



HAMPTON ROADS LEGAL SERVICES

Putting you in charge of your Financial Life

Monthly Newsletter

January 2014

Start your Year with a Way to Succeed: Introducing a Financial Coaching Program

Edrie Pfeiffer

Over the past almost two decades that I have worked with individuals who have financial problems, I have seen many individuals who needed more assistance with their finances than could be done through a bankruptcy. I have also meet with many people who didn't really need to file a bankruptcy but they needed practical guidance in handling their finances. Most of the time, these are people who have a steady job or other source of income. They should have the ability to pay their bills but they need assistance in the best ways to handle their monthly expenses. Perhaps they have never learned the skills necessary to budget or balance their checking account. They may be overwhelmed with other things and finances gets pushed to the bottom of the pile. While an individual filing a bankruptcy is required to have a counseling session before filing and to complete a course after filing, these are one time short sessions that don't really provide the ongoing assistance that many people need.



As I thought about this problem, I realized that there are programs that provide coaching for someone who wants to lose weight, fitness coaches who work with people on exercise programs, job coaches who assist individuals to prepare for the job market and even life coaches who work with individuals on strategies for being successful in life. However, there aren't many programs that work with individuals on an ongoing basis on handling their finances. A couple of months ago, I asked many of my clients if they would be interested in this type of program. I received a great deal of positive feedback so I have developed a financial coaching program to assist individuals to succeed in managing their finances. No, I can't make your current job pay you more money but I will work with you on making the money you do have go farther. I may also have suggestions on increasing your income.



There will be three levels of the Financial Coaching offered. All three levels will start with an Initial Review Session. I will sit down with you and review your income, monthly bills and credit report. Then together we will develop a budget for your household and discuss your financial goals. There will be a registration fee paid at this initial session. Then you will choose which level of membership will work best for you and you will be billed monthly for that level.

At the Gold Level, you will receive weekly email tips on budgeting and how to save money on your monthly living expenses. We have included some tips in this newsletter to give you a taste of the type of tips you can expect each week. Our goal is to show you ways to save at least \$50 a month on your living expenses. By implementing the tips each month, you could potentially save \$600 or more during your first year. We will also be available to answer your questions via email on a weekly basis. Once a month, we will check in with you

over the phone to see how you are doing on your budget and financial goals. Then once a year, we will meet with you again to review how the year has gone for you. We will pull your credit report and see how you are doing there and work on a new budget and goals for the next year.

At the Platinum Level, you will receive all of the assistance offered in the Gold Level, plus you will receive a weekly phone call to check in with you. We will answer your questions via email within two days. You will have a quarterly review session to see how you are doing on your financial goals and your budget in addition to the yearly review session. We will also provide you with an estate planning session and discounts on wills, power of attorneys and advanced medical directives.

At the Master Level, you will receive all the benefits above, plus we will meet with you monthly and assist you with your budget. Your questions submitted via email will be answered within one business day. We will also work with any credit card debt that you may have to try to negotiate payment arrangements. After your first year of membership, we will provide tax preparation for the Federal 1040 Form and itemized deductions.

We anticipate that there will be limited space available at each level but we want to give our current and former clients the first chance to join. Initially, the registration fee will be \$150 but the first 25 people to sign up will receive a \$25 discount off the registration fee. In addition, the first 10 people to sign up at each level of membership will receive 10% off their monthly fee. Call Desirai today at 757-276-7280 to schedule your initial review session.

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EASY WAYS TO SAVE MONEY

Edrie Pfeiffer:

I love wraps for lunch and it is really easy to swing by a fast food restaurant to pick one up for lunch. However, I have found it is also really easy and much less expensive to make one at home, plus I get to truly have it my way. I buy the large tortillas and keep various toppings like lettuce, spinach, mushrooms and shredded cheese on hand. I buy large bags of boneless chicken breasts. Then once a month, I cook several chicken breasts and chop them up into bite size pieces. I bag the pieces into individual servings and freeze them. When I want a chicken wrap, I grab a bag of chicken and heat it up. Using the tortilla as a base, I add whatever toppings appeal to me and within about the same amount of time that it would take to go through a drive through, I have a custom made wrap for a fraction of the cost.

