

Saving for Tomorrow

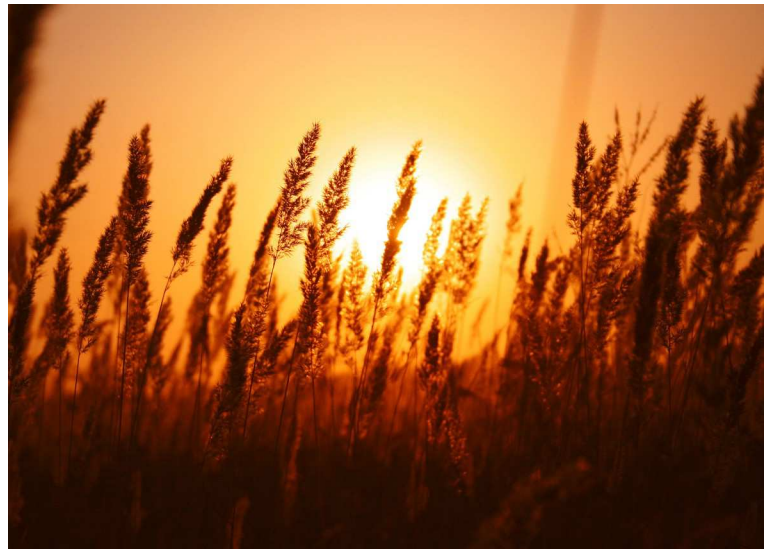
August 2013

Volume 13, Issue 8



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Reminders...

FES Participants: be sure to submit all withdrawal docs by Noon on Sept. 20th.

You must submit your **monthly** deposit slips, either by email, fax, or by dropping them off.

Need more info?

Contact Jace:
406.247.4710 • jchristensen@hrdc7.org

Or visit www.hrdc7.org and search for "Savings Programs."

Financial Education Workshops

WHEN AND WHERE	TOPIC
Tuesday, August 27 Carbon Room, 1st Floor 5:30—7:00pm	Financial Peace University Credit Sharks in Suits Understanding Credit & Collections
Monday, September 9 Yellowstone Rm., 2nd Floor 2-5pm	Financial Peace University Cash Flow Planning The Nuts and Bolts of Budgeting
Tuesday, September 17 Carbon Room, 1st Floor 5:30—7:00pm	Financial Peace University Buyer Beware The Power of Marketing
Monday, October 7 Yellowstone Rm., 2nd Floor 2-5pm	Financial Peace University Cash Flow Planning The Nuts and Bolts of Budgeting
Monday, November 4 Yellowstone Rm., 2nd Floor 2-5pm	Financial Peace University Cash Flow Planning The Nuts and Bolts of Budgeting

*Call Jace at 247-4710 to pre-register for a workshop. Each workshop is worth 2-3 credit hours toward your financial education requirements. Classes are free and open to the public. You do not have to be enrolled in the Saving for Tomorrow program to attend.

Cool Off...In Lake Elmo!

Swimming pools and water parks can be pricey, but for a quick drive to the end of the Billings Heights, your family can play in Lake Elmo at 183 Lake Elmo State Park.

Like many Montana State Parks, the cost is free for Montana residents. There is a \$5 per vehicle charge for non-residents.

The designated swimming area has a gentle slope, and is virtually wave and current free for those less experienced swimmers.



There are picnic areas, shade areas, a fishing platform, a sandy beach area, a playground area, and a 1.4 mile trail around the lake. Drinking water, outdoor showers, and restrooms are also available. Activities also include non-motorized boating, and a special fenced dog kennel for your favorite four legged friend.

If you are planning a group outing, there is a

reservable group shelter as well as a first come, first served group area. Call 247-2955 for more information, group rates, and information on the special requirements for dogs.

Directions: North on Main Street, West on Pemberton Lane (about 1 mile past Wicks Lane) to Lake Elmo Parking/ Entrance.

August 2013
by Jace Christensen
Asset Development Coordinator
District 7 HRDC

Please Welcome...Chance Miller!

We are excited to have Chance join our team! He brings fresh new ideas to HRDC and we look forward to what this upcoming year holds. Please welcome him to the great state of Montana!

66 Hi! I'm Chance, the new AmeriCorps – VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) member at HRDC.

As a VISTA, I will be doing a year of service here at the District 7 HRDC, working with Hanna and Jace to develop the Saving for Tomorrow program, the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, and perhaps some new programs along the way.



As of last spring, I had been working on my family farm during the week and on the roof with Atlanta Habitat for Humanity on the weekends. I am a graduate of the University of Georgia – Athens, where I studied economics and computer science. I just moved to Billings a few weeks ago from Greenville, Georgia and am quite excited to be here!

Outside of the office, I enjoy arguing with signposts, racing snails, running on rails, making the simplicities of life complex, the complexities of life simple, and dancing in the rain. I look forward to working with you and your community!99

Chance Miller
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406.247.4786

Back-to-School Tips & Tricks

Planning Ahead

For starters, parents should thoroughly examine their child's school supply list which is usually available for download on the web weeks before classes begin. Keep in mind that this list is only a working outline designed to cover just about every possibility and that the more realistic one comes home from the teacher's desk at the end of their first day.

