



HOMES & MONEY

Quarterly Newsletter

www.IntegraLendingGroup.com

3rd Quarter

Mortgage News

What Would You Do With \$8,000?

What if the government decided today that, instead of bailing out Wall Street, it was going to give every American \$8,000? What would you do with the money?

For most Americans, paying off credit card debt would be a great way to use the free money. According to a Nilson Report released in April 2009, the average credit card debt per household in the US was \$8,329 at the end of 2008. That money from the government would almost wipe out your debt completely. Imagine being completely debt free.



Healthcare is a big topic these days. According to the most current Census Bureau statistics, some 45.7 million Americans do not have health insurance. So, many Americans might choose to use their \$8,000 to enroll their family in a healthcare program through their employer. The federal government tracks the average spending on health insurance for people with job-based coverage, and the most recent figures (from 2005!) indicate that the average individual's premiums were \$3,991, while families spent an average of \$10,728. Your \$8,000 would go a long way in insuring your family.

Some Americans might choose to start a small business. Experts estimate that start-up costs for many new business ventures are between \$10,000 - \$15,000. With \$8,000, a large portion of your initial investment would be covered.

Continued on Page 2

Finance News

Financial Tips for Couples Who Need to Talk

Tough economic times can cause a major strain on your marriage. And while we all know that communication is often the key to overcoming this challenge, discussing finances with a spouse can be extremely difficult for many people. With this in mind, here are some tips to at least get the conversation started.

Get Out of the House – One of the worst times to discuss finances with your significant other is just after you've paid the bills. Let's face it, there's something about writing all of those checks that suddenly makes the reality of your monthly finances sink in. So, instead of approaching your spouse with statements in hand, try waiting a few hours. Think about what you want to say and how you want to say it. Then invite your partner for a walk or a cup of coffee at a local coffee house. The key here is a change of environment, a relaxed, neutral place where your partner won't feel like he or she is being attacked.

Give Your Partner Some Credit – If starting the conversation is hard for you, try opening with a story about your parents' attitude and behavior towards money. This will provide an opportunity for your partner to do the same, opening the door for the discussion. Experts suggest starting off with an example of your own shortcomings and how you hope to change it. Also, offering a compliment of what he or she has been doing right is a great way to break the ice.



Continued on Page 2

Guy V. Jones & Lance Scott

Managing Owner

Integra Lending Group, LLC

Phone: 985-206-0960

LS@integralg.com

Did You Know?

In 1963, pitcher Gaylord Perry said, "They'll put a man on the moon before I hit a homerun." On July 20th 1969, only a few hours after Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, Perry hit the only homerun of his career.

Five Quick Tips for New Bloggers

Tip 1: Keep it Short: Articles should be informative but brief.

Tip 2: Update Your Blog Frequently.

Tip 3: Be Reader Friendly: Avoid super technical jargon.

Tip 4: Keep it Down: Avoid music and loud videos.

Tip 5: Make Contact: Be sure to have a picture and info about you.

Mortgage News *(Continued from cover)*

If you really think about it, there are so many things you could do with \$8,000. You could open a 529 college savings plan. You could take your family on an amazing once-in-a-lifetime vacation. You could open an IRA and save for retirement...

But what's the point in dreaming. The government's not giving away \$8,000, right?

Wrong.

Right now, through November 30th of this year only, the government is giving qualifying first-time home buyers up to \$8,000 for purchasing a home (or up to 10% of the purchase price). This is free money that you do not have to pay back. And here's the best part: if you qualify, you can get your money from the IRS this year, even if you've already filed your 2008 taxes.

There are, of course, limitations and other qualifying factors, but they are all pretty reasonable and easy to explain, and we'll be glad to discuss these with you or anyone you know who is looking to buy a home. With today's combination of lower home prices and lower interest rates, this temporary incentive from the government is really a great option for many Americans who act now to finally fulfill their dreams of owning a home.

Finance News *(Continued from cover)*

Never Assume – Your goal here is to establish a common ground, to create and quantify a plan of action that will benefit you both, even a small goal that you both can work toward as a team. Because of this, you really can't assume that your values and beliefs are absolutely correct and flawless. Be respectful and humble and listen to what your partner has to say. Most importantly, don't blame.

