

MONEY SENSE

Genesis
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT INC.

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NEW BEGINNINGS, DEBT FREE

Stimulus Checks: The Facts

You've undoubtedly heard that sometime later this year you may be getting a "bonus" from the government. Although some reports have referred to them as "rebate checks," they are actually "stimulus" checks that the government hopes we will go out and spend to help motivate the economy. Following are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about these checks:

The checks will not be coming as part of your tax refund. Rather, they will be issued separately, beginning at the end of May and continuing through the summer. You will receive a letter sometime this spring, advising you of the amount of your check and approximately when you can expect it.

The only requirement for receiving the check is that you file your 2007 federal tax return. Anyone who had any tax liability last year will be eligible, as will millions of individuals who owed no taxes but had incomes of at least \$3000.

Even if you would not normally need to file a return because your income is below the filing threshold or you had income that is generally considered non-taxable- like social security or veteran's benefits- you will need to file this year in order to claim your check. You may be able to file a simple 1040A form. The IRS

will be notifying these individuals of the proper procedure for filing, and if you need assistance, you can locate free tax help through IRS VITA sites by calling 800-829-1040 to find the site nearest you.

The amount of money you receive will be based on the "net tax liability" you had last year (see line 46 on form 1040). In general, a single filer will receive between \$300-\$600; a married couple, between \$600-\$1200. You may also receive up to \$300 for each qualifying child you claim as a dependent on your return. In this situation, a qualifying child is defined as one younger than 17.

Certain individuals will not be able to qualify for a check, including anyone who is claimed as a dependent- or could be claimed- on another's tax return. Nonresident aliens are also excluded. And the amount of the check begins phasing out for single tax filers with an adjusted gross income of \$75,000 or more and for married couples filing jointly with an AGI of \$150,000 or more.

The IRS has set up an extensive file of information on the stimulus checks on its website. Look for the "Stimulus Payment" icon at the top of its homepage (www.irs.gov) and go from there.

Dollar Saver\$:

Winter Heating

- **Change or clean your furnace filter once a month.** Dirty filters can quickly become clogged, forcing your furnace to run harder and contributing to increased wear and tear.
- **If you have a forced air furnace, don't close registers in unused rooms.** Your furnace was designed to heat a specific square footage of space. It doesn't recognize when a register is closed and will continue working at the same pace. Cold air from the unheated rooms may also seep out into other living spaces, reducing the effectiveness of your insulation.
- **Vacuum registers and vents regularly** to keep dust and debris from clogging them and reducing their effectiveness. Don't let furniture or draperies block the flow either.
- **Avoid using space heaters, whether propane, electric or kerosene models.** They are expensive to operate and can also be very dangerous.
- **Use area rugs** on hardwood or tile floors to warm your feet.

Payment Address

Genesis Financial Management
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Just a reminder that we have moved! All written correspondence should be sent to us at:

Genesis Financial Management
12640 Telecom Drive
Tampa, Florida 33637
(Payments still go to our PO Box)



On The Web

Check out the following sites, which can help you with everything from budgeting to finding the next big bargain:

Mvelopes.com— virtual envelope system, online banking, etc.

Moneycenter.yodlee.com— helps you track all of your money in one place

Wesabe.com— blogs, money discussion forums, savings tips, etc.

Edmunds.com— compile all the data you need to get the best deal on your next car purchase

SavingAdvice.com— great money saving tips, articles, calculators and more

Find great money-saving ideas right next door when you consider the benefits of sharing resources with your neighbors.

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Are you an impulsive shopper? Do you regularly buy things you don't need and hadn't planned for? Do you have a hard time resisting the allure of a sale, find it difficult to deny yourself or others, easily succumb to peer pressure or find that you shop more when you're upset, sad, lonely, or want to reward yourself? These could be signs of a compulsive shopping habit that, if left unchecked, could become an addiction. Over time, these habits can have serious consequences for your finances which, in

Stopping the Shopping!

turn, can have consequences for other areas of your life

To get a handle on your shopping and spending, the first step is to eliminate the tools that make it possible—i.e., the credit cards. The next step is to pinpoint the triggers that compel you to reach for your wallet. These could be situational (a "Sale" sign), emotional (a personal disappointment) or interpersonal (a fight with a significant other). Try the following, a technique recommended by Psychologist April Lane Benson, the author of "Stop Overshopping: A Compre-

hensive Program to Help Eliminate Compulsive Buying.":

Carry a notebook with you and record exactly where you are and how you are feeling when you get the urge to shop. Ask yourself these questions before you enter a store:

- 1) Why am I here?
- 2) How do I feel?
- 3) Do I need this?
- 4) What if I wait?
- 5) How will I pay for it?
- 6) Where will I put it?

Just taking the time to run through this list might give you the chance to rethink your purchase and change your mind.

Bartering and Sharing Resources Saves \$\$

One of the easiest and most creative solutions to the problem of saving money in these days of rising costs may literally be "right next door"!

Consider the talents/skills that you and your neighbors possess and then consider ways that you might share or trade those talents for the mutual benefit of all.

For example, if you have good relations with your neighbors, you could form a

baby-sitting co-op among families with similarly-aged children. Each family agrees to help watch the other's children from time to time, giving you a much-needed—FREE!—break.

Or maybe you have a neighbor whose forte is hair-styling or nail design, and you're known for your culinary skills. You could agree to trade a home-cooked meal for a haircut or manicure; or perhaps lawn mowing services for an oil change or help with a

home-repair project in exchange for a sewing or photography lesson. You get the idea.

Another money-saving idea is to gather a group of friends who agree to share the cost of materials and prepare a number of "make-ahead" meals. When you don't have time to cook on a day-to-day basis, spending a few hours once a month can help you fill the freezer with delicious food. It can be great fun as well.

Please Note: File Taxes For Free Through Our Website!

Genesis is pleased to announce that we have partnered with "The Benefit Bank" to offer free online tax filing for your 2007 Federal Income Tax returns. (free filing for state returns is available in a limited number of states). To use this program, households must have annual incomes at or below \$54,000.

The "Benefit Bank" is a software program designed to simplify the filing process. With your tax forms in hand, you'll respond to a series of questions designed to help you determine your filing status, the number of dependents you can claim and any credits or deductions you may be eligible for. The "Benefit Bank"

will generate the 1040 forms for you. You can even e-file your returns and arrange for direct-deposit of your refund!

To access this great tool, head to our homepage at www.yourgfm.com and click on the link under the "File Your Federal Taxes For Free" heading.

Visit our Website: www.YourGFM.com