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PRESS RELEASE

MORE DINNER FOR YOUR DOLLAR
Finding Ways to Battle Rising Grocery Costs

SAN DIEGO, September 17, 2008 – With a slumping economy and rising fuel prices, families are searching for alternative methods to stretch their income. One way families hope to achieve this is by attempting to cut spending on food items, since other costs such as mortgage and car payments are fixed.

Unfortunately, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, a typical American family of four spends \$8,513 on groceries per year. With fuel and delivery costs rising, food manufacturers are faced with raising their prices or giving you less for your previously hard-earned dollar. With the average weekly cost of groceries increasing more rapidly than the rate of inflation, what can families do who may be struggling to keep up with rising grocery prices?

According to CNNMoney.com, grocery bills increased 6.1 percent compared to last year. So, how do we make ends meet? Saving money on groceries does not require a major change in eating habits or spending valuable time on clipping coupons. While these methods can be cost-effective, they can possibly be both inconvenient and ineffective in the long run. With a little planning and a discerning eye, families can enjoy the same meals at reduced costs.

Debt-Free America offers these easy tips to help you become a more strategic and informed shopper:

- **Make a list.** By making lists, you can avoid impulse buys that drive up your weekly spending. Sticking to a list prevents you from buying unnecessary items, which can greatly inflate your grocery bill.
- **Leave the credit card at home.** Just bringing cash to the grocery store will force you to stay within your budget constraints and keep a careful eye on how much you are spending. Bringing a set amount of cash limits you to only the things that you need.
- **Join wholesale clubs.** Usually, the cost of membership is lower than the amount of savings you receive by shopping at wholesale clubs. You can easily recoup the membership fee on pantry staples, which often runs as much as 30 percent cheaper.
- **Check the price per unit.** Manufacturers often package their food in larger boxes to trick consumers into thinking that they are buying more. By comparing the unit price of similar foods in different sized packages, you pay less for food – rather than more for empty volume.
- **Buy store brands.** The quality of store brand food items has improved dramatically in recent years, and many now compete with major national labels. By not paying for fancy packaging or heavy advertising, you can save on common items where the brand does not contribute much to the overall quality.

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- **Eat before you go.** It's also a bad idea to go shopping when you are hungry. Consumers tend to be more impulsive, and pick up unnecessary items when they are hungry. It is no mistake that bakeries are usually located at the front of the store. That mouth-watering aroma is purposely placed at the entrance to make you spend more money. So, shopping on an empty stomach will only worsen this craving.
- **Look around.** You may think that grocery stores are simply a place for buying food, but the truth is they are really a perfect example of getting consumers to buy more than they really need. Manufacturers of brand name items pay large stocking fees to have their products placed at eye level – because you are more likely to purchase the first thing you see. Remember to keep your eyes on the top and bottom shelves, where the more inexpensive versions of the same product are housed.
- **Don't be fooled by "sales".** Often times, grocery stores will put discounted items at the ends of the aisles so you are more likely to notice them. But if you take the trip down the aisle, there will often be even better deals for the same product. It is important to never go grocery shopping when you are in a hurry. Only go when you have enough time to thoroughly search for the best bang for your buck.

It is essential to take your time, go with a plan and understand the marketing ploys that are designed to make you spend more. Each of these will help you avoid overspending at the grocery store.

Debt-Free America is a 501(c)3 non-profit, community service organization offering confidential and professional credit counseling, debt management programs, and financial education to consumers nationwide. Debt-Free America is dedicated to providing FREE services to help financially distressed families and individuals effectively manage their personal finances. The Board members and operations staff have a long-term commitment to helping anyone in debt crisis, and even those not in a debt crisis. Debt-Free America has been in the business since 1997 and is now serving over 16,000 clients nationwide. Visit them on the web at www.debtfreeamerica.com.

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