The important items to note are those intended to be used by the class as a whole such as tissue paper, antibacterial wipes, hand sanitizers, paper towels, zip-lock bags, band aids, snack boxes, wax paper, and dry erase markers. Free riding on these commodities only places an additional financial burden on the teacher and just leads to a deficit in quality of another area of your child's education.

Items intended for personal use are best purchased throughout the school year as needed.

You would be surprised how often lesson plans and reading materials change, crayons melt, glue dries up, and craft instruments in general never get used. Budgeting may prove more difficult, but as long as you spend no more than five to ten dollars per child each month, you should still be spending roughly the same amount as you would have buying it all at once in the beginning with a less than perfect list.

As a practical matter, children really need only a handful of items to successfully navigate through their assignments on their first day: classroom items to be stockpiled for the coming year as discussed earlier, a clean seasonable outfit, a folder for handouts, ten sheets of loose-leaf paper, two pencils, a giant eraser, an



adequate lunch contained within a lunchbox (if not buying), and a backpack to bundle it all together.

The Actual Shopping Spree

Once the list has been narrowed down to the first set of essentials, your first stop should always be your home or even the neighbors. Surplus office supplies accumulates from freebies at tradeshow and conventions and more commonly the leftovers from last year that were incidentally shuffled out of sight to the backs of drawers, the insides of pockets and compartments in clothing and furniture rarely used, or even beneath the very cushion on which you are sitting.

Your next stop in turn should be the internet with your child at your side to explore all the options available at your local brick and mortar retailers before expending the gas to tour each and every one of

them in person. Your focus should primarily be on the large ticket items such as backpacks, trapper keepers, lunch boxes, calculators, and headphones that are intended to last throughout the year and hopefully several more to come. Quality should overtake price in consideration for these items. For example, buying a \$30-\$40 brand name backpack that will last your child four to five years will save you considerably more money than purchasing a \$15 plastic one that is only going to fall to pieces by the end of each year.

Smaller ticket items that may need continuous replenishing throughout the

year are best incorporated into your regular shopping routine for other household necessities at your local big box discount stores. Amazingly their prices tend to beat strictly office supply stores thanks to the sheer volume of inventory they are able to turn over in any given month and consequently greater bargaining power they hold over manufacturers.

Finally, for those families having difficulty sending their children off to school with all the supplies they need to succeed and still making ends meet, try calling the school's main office. Many times the community at large will donate extra supplies or even brand items directly to their less affluent schools to give every child a fighting chance.

August 2013
by Chance Miller
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Back-to-School Tax Tips

Going to college can be a stressful time for students and parents. The IRS offers these tips about education tax benefits that can help offset some college costs and maybe relieve some of that stress.

• **American Opportunity Tax Credit.** This credit can be up to \$2,500 per eligible student. The AOTC is available for the first four years of post secondary education. Forty percent of the credit is refundable. That means that you may be able to receive up to \$1,000 of the credit as a refund, even if you don't owe any taxes. Qualified expenses include tuition and fees, course related books, supplies and equipment.

• **Lifetime Learning Credit.** With the LLC, you may be able to claim up to \$2,000 for qualified education expenses on your federal tax return. There is no limit on the number of years you can claim this credit for an eligible student.

You can claim only one type of education credit per student on your federal tax return each year. If you pay college expenses for more than one student in the same year, you

can claim credits on a per-student, per-year basis. For example, you can claim the AOTC for one student and the LLC for the other student. You can use the IRS's Interactive Tax Assistant tool to help determine if you're eligible for these credits. The tool is available at IRS.gov.

• **Student loan interest deduction.** Other than home mortgage interest, you generally can't deduct the interest you pay. However, you may be able to deduct interest you pay on a qualified student loan. The deduction can reduce your taxable income by up to \$2,500. You don't need to itemize deductions to claim it.

These education benefits are subject to income limitations and may be reduced or eliminated depending on your income.

For more information, visit the Tax Benefits for Education Information Center at IRS.gov. Also, check Publication 970, Tax Benefits for Education. The booklet's available by calling 800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676).

From IRS Summertime Tax Tips

IDAs Help Pay for School

Individual Development Account Matched Savings Programs can help you pay for Education or Job Training. You will save each month from your earned income, take part in valuable financial education, and at the end of the program you will receive matched funds to use towards your educational goal.

At District 7 HRDC, we offer a matched savings program worth up to \$5,000—save \$1,000 and receive a \$4,000 match. Visit HRDC7.org and search for Savings Programs to get started.

Be sure to "Like" HRDC District 7 on Facebook for up-to-date information.



Saving for Tomorrow. This project is funded in whole or in part under a contract with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. The statements herein do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Department. Select programs are also funded in part through Assets for Independence Federal Demonstration project, First Interstate Bank, the United Way, and other generous contributors.

