



Your Bottom Line

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## 5 Weird Ways to Build Wealth

Most people try to avoid being seen as weird or different, but being weird just might be key to getting out of debt, breaking the paycheck-to-paycheck cycle, and building wealth.

The average person in America struggles to make ends meet and routinely spends more than they make. That's a bad recipe for success, unless your goal is to be stressed and strapped for cash. Instead of following the norm, take steps to break away from average and stand out from the crowd.

Mahatma Gandhi said that your beliefs become your thoughts, your thoughts become your actions, your actions become your habits and your habits become your destiny. If that's true, becoming wealthy is less about

your income and more about your overall attitude and habits. Stop thinking like everyone else and start acting like a money master by implementing the following habits.

- **Make to-do lists.** 73 percent of wealthy people plan their day. They realize that success doesn't happen by chance, it takes a conscious effort. Identifying and writing down daily goals gives you more control of your day, provides a visual reminder of what you'd like to accomplish, and helps you avoid procrastination.
- **Exercise.** There's a significant connection between health and wealth. Wealthy people know that living a healthy lifestyle leads to better overall health, greater mental clarity and increased energy, resulting in

fewer sick days used, more productive hours at work and less money spent on medical bills.

- **Wake up earlier.** There may be some merit to the saying, "early to bed, early to rise, makes you healthy, wealthy and wise." It's reported that 44 percent of rich people wake up three hours before their work day starts, compared to only 3 percent of lower income individuals. Make an effort to set your alarm a bit earlier and use the extra time to study, meditate, or squeeze in an extra workout.
- **Disconnect.** Watching TV and surfing the Web are common ways to wind down, but these habits may be standing between you and financial

cont. on page 2



Volunteer Experience  
Money Talks



Q&A: Oklahoma's  
Promise



Dirt Cheap Gardening  
FAFSA Resources



Automating Your  
Money  
On Our Mind



World Currencies  
At Your Service



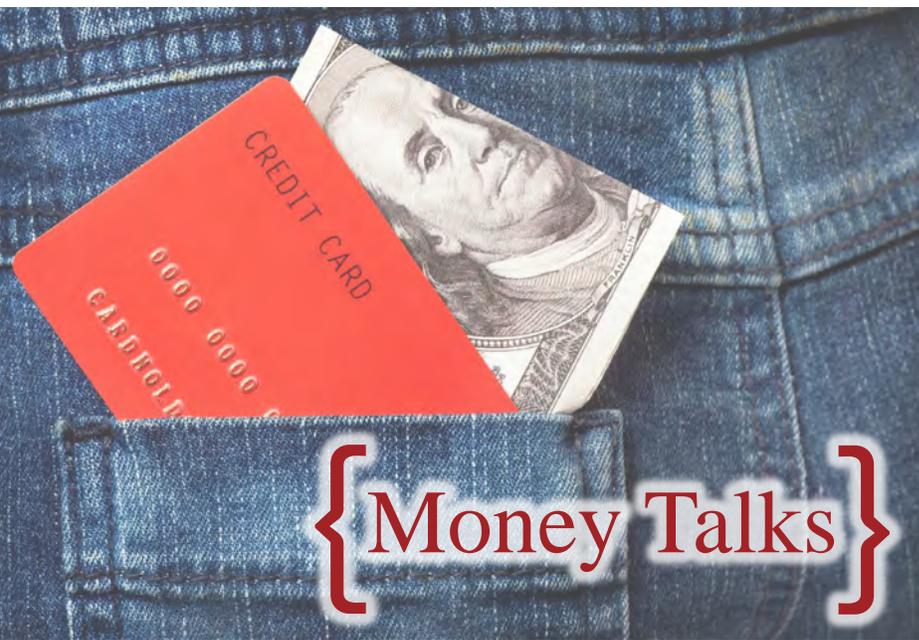
Becoming Your  
Own Boss  
Savvy Saving



Partner News  
Calendar

prosperity. It's true, the majority of wealthy people report watching only one hour of TV a day. So what do they do with their free time? They network, socialize and read. Many millionaires report reading on a daily basis and encourage their children to read two or more non-fiction books each month.

- **Live modestly.** Those who have ample money know there's no need to go into debt to try to impress others. Here are some examples of the rich and famous who still behave frugally.
  - » Despite her wealth, actress Hilary Swank clips coupons.
  - » Warren Buffett lives in the same home he bought in 1958 for \$31,500.
  - » Bethenny Frankel shops sales and bargain hunts on eBay.
  - » T. Boone Pickens follows his grandma's advice, "never to go anywhere with money in your pocket looking for something to buy." When he shops, he uses a list and only carries enough cash to buy exactly what he planned to.



