



Your Bottom Line

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## Back-To-School Savings for All Ages

From kindergarten to college, there are many ways to save money at the start of the school year. Try these tips to ease the pinch.

**Prioritize, budget, and shop sales.** It seems the summer goes by too quickly, and the new school year sneaks up on us. Planning ahead can help reduce the shock factor our bank accounts experience this time of year.

Start by making a shopping list. Prioritize it by need and include everything from clothes to lunch items. Be sure to inventory what you already have so you won't waste money on duplicates.

Next, prepare a realistic budget. It's a good idea to browse prices online, look for coupons and sign-up for email

notifications about big sales. Once your budget is set, stick to it!

It may be too late this year, but shopping throughout the year for school supplies and bulk items can help you save money in the long run. If you're buying clothes for quickly growing kids, buy items during off-season sales in the next size up.

**Get thrifty!** With a little research, time and creativity, you can find many ways to save on all your back-to-school needs. Start by maximizing your free options and then work your way up the price ladder. Only buy new or non-discount items if you've tried all other options.

– **Textbooks.** Many local libraries carry common college textbooks. Get your

books for free by checking them out when classes begin. If borrowing isn't an option, consider buying used books online, renting books, or downloading digital books on your e-reader or smartphone. Sites like [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), [Half.com](http://Half.com), [eBay.com](http://eBay.com), [Craigslist.org](http://Craigslist.org), and [Rehash.com](http://Rehash.com) sell used books and offer buyback or sellback programs, too.

– **Clothes and Supplies.** New clothes can be particularly expensive. Consider hosting a back-to-school clothes swap with friends or other parents. (Be sure to remind your guests to only bring slightly worn items that are free of stains and holes.)

Vintage looks are in right now, and there's no better

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Frugal Reunion Fun Money Talks



Q&A: Ft. Sill Financial Readiness Program



OCAP Conference Social Buying, Deal or No Deal



Tips for Earning Fast Cash On Our Mind



Saving on Extras At Your Service



Frugal Fitness Tips Go Green, Save Green



Partner News Calendar

place to find one-of-kind items than a thrift store or resale shop. You may have to dig for the perfect piece, but the effort can be worth the savings. Be sure to check out [Pinterest.com](http://Pinterest.com) for thrifty ideas, too. If you have clothes or other items from last year that are still usable, give them a fresh look by pairing them with inexpensive accessories.

Don't forget about Oklahoma's tax-free shopping days! One weekend each year, usually around the beginning of August, clothing and shoes under \$100 are sold tax-free. Visit [Tax.ok.gov/stholiday.html](http://Tax.ok.gov/stholiday.html) for more info.

- *Big ticket items.* There may come a time when you'll need to purchase pricier items like a computer, software, graphing calculator, camera or musical instrument. Even these expensive items can be purchased for less.

Look for used or refurbished goods and ask for student discounts. If you must buy new, explore buying directly from the manufacturer; often, not only will you get a student discount, but the base-price is often less than department store prices.

To save more in the long-run, consider spending more for high quality products that you won't have to replace as often. Think about purchasing warranties for more expensive items.



Start a conversation with your friends or family about money. Ask them:

“What does financial freedom mean to you?”

Tell us at [Twitter.com/OKMoneyMatters](https://twitter.com/OKMoneyMatters)  
or [Facebook.com/OklahomaMoneyMatters](https://facebook.com/OklahomaMoneyMatters)



# Frugal Reunion Fun



If there's a high school reunion in your future, spending money on airline tickets, entertainment, hotel rooms and something special to wear may be on your mind. In preparation for your reunion fun, consider these tips:

**Estimate your expenses.** If your reunion location is close to home, saving money may not be that hard. However, if you'll be traveling, take time to create a budget. Planning ahead can save you the heartache of spending freely and paying the price later.

**Start early.** The more time you have to plan, the better off you'll be. Start looking for deals as early as possible to guarantee the best rates. Explore websites like [Groupon.com](http://Groupon.com) or [LivingSocial.com](http://LivingSocial.com) for great deals on local entertainment options.