Aaron:

Are you tired of paying a high cell phone bill every month? Have you considered switching to a pay-as-you-go cell phone company such as Virgin Mobile or Net10? Pay-as-you-go plans do not require contracts and can be substantially cheaper per month compared to a traditional cell phone contract. Pay-as-you-go plans require you to buy your phone outright, which can cost more up front, but most companies offer a multitude of phones at reasonable prices. The real cost saver is the monthly plan cost. Most companies offer plans with unlimited talk, text, and data for around \$50 per month. Additionally, the service and data speeds are very reliable as they piggyback on the major provider networks. Once your current cell phone contract is up, it may be time to make a switch!

Colleen:

I limit myself to eating lunch out only once per week and packing my lunch the other four work days. That saves me,



on average, about \$20.00-\$40.00 per week over when I used to buy my lunch out every day, depending on where you eat. Even stopping by 7-Eleven or WaWa was adding up to about \$5.00 to \$10.00 per trip.

Saving \$20.00 per week on eating out x 52 weeks per year = \$1040.00!! I put that money aside in savings for things like Christmas or Busch Gardens tickets.

Desirai:

The internet is the best tool to use when looking to make a purchase. You can find manufacturer product coupons, free shipping codes, printable store coupons and online discount codes that were once not readily available to you. Before you spend money at a local store, go online first to search for deals. Whether you are buying clothes, a video game or something as simple as a case for a cell phone, do not pay the full asking price.

Here are some of the websites that I use frequently to save money: Retailmenot.com, Groupon.com and Restaurant.com

Annette:

I use mypoints.com. You can click on emails and get points and cash them in for gifts cards to many different stores such as Walmart.

Five More Tips On How To Succeed On Your New Year's Resolutions

By Edrie Pfeiffer, Managing Attorney
Hampton Roads Legal Services

In January 2013, we launched our monthly print newsletter. This newsletter is the first issue of our second year. One of my goals for last year was to publish a monthly newsletter. It hasn't been easy but I was committed to making it happen. In our first issue, I offered some tips to help you succeed on keeping your New Year's Resolutions. This month I want to offer some additional tips to help you fulfill your goals.

1) *Put your goal in writing.*

It is easy to think about your goals but it somehow changes things when you put them in writing. They seem more permanent when you have them written out. After you put them in writing, post them in a place where you will see them regularly. Make sure that you actually



review them. When I set the goal of publishing a monthly newsletter, I didn't just think that I should do this, I put it in writing,

2) *Share your goals with someone.*

Just like writing down your goals, it helps to share your goals with someone else. It is even better if the person you

share your goals with is someone who can hold you accountable. Last December, when I committed to this monthly newsletter, I told my staff about it but I also set up a relationship with a local printer to publish it for me. This has helped to keep me accountable since he contacts me each month if I don't have the newsletter to him by a certain date.

3) *Block out time in your schedule to do what you need to do for your goal.*

Believe me, I understand how easy it is to push something to the back burner because there are other matters that need to be taken care of. I have to make sure that I set aside time to write the articles each month for the newsletter. If I don't commit to doing this, it is very easy to see all those other things that need to be taken care of and push off writing the articles.

4) *Set a deadline for accomplishing each step of your goal.*

Every month I set a deadline for when the articles need to be written. Having a firm deadline for not only myself, but for my staff and guest articles, really helps to keep me on track. I always set the deadline a few days before I have to send the newsletter to the printer so that I have a slight grace period if a true emergency comes up.

5) *Reward yourself for the accomplishments you make.*

You need to have rewards for the small gains. My biggest reward is seeing the newsletter proof come back from the printer each month. I also am rewarded when a client tells me that they really enjoyed that month's newsletter. Identify those rewards that will help you reach your goal. I know it can be done since I have now completed one full year of monthly newsletters. Accomplishing your goals won't be easy but aren't you worth it.