Bring in an Expert – Take the conversation to the next level. Once you've established a general plan, talking to a financial planner together can serve not only to ease the tension, but to solidify your common goals. Either way, keep talking, keep trying, and avoid bickering. Remember, no argument has ever decreased anyone's monthly bills and keeping quiet has never increased anyone's savings.

Street Smarts

Tax Breaks for Job Hunters

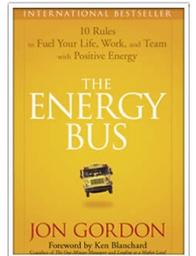
The IRS recently released tips for deducting costs related to your job search.

1. In order to deduct job search costs, the expenses must be spent on a job search in your current occupation.
2. You can deduct employment and outplacement agency fees you pay while looking for a job in your present occupation. If your employer pays you back in a later year for employment agency fees, you must include the amount you receive in your gross income up to the amount of your tax benefit in the earlier year.
3. You can deduct amounts you spend for preparing and mailing copies of a résumé to prospective employers as long as you are looking for a new job in your present occupation.
4. If you travel to an area to look for a new job in your present occupation, you may be able to deduct travel expenses to and from the area.
5. You cannot deduct job search expenses if there was a substantial break between the end of your last job and the time you begin looking for a new one.
6. You cannot deduct job search expenses if you are looking for a job for the first time.

Book Review

The Energy Bus

by Jon Gordon



The Energy Bus, an international best-seller by Jon Gordon, takes readers on an enlightening and inspiring ride that reveals 10 secrets for approaching life and work with the kind of positive, forward thinking that leads to true accomplishment, at work and at home. It helps you think about your own personal habits and what hard choices might be required in order to create and maintain energy in your life. Most importantly, it provides a powerful roadmap to overcome common life and work obstacles.

The Energy Bus is available at www.amazon.com.

Trivia Challenge

The first American TV show to be seen in the People's Republic of China was?

- A. I Love Lucy
- B. Leave it to Beaver
- C. Baywatch
- D. Seinfeld

Call 866-624-9844 or email us at LS@integralg.com with the correct answer, and your name will be entered into our quarterly drawing to win dinner and movie tickets for two!

Quote of the Day

"I made the decision long ago that to be afraid would diminish my life."

—Janet Reno



Home News

Lower Your Property-Tax Bill

By Pat Mertz Esswein, *Kiplinger's Personal Finance*, www.kiplinger.com



If you anticipate a silver lining in the black cloud of declining home prices – in the form of lower property-tax bills – you may be disappointed. The National Taxpayers Union figures that as much as 60% of taxable property in the U.S. is over-assessed, largely because assessment cycles haven't caught up with the decline in home values.

In California, for example, a home's assessed value is based on its purchase price, plus increases of up to 2% annually. The house isn't revalued until it's sold again. To capture the price plunge of the past few years, homeowners must file an appeal and prove that their home's assessed value exceeds its market value. In San Diego County, the assessor's office processed 80,000 appeals in 2008; the average reduction in assessed value so far is \$110,000, equivalent to a tax cut of \$1,200.

Many jurisdictions calculate a home's assessed value as a fraction of its market value, so do the math to make sure your home is priced fairly. Also verify that you have received any breaks you're entitled to, such as a homestead exemption or a reduction for seniors or veterans.

How to appeal. Go to the assessor's Web site or office to double-check the "property card" and any working papers for your home. Are the figures for square footage and number of bedrooms and bathrooms correct? Has the assessor accounted for any features that could detract from your home's value, such as an irregularly sized lot or a carport instead of a garage? Pull the property cards for five or ten neighboring homes that are similar in terms of age, style and features. If the assessments on similar properties are a lot lower – 10% or more – you have a good case based on uniformity.

Otherwise, if you believe your home's assessed value exceeds its market value, you'll have to provide sales-price data for several comparable homes. You can get that information from a real estate agent, or check the local public library or your county assessor's or county clerk's office. Ask the assessor whether a recent appraisal for, say, a refinancing is acceptable proof of your home's market value.