**Do the math.** It pays to bargain shop when booking flights and hotels. With a little research, you're bound to find some great savings online. Visit vendor websites for coupons and discount codes, and don't forget to visit websites like [Expedia.com](http://Expedia.com) and [Priceline.com](http://Priceline.com), which can bundle lodging and airfare for you.

**Dine on a dime.** If dining out and entertainment aren't included on the reunion agenda, don't forget to include these costs in your budget. Stay at a hotel that provides free breakfast, take advantage of buy-one-get-one meal offers, or split an entrée while catching up with old friends.



# Q&A: Financial Readiness Program

Zilpa Oseguera, Financial Counselor and Army Emergency Relief Officer  
Fort Sill Army Community Service

Zilpa Oseguera, financial counselor and program lead, talks to us about Fort Sill's Morale, Welfare and Recreation/Army Community Service (MWR/ACS) Financial Readiness Program and the services they provide.

## *Tell us about Fort Sill's MWR/ACS Financial Readiness Program.*

Our program offers the latest financial education tools and training to soldiers and their families stationed at Fort Sill. The team's focus is to provide hands-on financial training in the areas of money management, saving and investing, consumer awareness, debt and credit management and banking and checking.

In addition to financial education and training, the program also offers individual financial counseling. We currently have two certified financial counselors that offer tailored coaching to soldiers and their families with specific financial problems such as debt, credit and consumer issues. Our program also assists active duty soldiers and families with financial assistance through the Army Emergency Relief Program (AER).

AER is the Army's own emergency financial assistance organization and is dedicated to "helping the Army take care of its own."

## *What are some unique services you provide?*

The Financial Readiness Program offers soldiers and families the opportunity to obtain a copy of their credit score, free of charge. We've partnered with [SaveandInvest.org](http://SaveandInvest.org) to offer this important financial tool to help military families maintain financial stability and achieve their financial goals.

With today's economic challenges and military demands, soldiers and their families who check their credit scores will have the opportunity to better manage their debt and build wealth. To help military families, our financial counselors are available to provide assistance in reviewing their credit reports and scores and offer strategies for improving low scores and building a solid credit history.

## *Who can take advantage of these services?*

These services are available to active duty personnel, National Guard and Reservists and their immediate family

members enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS), military retirees, military widows, and Department of the Army Civilians.

## *What do you like most about your job?*

In my job there are a lot of opportunities to make a difference in someone's life. I enjoy working with a wonderful team whose passion is to help people build their self confidence to make better financial decisions.

It's very fulfilling to see someone who may have experienced financial setbacks achieve financial independence. Every day we're helping people take small financial steps to build long-term wealth.

## *How can people learn more?*

To learn more about Fort Sill's MWR/ACS Financial Readiness Program please visit [Sillmwr.com/soldier-family-programs-2/financial-readiness-and-aer-loans/](http://Sillmwr.com/soldier-family-programs-2/financial-readiness-and-aer-loans/) or call 580-442-4916.

# Counting on a Bright Future

OCAP Annual Conference



The Oklahoma College Assistance Program (OCAP) invites you to save a very special date. On 10.11.12, you could be Counting on a Bright Future at the annual OCAP Conference in Oklahoma City! OCAP, an operating division of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, is OKMM's parent organization.

Mark your calendars now, and spend the day with colleagues who share your passion for helping Oklahoma students count on a bright future. With a diverse selection of breakout sessions, we anticipate this will be one of our largest conferences to date! Here's a sampling of the great topics that will be discussed this year.

- Federal financial aid changes
- Oklahoma's Promise updates
- Default prevention and management
- Empowering foster children and families
- Financial education activities
- Reaching low-resourced populations
- Serving adult learners
- OCAP products and services
- Successfully engaging parents

Space will be limited, so stay tuned for registration information and when it's time, don't wait to sign up. We look forward to seeing you in October!