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

“What is the worst piece of financial advice you’ve ever received?”

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



## Volunteering Can Help You Get a Job

You may have heard that listing volunteer experience looks good on a resume, but you're not quite sure how the hours you spend at the local animal shelter or the work you do with your church's youth group has any impact on your current job search.

Here are some tips to consider when marketing volunteer work to help you land the job of your dreams.

- **Show your character.** Volunteering shows employers that you're a well-rounded person. By committing time to an unpaid position, you demonstrate your dedication to a cause (or causes) and your willingness to give back to your community.
- **Demonstrate your skills.** If you'd like to advance your current career or enter a new field, focus on volunteer positions that help you bridge gaps in your work experience. For example, if you'd like an advanced role within your agency but you've never had a management position before, emphasize unpaid positions that honed your leadership and project management skills. Every job, paid or not, teaches valuable skills that can be beneficial as you climb the career ladder.
- **Open the door to more.** If the program you'd like to work for doesn't currently have an opening, ask if they have a need for volunteers. This approach works especially well if you're interested in a non-profit business. Maximize your time there by demonstrating your work ethic, learning the industry lingo, networking and exploring team dynamics.



# Q&A: Oklahoma's Promise

Carol Alexander, Scholarship Coordinator

Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

## *Tell us about Oklahoma's Promise.*

Oklahoma's Promise is a unique scholarship program that offers the promise of free college tuition! It's designed for deserving students who work and study hard, but whose families find it difficult to afford college.

The program pays resident tuition at an Oklahoma public institution or a portion of tuition at an Oklahoma private institution or public technology center for courses that are approved for credit toward an Associate of Applied Science degree. Students must apply in the 8th, 9th or 10th grade (homeschool students must be age 13, 14 or 15), be an Oklahoma resident, complete a specific high school curriculum, achieve at least a 2.5 grade point average in the curriculum and overall, and abide by certain conduct standards.

Family income may not exceed \$50,000 at the time of application and \$100,000 at the time the student begins college and prior to receiving the scholarship.

## *How has the program changed over the years?*

There have been many changes; however, the purpose of the

program has remained consistent. We strive to increase the number of college graduates in Oklahoma by encouraging more students to aspire and prepare academically for college. Our first class of high school graduates had about 1,600 students; our classes now have around 10,000 each, so that required some adjustments.



Some of the recent changes to the program include a second income check at high school graduation and college GPA requirements for the students. Implementing these changes has taken the cooperation of several departments within our agency as well as the colleges and universities. Everyone works well together, which has made the transition fairly smooth.

## *What is one key point you'd like to emphasize to families applying for Oklahoma's Promise?*

Follow through with the application process, whether you complete the online application or the paper form. At present, applicants are required to mail in a signature page and income documentation regardless of the type of application filed.

Also, don't assume your student is enrolled until you receive confirmation from our office. If you complete the online application you'll receive an email confirmation. Likewise, if you complete the paper application your confirmation will arrive through the regular mail.

## *How can students and families learn more about participating in Oklahoma's Promise?*

Parents and students can find in-depth information, including program benefits, scholarship conditions, required classes and more, by exploring [okpromise.org](http://okpromise.org).

To speak to a program representative, call 800.858.1840 (toll free) or email [okpromise@osrhe.edu](mailto:okpromise@osrhe.edu).

# Dirt Cheap Gardening

Are you a seasoned gardener or someone who's trying out their green thumb for the first time? Whether it's a flower, vegetable or tree, getting it to grow doesn't have to be expensive. Think about it... at least half of the necessities—soil, sunlight, water—are free! And, you can find discounted or free gardening tools, too. For example, don't pay big bucks for fancy planting pots or tools; instead, look around your garage or even in your closets for items that can be upcycled into planters or gardening tools, such as a homemade composter. Want to start small? Poke a few holes in the lid of a milk jug and you'll have an excellent DIY watering can.

- If you're a gardening newbie, it may be best to start with plants that are inexpensive and low-maintenance. Certain herbs, fruits, vegetables, flowers and shrubs grow easily, and are inexpensive and multifunctional. Consider doing an Internet search or visiting a local greenhouse to learn more about plants that are good for first-time gardeners in your area.
- For those with slightly greener thumbs, there are a number of plants to consider adding to your garden to help you get the most for your money. Lettuce grown from a package of seeds will produce enough heads of lettuce to last for months, which could save you big bucks at the grocery store. Garlic, another expensive grocery item, can be grown fairly easily and can produce bulbs for considerably less than in-store prices.
- For the more experienced gardener, why not take your skills to the next level? Consider dedicating the majority of your garden real estate to produce that would otherwise cost you the most in-store. Cherry tomatoes, arugula, dill and winter squash are some of the more expensive products. Growing them at home could help you save in the long run. Have extra produce? Consider preserving it for later use. Many fruits and vegetables can be canned and many herbs can be dried. Not interested in canning? Consider selling your extra produce at a farmers market or flea market to earn back some of your gardening costs.