TAX NEWS FOR THE START OF 2014

By The Small
Business
Specialists



With the Christmas and New Year celebrations behind us, we begin to ponder the approaching tax season. Congress is still wrangling with budgetary issues and last minute tax law revisions. Literally hundreds of changes, extensions and deletions will go into effect and could impact the preparation of your tax return this year. Here are a few of the highlights for 2014.

Home Owner Energy Credits: You could qualify for a 10-30% tax credit--unlimited for solar, wind and geothermal power but, capped at \$500 for insulation and storm doors.

Mortgage Interest: IRS stated they will pay more attention to this deduction limitation and how refinanced loan proceeds are used. Keep record of expenditures you make with refinanced loan funds.

Charitable Contributions: For any single contribution you make over \$250, you must receive an acknowledgement letter from the organization showing the date, description and amount of your contribution, or its fair market value. The letter should state that you did not receive any goods or services in exchange for your contribution.

Foreign Accounts: IRS is looking closely for offshore accounts. If you have an interest in a foreign account, property or business that exceeded a collective value of \$10,000 (*excluding mutual funds*) any time during the year, you have to report this information to the IRS. Substantial penalties will be assessed for failure to disclose this information.

Education Credits: If you are paying higher education expenses, you may qualify for the American Opportunity Credit and/or the Lifetime Learning Credit. In addition, up to \$2,500 in interest on student loans for qualified higher education expenses may be deductible if your adjusted gross income is less than \$75,000 (\$155,000 if you're married and filing a joint return). A portion of your tuition and fees may be deductible up to \$4,000 if your adjusted gross income is \$80,000 or less (\$160,000 on a married filing jointly return).

Rental Property: Each property must be reported separately, showing the ownership, physical address, type of structure, number of days rented -vs- number of days of personal use. Unless you are in a real estate professional, losses are subject to passive activity limitations.

Social Security Wage Limit: The amount of your wages subject to social security withholding will rise for 2014 to \$117,000, from 113,700 in 2013.

With all the changes facing us it's advisable to work with a tax professional to insure your return is prepared accurately and includes all the deductions to which you are entitled. If you need help, here at The Small Business Specialists, we'll be glad to answer your questions and provide assistance for your business or personal tax matters. We are a firm of tax representatives, enrolled agents with the Internal Revenue Service, and accredited tax advisors. Call us at 757-301-8388. We are here to simplify your life by simplifying your business and taxes.



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This Firm is Not a Public Legal Aid Agency

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Hampton Roads Legal Services located in Virginia Beach assists clients with Debt Relief, Bankruptcy, Family Law, and Estate Planning matters. We serve clients throughout Hampton Roads including Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Chesapeake, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and surrounding areas. This firm is not a public legal aid agency.

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One of the nicest parts of our practice is when someone sends a friend or relative to us. Be sure that to tell people you refer to us to give us your name so we can recognize and reward you. We would like to recognize the following individuals who have recently referred new clients to us.

Rodney B., Camden, NC

Velma B., Portsmouth, VA

It has been a year now that we have been sending out a monthly newsletter. We hope that you have enjoyed receiving them. One of the hardest parts of preparing the newsletter is deciding what to cover. I would welcome your suggestions on what you would like to hear more about or what you would like to see in future issues. Please call, write or email us your suggestions.

Please remember that we are closed every Monday from 1 to 1:30 for our office staff meeting. In addition, please remember that Mrs. Pfeiffer, Colleen or Annette do not take walk in appointments or unscheduled phone calls. If you need to speak with Colleen, Annette or Mrs. Pfeiffer about your case, Desirai will be happy to schedule you a time to call one of us. Normally she will be able to schedule you an appointment with Colleen or Annette within 24 hours. You can always send us an email at info@hamptonroadslegal.com and we will respond within one day. This allows us to concentrate on your case without interruptions.

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter you can call Desirai at 340-3100 to remove your name from the mailing list or you can e-mail her at info@HamptonRoadsLegal.com.

This firm is a debt relief agency. We assist people through bankruptcy.