## Social Buying, Deal or No Deal?

To Groupon or not to Groupon? What's the first question you should ask when joining a social buying site? Are you really saving money or just searching for a reason to spend it? However you look at it, spending money is still spending money. Here are a few things to think about if social buying interests you.

**Assess your needs.** Before you get excited about saving five dollars on \$10 worth of ice cream, stop and ask: do you even want the ice cream and if so, how much are you going to get? That Groupon may only be enough for one serving. It's important to read the fine print before making a purchase.

**Evaluate the savings.** Be selective about the "daily deals" you spend your money on. If you're already planning to get a spa massage at a local salon, does it make sense to drive to the neighboring city to purchase the same massage for \$20 less? What you save on your purchase may simply go into your gas tank.

**Real deal?** Make sure that the deal you're seeing is actually a bargain. Sometimes offers on social buying sites aren't really discounted. It's worthwhile to comparison shop, making sure a better deal can't be found someplace else.





## Quick Tips for Earning Fast Cash



If you're looking for some extra cash but don't have the time or energy to set up a garage sale, consider these simpler ways to sell stuff you no longer use or want in your home.

**Hold a virtual garage sale.** With websites like [eBay.com](http://eBay.com), [Craigslist.org](http://Craigslist.org), [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) and [Rehash.com](http://Rehash.com) there's a market for just about everything on the Web. So, grab your camera, set up a PayPal account and start selling.

**Explore trade-in stores.** Look for stores that specialize in buying used goods. For example, there are many stores that specialize in buying used CDs, DVDs and video games, and will pay cash for your unwanted items. There are even chains, like GameStop, that have stores nationwide.

**Visit pawn shops.** Pawn shops will buy a surprisingly broad range of household items and pay you cash. Many pawn shops will even negotiate prices with you, so you may find it useful to take your items to several shops before settling on an offer.

**Embrace consignment stores.** Consider taking your gently used clothes to a consignment shop. Stores like Daisy Exchange in Oklahoma City will pay cash on the spot for stylish clothes. Others pay you a percentage upon selling your items.

You never know what people are looking to buy. If you don't have any luck selling your items at one place, don't hesitate to try another.

## On Our MIND

What's on the mind of OKMM staff? This month communications specialist Michelle Van Swearingen talks about the pros and cons of upgrading her car.



In a world where we constantly strive to have more than the "Joneses," it's easy to get sucked into wanting more than we can afford, or even need.

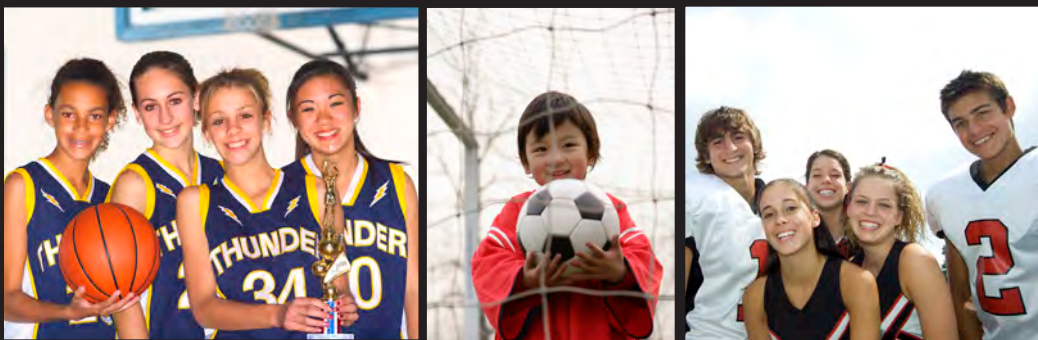
For example, after a few years of owning a car, its new car smell goes away and your oil-change guy stops complimenting the cleanliness of the engine. You begin to realize that your car is not new or cool anymore. Then, as though right on cue, you start receiving mail from car dealerships offering huge discounts or amazing trade-in deals for newer, much cooler vehicles and you start feeling that old Joneses jealousy creeping in.