**startwithfafsa.org**  
What you need to know about submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the most important step for students on the path to college. Completing the FAFSA is essential for obtaining federal and some state financial aid, including grants, scholarships, work-study programs and federal student loans.

To help students and parents understand the application process, OCAP's college access initiative, UCanGo2, is pleased to introduce a new FAFSA resource, [StartWithFAFSA.org](http://StartWithFAFSA.org). This interactive site allows students and parents to sort information about specific FAFSA topics, watch FAFSA video tutorials in English or Spanish, download helpful publications and submit questions and comments. New topics and answers to important questions are uploaded weekly.

The site also offers:

- Links to FAFSA resources.
- Timely reminders.
- Oklahoma-specific information.
- FAFSA FAQs.



# Should Your Finances Be On Autopilot?

Have you ever been offered the opportunity to enroll in automatic bill payment? Are you curious about the pros and cons of signing up? Deciding whether or not to automate your money is a matter of personal preference. Here's a list of some of the pros and cons to help you make the best choice.

## Pro: Out-of-sight, out-of-mind

Some people dislike the amount of time it takes to pay bills. Setting up automatic payments reduces the time commitment and stress it takes to pay each bill.

## Con: Out-of-sight, out-of-mind

Reviewing your bills each month helps you stay on top of your budget. When you don't have to look at your bills in order to pay them, you run the risk of losing touch with your finances. Also, once a bill is paid, you've provided consent for payment of the charges, which may lower your effectiveness when disputing unexpected charges.

## Pro: Fewer penalties

Setting up automatic payments can be helpful if you struggle to remember to pay bills on-time. If you have multiple bills to juggle, it can help reduce fees and penalties associated with late charges.

## Con: Potential penalties

Bill amounts have been known to change significantly and with little to no warning. If this happens to you, and you're enrolled in automatic payments, you could overdraw your checking account. If your bank charges you with overdraft fees, you could easily end up spending more than you'd planned.

## On Our MIND

What's on the mind of OKMM staff? This month outreach coordinator Melissa Neal talks about the importance of spending money on things that "count."



I love working with adult learners. There's something exciting about walking into a classroom knowing, without a doubt, that I'm going to learn just as much as I hope to teach. Adult learners bring a lifetime of experience to the classroom and it's refreshing to hear them share stories that teach different perspectives and emphasize that there's no single way to manage your money (that's why it's called personal finance).

I recently met a woman who shared these words of wisdom. "We all waste money, so we 'd better make sure we're wasting it on something we care about." She's right; a lot of people (myself included) suffer from a socially transmitted illness called "affluenza" - a condition of having too much. Too much debt, too much stress and too much waste resulting from the never-ending pursuit for more.

Here are some of the steps my family is taking to move toward weeding out the less important things so we can spend our hard-earned money on what we care most about.

- **Make a list.** Our list of wants seems to be overflowing and never-ending, so we've created a system to help us manage them. When we identify something we'd like to have we add it to "the list." Some things stay briefly because they're a fleeting whim, while others become a permanent fixture. The items with sticking power are the ones we save for, because we know it's an item we'll use and enjoy for more than a moment.
- **Count our blessings.** It's easy to let envy take control when we see others with things we'd like to have. When we start to feel like we're missing out, we step back and focus on the positive. Instead of looking at all the things we're lacking, we try to appreciate the wonderful things we have. While we don't have everything we want, we do have everything we need. Our home is safe, our family is healthy and our pantry and closets are full.
- **Buy fewer things, make more memories.** Items, even well-made ones, can't outlast memories. Instead of accumulating new things and piles of stuff, my family has decided to concentrate on buying experiences and building a lifetime of memories. We love animals and all things Disney, so our goal is to visit as many zoos and aquariums as possible and eventually take a grand Disney vacation. We can't wait.



# Currencies Around the World

Although the U.S. dollar is one of the most traded currencies in the world, if you plan to travel or live abroad, you'll need to exchange your U.S. dollars into that country's currency. Here are the names of some well-known currencies and interesting facts that make them unique.

