News Release

For Publication: Thursday, December 18, 2014
From:  Lynn Little, Extension Educator, Family and Consumer Sciences
       University of Maryland Extension

Control Your Holiday Spending, Control Your Credit Card Use

The holidays should be a joyful time for you and your family. But for many families it's tough to find the extra cash for holiday expenses. Using your credit card solves that problem but can create other problems. Most families don't plan to run up high balances on their credit cards during the holidays - it just happens. Nearly one-third of adults say they spent more than they planned on holiday gifts. Many families find it hard to pay off their credit cards after the holidays.

How can you control your holiday spending? Start by making a written spending plan for the holidays and gift giving. Think about how much you can afford to spend for gifts as well as decorations, holiday meals, and travel.

Set spending limits for gifts as well as for the other items in your holiday spending plan. If it's been a tough year for you, think about cutting back on what you usually spend during the holidays.

Decide if you are going to use a credit card for holiday spending. If you plan to buy using only cash or a debit card, leave your credit cards at home when you go shopping so you won't be tempted. If you write checks or use a debit card, be sure to record each purchase in your check register and figure the balance before writing another check. Stay within your limit!

If you need or want to use a credit card, pick just one to use for your holiday spending. It's much easier to control your spending when using just one card. Write your spending limit on an envelope and put it in your wallet. When you use your credit card, write the amount on the envelope and subtract it from your limit. Put the receipt in the envelope. When you've reached your limit, stop using your credit card!

University of Maryland Extension (UME) provides educational programs and problem-solving assistance related to agriculture, natural resources, nutrition, finance, 4-H, and youth development. Contact your Garrett County office of UME at 301-334-6960 or visit us at www.garrett.umd.edu