Should you take them up on their amazing deals or stick with your old tried and true? Depending on your situation, trading in your vehicle may not be the worst idea. After all, as soon as you take a newly purchased vehicle off the lot, its value instantly depreciates and continues to depreciate, losing value each day that you own it. And like any other machine, the wear and tear on your vehicle increases with usage.

If your car is paid for, you may find a trade-in will save you money in repairs down the road. Plus, if you research new cars, you may find that many are more fuel efficient, have convenient technology upgrades and have better safety ratings.

If you still owe a significant amount on your vehicle, a trade-in or upgrade may not be the best idea. Make sure you do your research and the math before you trade-in your current vehicle. Consider how much you still owe, the wholesale value of your current vehicle (which is often the base trade-in value), how much you've already invested, and the total cost of the new car - including tag, title and tax.

To learn more about your vehicle's resale or trade-in value, visit the Kelley Blue Book website at [KBB.com](http://KBB.com). And, for more helpful information about the pros and cons of vehicle trade-ins, check out the Auto Loans 101 learning module at [OklahomaMoneyMatters.org](http://OklahomaMoneyMatters.org).



# Managing the Extras

With the fall school semester coming, it's time for students to sign up for extracurricular activities. It's been proven that students who are involved in extras like sports, art and music reap many positive benefits. Skills like learning to work as a team, self-discipline, and leadership can help students keep their grades high and boost their resume and college applications. Yet, with schools and organizations facing budget issues, parents may have to dig deeper into their wallets to support these activities. If you're a parent looking for ways to trim extracurricular costs, check out these tips to save your budget while helping your kids stay active.

**Know the cost...then budget.** Prior to signing up, ask about the upfront membership or association fees. Track all expenses associated with each child's activities so you can budget for them and also save ahead for future costs.

**Communicate with the coach.** If you're struggling to pay for required fees, uniforms or supplies, ask the sponsor or coach if they know of any discounts or alternative products.

**Meet other parents.** Chances are you're not the only one struggling to manage activity expenses. Getting to know other team parents allows you to get advice and learn from their money-saving tips. In addition, this network is great for coordinating things like gear exchange, carpools, snacks, or fundraising events.

**Recycle and reuse.** If an older child decides not to play soccer anymore, yet your youngest kiddo looks like the next star goalie, why not pass down usable equipment and uniforms? This can save a lot of money, especially if your family invests in a particular sport, activity or organization.

**Encourage your child to help.** One of the best qualities your child can develop from extracurricular activities is a great work ethic. Encouraging your child to help with expenses can instill a sense of ownership and responsibility.

**Know when to quit.** Many parents continue investing in activities their kids no longer care about. Ask your child if s/he's still interested in an activity; the answer can help you determine if it's worth it to maintain the added expense. If you find you can't afford the costs, have an honest talk with your child about the situation and work together to find alternative activities they can get excited about.



## At Your Service

### *Train-the-Trainer Workshops*

One of OKMM's goals is to help our campus and community partners integrate financial education into the work they're already doing. Let us partner with you to spread the word about healthy money management in the communities where you live and work!

We invite you, your employees and your student leaders to take advantage of an empowering outreach opportunity by participating in one of our customized train-the-trainer workshops. We'll work with you to identify your needs, provide resources and show you how to tailor your message to best reach your audience. We'll also explore engaging activities that support your budgeting, saving, consumer credit, identity theft prevention and student loan management messages.

Here's what Ashley Arnold, Public Relations Leader at Legacy Bank, had to say about one of our recent trainings.

*"We had a great time at your training and found it to be the most helpful training we've attended."*

To learn more about customizing your financial education program or to schedule a workshop or training session for your team, call 800.970.OKMM (toll free) or email [oklahomamoneymatters@ocap.org](mailto:oklahomamoneymatters@ocap.org).

