



Managing Your Money

Situation:

Twenty-two percent of New Hampshire's working families face financial insecurity because their earnings and income fall below the basic family budget standard. This includes public work support and other public benefits, according to the Center for Economic and Policy Research. Families' personal savings rate as a percentage of disposable income also has declined since the late 1980s, according to the U.S. Dept. of Commerce.

With the current financial crisis spreading across the country, many Carroll County families face increasing financial pressure due to sudden unemployment, changes in their mortgage situation, and increased fuel costs. Families need access to reliable information as they make financial decisions, as well as education on how to develop good family finance habits.

UNH Cooperative Extension's Public Value:

Personal finance management programs with research-based, well-designed curriculum, lead to financial choices that reduce the probability a family will need public assistance.

UNH Cooperative Extension's Response:

UNH Cooperative Extension's Family Resource Management programs focus on increasing knowledge and skills, including how to identify and develop goals, creating a spending/savings plan, understanding credit and reducing overall debt, stretching resources, and becoming a more educated consumer. Extension's curricula of "Making Money Work for You," "Taking Charge of Your Finances," "Credit Check Up," and "Don't Get Crushed By Debt," along with basic budgeting workshops, made a tangible difference in New Hampshire residents' lives. In 2008, 54 Carroll County residents attended *Making Money Work for You* workshop series, *Credit Check-Up*, *Don't Get Crushed by Debt*, or *Managing Financial Resources* workshops.

UNH Cooperative Extension coordinates the N.H. Statewide Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Alliance where asset-building coalitions and statewide partners work towards increasing the numbers of taxpayers getting their tax returns prepared free with a focus of increasing the EITC for those eligible. The dollars these individuals/households gain are typically spent in their communities. There are five free tax preparation sites in Carroll County.

How We Make a Difference:

Ninety-three percent of Carroll County participants who attended money management programs reported they increased their money management skills and expected to decrease their debt.

- Before the workshops, 83 percent of participants reported they felt confident about making decisions about money; after the workshops, they all said they were confident about making money decisions.
- At the end of the workshops, 75 percent reported they had managed credit and reduced debt and 25 percent plan to in the future.
- Fewer participants indicated they were paying bills late at the end of the workshops – 25 percent compared with 50 percent at the beginning of the workshops. Paying bills on time is important because late fees or increased interest may be added to the bill. It may also negatively affecting a person's credit rating.

For Tax Year 2007, the free tax preparation sites in Carroll County filed 681 returns, resulting in a savings for these taxpayers of \$102,150. In addition, these taxpayers received \$62,837 in EITC, \$39,144 in Child Tax Credit and \$306,144 in refunds.

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