

Natural Resources and Environmental Issues

Volume 11 *Abstract Proceedings of the Galaxy II
Conference*

Article 37

1-1-2004

Program Development and Evaluation - Finance / Money Management

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Recommended Citation

(2004) "Program Development and Evaluation - Finance / Money Management," *Natural Resources and Environmental Issues*: Vol. 11, Article 37.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/nrei/vol11/iss1/37>

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CASHING IN ON BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES: A CURRICULUM FOR BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE HOME-BASED AND MICRO BUSINESS EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Karen Biers*

ABSTRACT:

An increasing number of Americans are starting small businesses to enhance their family's economic situation and quality of life. These entrepreneurs have the technical skills to produce products and services, but frequently lack business management skills to successfully start and grow their enterprises. Extension professionals across the country are seeking ways to help improve the economic vitality of entrepreneurs, their families, and communities. In order to meet this educational need, USDA's Home- Based and Micro Business Design Team wrote a twenty-three chapter curriculum titled "Ca\$hing in on Business Opportunities: A Guide to Building a Home- Based and Micro Business Program". The curriculum includes educational material for Extension and other economic development educators to provide the business training entrepreneurs need to establish and grow their businesses. The curriculum, available in CD, covers a wide range of topics and includes a leader's guide, narrative, hand-outs, transparency masters, and Power Point(R) slides. This session will give an overview of the curriculum and then focus on selected chapters.

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STATEWIDE PERSONAL FINANCIAL LITERACY CAMPAIGN

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ABSTRACT:

Many of Mississippi's youth are leaving school without the knowledge and skills necessary to make critical life decisions (e.g., wise use of credit, developing a spending plan, purchasing auto insurance). Yet, ironically, the state Core Curriculum Content Standards specifically encourage the development of critical thinking skills and the use of real life applications of subject matter. The Mississippi teachers are lacking a curriculum that they can pick up and use in the classroom. In order to adequately prepare students for the future, teachers need curricula that are closely aligned with the objectives and progress indicators of particular standards. The Mississippi State University Extension Service secured grants to sponsor a statewide personal financial literacy conference for 300 teachers, grades 7-12. The conference, set for July 9-11, 2003, offers breakout sessions on BizWorld, credit records/scoring, LifeSmarts, NEFE High School Financial Planning Program, The Stock Market Game, Junior Achievement, Money Math, Chuck Taylor curriculum, InVest, Consumer Jungle, Financial Champions and a general session on personal financial planning. The conference launches a statewide personal financial literacy campaign for use in Mississippi schools and with the general public. The campaign will convey to students and their families how critically important personal financial management skills are to achieving and maintaining an acceptable quality of life.

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FINANCIAL EDUCATION HELPS IDA PARTICIPANTS SAVE MONEY

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ABSTRACT:

This study investigated changes in money management knowledge and behavior among low-wealth adults who were enrolled in Individual Development Account (IDA) financial education programs. Over 250 adults participated in these programs. IDA participants' characteristics were significantly related to their baseline level of financial knowledge and behavior. At the end of the four-week financial literacy classes, participants' knowledge and behavior scores increased. All six specific money management behavior scores of readiness to implement change increased as well, with the biggest change occurring in setting aside money for unplanned spending, and the smallest occurring in reducing debt. Other behaviors studied were financial goal setting, using a spending plan, tracking spending, and saving money. Although reducing debt had the smallest change, participants were already actively reducing their debt at the beginning of the education program. Implications for working with limited-resource audiences will be discussed.

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