# Inexpensive Ways to Stay Fit

With busy lifestyles, sedentary habits and the rising costs of food and health programs, anyone trying to live healthier may feel defeated before starting. However, there are options for those attempting to stay fit while on a budget. Here are a few tips to get you started.

**Educate yourself.** Before you can get healthy, you need to know the right way to do it. Educate yourself on how your body and mind will work within a healthier lifestyle. Do this by testing your physical limits, writing down your short – and long – term goals, learning healthier ways to eat, and creating a support system. Not only does this process allow you to learn about yourself, but you'll save time and money by avoiding bogus products or participating in programs you'll later lose interest in.

**Move your body.** If you're healthy enough to walk or lift weights, use this to your advantage. Any cardiovascular or weight bearing activities can strengthen your body's circulatory and muscular systems. Activities like walking around your neighborhood, doing push-ups during TV commercials or stretching at your desk are great options to help you stay fit. The key is consistency, so carve out time each day for exercise.

**Listen to the experts.** There are many books, experts and organizations that provide information on how to stay fit without draining your pocketbook. For example, the American Heart Association offers free tips for improving heart health through physical activity, nutritious foods and reducing stress under the "Getting Healthy" tab at [Heart.org](http://Heart.org). Programs like TOPS (Take Off the Pounds Sensibly) or the website [SparkPeople.com](http://SparkPeople.com) provide healthy lifestyle advice at little to no cost. Also, if you have friends, family members or coworkers who live a healthy lifestyle, ask them to share tips and advice.

**Use what you know.** Do you feel like you've had a complete workout after gardening all day? Ever sneak zucchini or broccoli into your family's dinner casserole to make it more nutritious? Identify the activities and practices that are already a part of your routine and incorporate them into your healthy lifestyle goals.

Overall, the key to a healthy lifestyle is finding what works best for you. It's a worthwhile journey to discover.



## What You're Missing on Twitter

Follow us at [Twitter.com/OKMoneyMatters](https://twitter.com/OKMoneyMatters)

Do you think you could live without money? This woman did.  
<http://bit.ly/P6Oh03>

## Go Green, Save Green

### Erase Crayon From Walls

If junior chose your lovely white walls for his latest masterpiece, *This Old House* magazine shares a chemical-free way to erase the artwork without giving your arms a workout.

Begin by coating crayon doodles on scrubbable walls with mayonnaise. After a few minutes, wipe off the mayo and crayon marks with a damp cloth. Rinse the wall with a clean, damp rag and presto, your wall looks good as new!

65% of Americans would live alone on a deserted island for a year for \$1,000,000.

NicheGeek.com



# Partner News and Events



Next Meeting:  
Wednesday, July 25  
11:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.  
Oklahoma City

Email Dan at [OklahomaJumpstart@gmail.com](mailto:OklahomaJumpstart@gmail.com) for more details.

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## Invest Ed <sup>®</sup>

Senior Fraud Conference  
Wednesday, August 8  
A look at current fraud trends affecting seniors.  
Embassy Suites  
Norman, OK

Visit [Investedok.org](http://Investedok.org) for more details.

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## Have News to Share?

Let us feature it! Do you have a contest, educational workshop or other personal finance event you'd like us to highlight in a future edition of the newsletter? Send a note to [mcrawford@ocap.org](mailto:mcrawford@ocap.org) today; space is limited.



Oklahoma Money Matters (OKMM) is a personal finance education program that helps K-12 schools, higher education campuses, businesses and community partners develop or expand educational services that empower Oklahomans to make positive financial choices.

OKMM is an initiative of the Oklahoma College Assistance Program and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

Visit us online at [OklahomaMoneyMatters.org](http://OklahomaMoneyMatters.org).

To ask questions or share comments regarding this newsletter, email [OklahomaMoneyMatters@ocap.org](mailto:OklahomaMoneyMatters@ocap.org).



Oklahoma College Assistance Program

OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION



*Improving our future by degrees*

### July

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
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29	30	31				

### August

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