



BLACK ENTERPRISE - YEAR 2006 JULY ISSUE

SHOPSMART

Consumer Life

Living The Glamorous Life

How to look like a millionaire without breaking the bank

By Leslie E. Royal

Everyone likes to live the glamorous life. But what if you don't have a six-figure income? What if, in fact, you have two kids, a mortgage, and make \$60,000 or less? Either you have to spend less or make more -- or both! If making more is not in your near future, focus on spending less because too many people are in debt and choose to live above their means. In 2005, for example, there was a 30% increase in bankruptcy filings.

According to Mike Sullivan, director of education for Take Charge America credit counseling firms, people of every income level live from paycheck to paycheck with the average American family having \$9,000 in credit card debt. "We get many clients who are professionals earning six-figure salaries," says Sullivan. "The key to living a successful and happy life is simply to spend less than you earn, no matter what you earn."

It might take a little discipline and a big commitment, but you can live a champagne lifestyle -- without breaking your budget - even if money is tight. Here's how you can do it:

According to the book *Five-Star Living on a Two-Star Budget* (Harvest House Publishers; \$10.99) by Margaret Feinberg and Natalie Nichols Gillespie, professional and middle class alike can "live big on just a little." The book shows you how to get the best of everything by managing your money, shopping at the best designer outlets, getting beauty and hair bargains, and finding discount coupons and travel steals. The authors explain how to buy a home at 20% to 50% below market value, luxury cars at \$10,000 to \$15,000 less than the sticker price, and designer clothes and accessories for up to 65% off of department store prices.

ENTERTAIN YOURSELF

The book encourages the affluent penny-pincher to buy the Entertainment Book (www.entertainment.com) for \$30 and get coupons for substantial discounts at restaurants, grocery stores, movies, and dry cleaners in your area. Now that the year is almost half over, you can get a great discount on the book. What's more, it's a great way to get the deals you want, from car rentals to airfare to the best local attractions.

SHOP 'TIL YOU DROP

For the shopper in you, Chelsea Premium Outlets (www.premiumoutlets.com) is a great place to start. With 38 outlet centers in 22 states, the company offers 25% to 65% off designer brands every day. Their outlet stores include Burberry, Coach, Fendi, Giorgio Armani, MaxMara, Hugo Boss, Versace, BCBG Max Azria, Dior, and Chanel. Sign up for their V.I.P. Shopper Club on the Website and get exclusive discounts worth hundreds of dollars. For more shops, see the sidebar.

"We market to people who need a bargain and to people who simply love a bargain, and today, who doesn't love to get a great deal?" asks Michele Rothstein, senior vice president of marketing for Chelsea Premium Outlet. "Many of our best shoppers are affluent, successful people who work hard for their money and want to spend it wisely. People used to keep their bargains a secret, but today, savvy shoppers like to brag about it."

GET A NEW SET OF WHEELS

So you want a brand new car, but don't want a payment the size of a house note. Feinberg and Gillespie suggest checking with car rental companies about upcoming sales and going online to www.ebaymotors.com or www.autotrader.com. What's more, going to auctions is like Christmas in July. There are many options, such as IRS, Customs, Military, Marshal, State Treasury, and state and local governments that auction late-model luxury cars. GovernmentAuctions.org (www.governmentauctions.org) has a directory on its Website. Auctioned items include trucks, boats, motorcycles, antiques, jewelry, houses, and more.

"In all, you can get a great deal on cars. But you have to first inspect them, come up with a bidding plan, and stick to it," says Ian Aronovich, president of GovernmentAuctions.org. He points out that government auctions often feature luxury cars and upscale homes that have been obtained through tax seizures, drug seizures, and customs seizures. Because the government obtained them either inexpensively or at no cost at all, it will sell them to the highest bidder, no matter how low the bid may be. However, some bids have reserve prices.

BECOME A HOUSE HUNTER

Many individuals feel that they can only get a great housing deal on a fixer-upper. But you can find an affordable property by searching sites like www.foreclosurefreesearch.com, which offers listings on foreclosed property nationwide that you can purchase at 20% to 50% below market value. "These Websites have free foreclosure lists [some offer limited free trial periods] that allow you to get to the homeowner before the sheriff's sale is imminent, to work out a deal," says Rosalyn Charles, a real estate attorney for Cary Charles & Winston L.L.C. in South Orange, New Jersey. "You can get a home that allows you to start out with some equity. That equals assets, money in the bank, buying power, and wealth."

The goal should be to live a debt-free life, says Lisa Williams, a financial motivator and owner of www.livingintheblack.com. "In the black is an accounting term that means without debt. Living in the black is not predicated on whether you make \$30,000 or \$300,000 a year. However, it is based on how you save, invest, and spend the income you receive."

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