Two chances. Read your assessment letter for details on how to appeal. You'll probably have two windows of opportunity: During the first, you may request a reduction in the assessed value of your home for the forthcoming tax bill. During the second, you may appeal for a retroactive reduction and refund.

Until your appeal is resolved, pay your tax bill in full to avoid incurring penalties and a lien against your home. As a last resort, you could go to court, but that's an expensive process usually best suited for commercial property owners with more at stake.

You may see advertisements for companies that will help you appeal your assessment, often in exchange for about half of any savings on your tax bill. But with the right preparation, you can probably do just as well yourself using a guide such as *How to Fight Property Taxes* (\$6.95), from the National Taxpayers Union. The NTU's [Web site](#) also has links to state and local taxpayer associations that may offer further insight into the appeals process.



Roasted Tomatillo and Avocado Salsa

No one will ever believe you made this yourself.

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs. tomatillos, husks removed and quartered
- 1 medium onion, roughly chopped
- 2 large jalapeños; halved, seeded and de-veined
- 3 large cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- The juice of 1/2 a lime
- 1 large avocado, chopped small
- 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Directions:

Preheat broiler. In a glass baking dish, place tomatillos, onions, jalapeños, and garlic. Season with salt and pepper, add olive oil, and toss until well coated. Place in broiler for 20 minutes or until the vegetables are well charred, stirring every 5 minutes. Allow mixture to cool, and process in a blender or food processor. Taste and re-season if necessary. Allow mixture to chill in refrigerator for two hours. Before serving, add avocado and stir to combine.

This wonderful dish not only makes a great dip but can be used as a sauce for grilled chicken, fish, or shrimp. Your guests will absolutely love it!

Facts and Figures

Six-Figure Jobs That Just Might Surprise You



Getting paid a six-figure income in today's job market is pretty tough, but maybe you're looking in the wrong fields. According to the U.S.

Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, which are compiled from 2008 data, the six-figure salaries for the following careers just might surprise you.

Human Resources Manager – Top 10% Minimum Annual Income: \$163,220; Average Annual Income: \$103,920 Top-Paying State: Delaware.

Astronomer – Top 10% Minimum Annual Income: \$156,720; Average Annual Income: \$99,730; Top-Paying State: Maryland.

Art Director – Top 10% Minimum Annual Income: \$154,840; Average Annual Income: \$88,510; Top-Paying State: New York.

Pharmacist – Top 10% Minimum Annual Income: \$131,440; Average Annual Income: \$104,260; Top-Paying State: California.

Film or Video Editor – Top 10% Minimum Annual Income: \$112,410; Average Annual Income: \$62,500; Top-Paying State: Massachusetts.

Forbes Magazine also recently listed more surprising six-figure income jobs that do not require a college degree, which include, **Air Traffic Controller** (income for the 90th percentile: \$186,000; 75th percentile income: \$156,000); **Court Reporter** (income for the 90th percentile: \$104,000; 75th percentile income: \$84,100); **Hotel Executive Chef** (income for the 90th percentile: \$107,000; 75th percentile income: \$86,500); and **Ultrasound Technologist** (income for the 90th percentile: \$110,000; 75th percentile income: \$82,500).



If you know anyone who is looking to buy, sell or refinance a home, please forward their name and telephone number to us. We will happily provide the same high level of service that we have provided to you. The greatest compliment you could possibly give us is the referral of your friends and family.

Thank You!

We wish to thank our clients who have been kind enough to refer business to us. We appreciate the opportunity to provide excellent service to your family, friends, and co-workers.

\$300 off!

This coupon entitles you or a friend to \$300 off your closing costs when obtaining home financing (purchase or refinance).

Coupon must be presented at time of application.

Limit one coupon per loan transaction. Not valid on loans currently in process or with any other discounts or offers.



Guy V. Jones & Lance Scott
Managing Owner
Integra Lending Group, LLC
Phone: 985-206-0960
Fax: 985-206-0965

385 Hwy 21 Suite 301
Arbor Walk Professional Plaza
Madisonville, LA 70447