an [emergency fund](http://www.bing.com/search?q=emergency+fund&form=MSMONY). A great way to build up your emergency fund quickly is by directing all extra money to it, including bonuses, overtime pay, rebate checks and even change you find in parking lots, Huffstetler says, adding that you should track your progress regularly to stay motivated. "I recommend setting a specific dollar amount that you're trying to reach, and then keeping at it until you reach your goal," Huffstetler says. "If you have a really big number in mind, consider setting several smaller goals so it doesn't seem like such a daunting task." The question to ask yourself is this, “If I were to lose my job right now, how long would I be able to keep making payments on my debts.”

**Challenge: Cook meals with ingredients you already have**

Looking for an easy way to save money? Consider rethinking the way you prepare your meals. Certified Financial Planner Jorie Johnson of Financial Futures in Manasquan, N.J., suggests cooking meals with only ingredients that you already have in your pantry or fridge once a month for two to three days straight. "This helps clean out your kitchen and should save you $40 to $60 for a family of four," she says. Of course, taking on this challenge means avoiding grocery store visits, pizza takeout orders and trips to restaurants during these designated days each month. And who knows? You might just discover a few new great recipes in the process.

**Challenge: Tackle credit card debt**

Need some help tackling that mountain of [credit card debt](http://www.bing.com/search?q=credit+card+debt&form=MSMONY) you've racked up? Try totaling all of your credit card debt as of a specific date, then establish goals for how to lower the total on that same date each month in the future, suggests J. David Lewis, a financial adviser and president of Resource Advisory Services in Knoxville, Tenn. "What is a reasonable amount the total can be reduced each month? It means pay the amount you charged this month plus the amount you want to reduce the total," he says. "An achievable goal like this seems to affect how people use the cards when they are committed." Just don't set your goals too high at first or you might become overwhelmed and abandon the challenge. Instead, Lewis suggests setting a smaller goal for about three to six months, then gradually increasing it. "Don't be too concerned if you miss the goal one or two months out of six months. The point is to always make progress," he says.

Another way to reduce credit card debt is to follow advice given by Dave Ramsey with his **Debt Snowball Plan** (daveramsey.com).



The principle is to stop everything except minimum payments and focus on one thing at a time. Otherwise, nothing gets accomplished because all your effort is diluted. Begin intensely getting rid of all debt (except the house) using my debt snowball plan. List your debts in order with the smallest payoff or balance first. Do not be concerned with interest rates or terms unless two debts have similar payoffs, then list the higher interest rate debt first. Paying the little debts off first gives you quick feedback, and you are more likely to stay with the plan. Redo this each time you pay off a debt, so you can see how close **you are getting to freedom**. You attack the smallest debt first, still maintaining minimum payments on everything else. Do what is necessary to **focus your attention**. Keep stepping up to the next larger bill. After the credit debt is taken care of, you are ready to invest your money wisely.

**Challenge: Buy meat in bulk**

When it comes to grocery shopping, meat can be among the more expensive items in your shopping cart, but there are ways to save money while still buying all of your family's favorites. To help cut down that grocery bill, try [buying meat in bulk](http://www.bing.com/search?q=buy+meat+in+bulk&form=MSMONY) and freezing it for future meals. "It is quite a bit cheaper to buy bulk meat such as chicken breast," says Certified Financial Planner Jeremy E. Portnoff of Portnoff Financial in Woodbridge, N.J., and Tustin, Calif. "I buy the bulk pack -- such as chicken and pork chops -- and then I separate it into smaller packages, for example, two chicken breasts into a freezer-safe Ziploc bag. Often I will also pour marinade into the bag of chicken before freezing. This way when I take a bag out to defrost, it is marinating the whole day, and when I cook it, you can't tell it was ever frozen."

Portnoff suggests checking the price per pound of meat before buying. "I have stopped eating lunch meats because I realized the price per pound can be around $6 whereas the bulk chicken breast is about $2 per pound," he says. "It's better to cook extra chicken and use the leftovers for a sandwich."

**Challenge: Set up 2 checking accounts**

One way to help ensure that you always have enough saved to cover essentials is by setting up two separate checking accounts, Lazarus says. "Create one for all your monthly bills and prorated annual bills like car insurance, and one for your discretionary spending," she says. "This way, you'll know your bills will be paid and you can live within the limits of your second checking account balance." In order to do this, Lazarus suggests setting up an annual budget. "This can be as simple as mapping out on a single sheet of paper how much you earn each month and how much you plan to spend, month by month," she says. Lazarus advises putting enough money into the bills account to cover your bills -- both the monthly ones and the ones that come every now and then. Then, with the money that's left over, figure out how much you want (or can afford) to spend on discretionary items and add that to the other account.



SO YOU ARE GOING BACK TO SCHOOL AS AN ADULT? HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR YOU!

**1. Get Financial Help**

Unless you’ve won the lottery, money is an issue for almost everyone going back to school. Remember that [scholarship](http://adulted.about.com/od/scholarships/a/Collegenet.htm)s aren’t just for young students. Many are available to older students, working moms, non-traditional students of all kinds. Search online for scholarships, including [FAFSA](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/) (Federal Student Aid), ask your school what kind of financial aid they offer, and while you’re there, ask about work on campus if you’ve got a few extra hours available.

**2. Make a Date with Yourself for Study Time**

You have a full life already. For most college kids going to school *is* their job. You may very well have a full-time job plus a relationship, children, and a home to care for. You’re going to have to manage your [study time](http://adulted.about.com/od/OnlineEducation/tp/Get-Organized-For-Your-Online-Course.htm) if you’re adding school to your already busy schedule. Choose the hours that make the most sense for you and mark them in your planner. You now have a date with yourself. When something comes up during those hours, stay strong, politely decline, and keep your date to study.

**3. Manage Test Anxiety**

No matter how hard you’ve studied, tests can be stressful. There are lots of ways to manage your anxiety, assuming you’re prepared, of course, which is the first way to reduce test stress. Resist the urge to cram right up to test time. Your brain will function more clearly if you: \*Arrive early and are relaxed. \*Trust yourself. \*Read the instructions carefully. \* Answer the questions you know easily first, and then go back and work on the harder ones.

**4. Get Your Forty Winks**

One of the most important things you can do when learning *anything* new is to sleep! Not only do you need the energy and revitalization that sleep provides before a test, your brain needs sleep to catalog learning. [Studies](http://adulted.about.com/b/2008/07/06/your-brain-is-not-sleeping-when-you-are.htm) have shown that people who sleep between learning and testing score much higher than those who haven’t slept. Get your forty winks before testing and you’ll do much better.

**5. Find a Support System**

So many non-traditional students are going [back to school](http://adulted.about.com/od/StudentProfiles/qt/Christy-Turlington-Burns-Non-Traditional-Student.htm) that many schools have websites or organizations set up to support you: \*Get online and search for "non-traditional students". \*Stop at your school’s front office and ask if they have help in place for non-traditional students. \*Introduce yourself to other students like yourself and support each other. \*Don’t be shy. Get involved. Almost every non-traditional student has some of the same concerns you do.

Education is what remains after one has forgotten everything he learned in school.
Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

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