- **Euro.** As the second most traded currency in the world, the euro is used by 18 Eurozone member states. It was introduced in virtual form in 1999 and later as coins and bank notes in 2002.
- **Japanese yen.** The yen is the third most traded currency in the world. One yen coin can float on water, because it's made of 100% aluminum.
- **Great British pound sterling.** As the official currency of the United Kingdom, the pound sterling is considered the world's oldest currency still in circulation.
- **Brazilian real.** Known in Portuguese as “royal”, the real is famous for its unique art work. Different plants and animals are printed on its bank notes while the coins bear the cross-shaped constellation called Crux.
- **Russian ruble.** Meaning “to chop” in reference to chopping off silver to make coins, the Russian Federation issued their version after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1992.
- **Indian rupee.** With its existence beginning in Ancient India, the rupee was first introduced as a silver coin. Currently, its bank notes feature the face of the late Mahatma Gandhi.
- **South African rand.** Derived as a nickname from the Afrikaans word “Witwatersrand” (English translation: white waters ridge) where gold deposits were found in the large city of Johannesburg, the rand started in 1941 as the official currency of the Republic of South Africa, which began the same year.

To learn more about the exchange rate of the U.S. dollar, visit a bank that exchanges foreign currency or explore a website like [xe.com](http://xe.com) or [gocurrency.com](http://gocurrency.com).



## At Your Service

### *Personal Finance Skill Assessment*

If you provide financial education to college students or adult learners, we want you to know about a new tool created to help you enhance your financial education efforts.

*Your Money Matters: How Financially Savvy Are You?* is a user-friendly assessment and corresponding answer key designed to gauge students' current understanding of basic money management concepts.

The quiz consists of 20 questions covering a range of topics, including:

- Saving for emergencies.
- Creating a realistic budget.
- Using credit responsibly.
- Monitoring credit reports.
- Successfully managing student loans.

To request your free digital copy, or to learn more about Oklahoma Money Matters' services, call 800.970.OKMM (toll free) or email [OklahomaMoneyMatters@ocap.org](mailto:OklahomaMoneyMatters@ocap.org).

# Become Your Own Boss

Many people dream of being their own boss, but starting your own entrepreneurial venture can be scary. Not only will you have to invest a lot of your time and money, you'll also have to put yourself "out there" for the world to see. If you're serious about starting your own business, you'll find a way to push any fear aside and go for it. We've compiled some tips to help you get started.

- **Do your homework.** Hopefully, you've already begun the research process. If not, take steps to learn about the market you plan to enter. Is there a need for your product or service? Will location play a role in your business? How much will you need for startup costs and how soon can you expect to see a return on your investment? According to [Entrepreneur.com](http://Entrepreneur.com), the research and learning process should continue throughout the life of your business; the more you learn, the more you earn.
- **Put in on paper.** Write down all of your ideas for your new business in the form of a business plan. There are countless books, templates and online resources to help you organize these ideas into a profitable plan. Having a solid plan in place can help you meet your goals, find funding and promote your business.
- **Make it legal.** Don't start earning money for your business without taking the necessary steps to make it legal. You'll need to establish your business's legal structure, name and tax ID number. You'll also need to determine if you need any special permits or licenses. Further steps may be required if you plan to have employees other than yourself. To learn more, check out the Oklahoma Department of Commerce's *Business Start-up Guide* at [OKCommerce.gov](http://OKCommerce.gov).



Americans buy over 120 million pounds of candy for Easter. That's enough to fill more than 4,615 dump trucks!

*National Confectioners Association*

## Savvy Savings

For many people, coffee is serious business! A daily cup (or 4) can be costly. Here are a few tips for making your coffee drinking experience easier on your wallet.

- Consider buying coffee in bulk at your local wholesale club and brew at home. Even name brands like Starbucks are sold in bulk packages.
- Search for DIY creamer recipes online. Make a batch and store in the fridge.

*Basic recipe (makes 1 cup)*

- » Mix 1 cup half & half or heavy cream with 1/4 cup regular sugar or coconut sugar.
- » Add your favorite flavor(s), to taste.
- » Simmer, remove from heat and steep for one hour before straining and storing.





# Partner News and Events



Member Meeting:  
**Wednesday, April 16**  
11:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.  
Oklahoma City

&

Jump\$Start Day at the Capitol  
**Wednesday, April 23**  
Oklahoma State Capitol, 4th floor rotunda  
Oklahoma City

&

Jump\$Start Your Money Week  
**April 20-26**

Visit [OklahomaJumpstart.org](http://OklahomaJumpstart.org) or  
email [OklahomaJumpstart@gmail.com](mailto:OklahomaJumpstart@gmail.com) for more details.

## 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 [mneal@ocap.org](mailto:mneal@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).



March						
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

April						
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
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27	28	29	30			