

# TIP\$ & TRICK\$



1st Quarter 2004

Katy Hudson  
President/CEO

Bakersfield Main Office  
5300 Lennox Avenue  
Suite 200  
661-324-9628

Visalia  
718 W. Center Street  
#C  
559-732-2227

Out-of-area  
800-272-2482

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## What is CCCS?

Consumer Credit Counseling Service™ of Kern & Tulare Counties (CCCS) is a member of the National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) (www.nfcc.org) and is certified by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (www.hud.gov) to provide comprehensive housing counseling services.

CCCS is independently accredited by the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services (COA) (www.coanet.org) and is a member of the Better Business Bureau (BBB). NFCC and Associated Credit Bureaus, Inc. (ACB) certify CCCS counselors. Our nonprofit, full-service money management resource center has served the local community for over 37 years.

We offer a well-rounded fi-

ancial counseling service that provides options and solutions for our clients' financial concerns. We specialize in the areas of confidential debt and financial management counseling as well as free or low-cost credit, budgeting, identity theft and home-buyer education and counseling programs.

Responding to the need of community members to learn how to protect and improve their financial well being, we have added personal credit report and credit score reviews and self-study credit/personal finance education to our growing list of community services.

Divorce, medical emergencies, unemployment, identity theft and overspending, among other things, can lead to financial stress and credit



“Our nonprofit has educated the local community on personal finance and housing for over 37 years”

problems. CCCS offers advice and solutions for each client's unique financial situation- from how to remove inaccurate information from credit reports, to comprehensive debt repayment plans, to how to develop a budget that will help ensure financial goal attainment.

(continued on page 2)

## Tired of Credit Card Offers in Your Mailbox?

Every day your mailbox contains another interesting offer of credit or merchandise. While millions of Americans welcome these choices, others prefer not to receive such mailings.

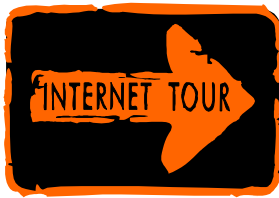
If you want your name and

address removed from all mailing lists offered by the main consumer credit reporting agencies-Trans Union, Experian, and Equifax-call 888-5OPTOUT (888-567-8688).

If you opt-out, you will no

longer appear on direct marketing lists offered by these credit reporting agencies. However, you may continue to receive commercial mailings based on lists from other sources.

## CCCS LAUNCHES ITS WEB SITE



[www.californiacccs.org](http://www.californiacccs.org)

It's been a long time coming, but the CCCS WEB site is finally under construction.

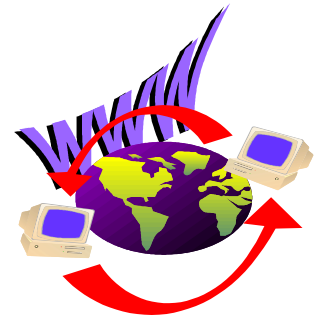
[www.californiacccs.org](http://www.californiacccs.org)

The site contains information about CCCS' services and much more. You can view a calendar of education classes, get the latest news on personal finance issues that affect you and find links to other resources that can help you accomplish your financial goals.

You will find information on budgeting, credit, home buying, identity theft and saving.

Please visit our new site often, as we will be adding to it weekly until it is complete.

If there is information you'd like to see on our WEB site, please email your suggestions to [cccsktc@att.net](mailto:cccsktc@att.net). We'd be happy to hear from you.



*"It saves time! It saves work! It simplifies your life! You can avoid the hassle of getting and mailing money orders."*

## ELECTRONIC PAYMENT NOW AVAILABLE!!

**Q. What is electronic payment?**  
Electronic payment is *automatic* bill payment whereby your payment is deducted automatically from your checking or savings account.

**Q. Is electronic payment risky?**  
Electronic payment is less risky than check payment. It cannot be lost, stolen or destroyed in the mail. It has an extremely high rate of accuracy.

**Q. What if I need to stop,**

**change or delay my payment?**

Once you've enjoyed the convenience, time and money savings of electronic payment, we doubt you will want to go back to paying bills the way you did before. However, you can cancel or change your written authorization. We need a written request for any change in authorization at least five business days prior to your transfer day.

**Q. How do I sign up for electronic payment?**

Call CCCS today at 661-324-9628 and ask us to send you the authorization form. Or, you can download the form at [www.californiacccs.org](http://www.californiacccs.org), fill it out and mail it back.

You are more likely to realize your goal of becoming debt-free by signing up. It saves time and work and will simplify your life! Don't delay; sign up today!

## What is CCCS? (continued)



Caption describing picture or graphic.

In our efforts to help Kern County employers retain financially stable employees, we provide Employee Assistance Programs on budgeting and personal finance issues at very reasonable rates. We accept referrals to our programs from businesses and services.

We also offer community workshops at our location or yours. Community groups, schools, government organizations and businesses invite us back on a regular basis to provide financial education programs.

If you would like more information about our programs and

services, please call 661-324-9628.

## Suggestions for Easier Budgeting!

- Establish a special time— a day of the week or several dates per month to pay bills, balance accounts, and evaluate your budget.
- Keep a journal or log of the tasks accomplished at each session. Also, be sure to note the check number if you pay your bills by check. Keep it simple. Entries may look something like this:  
4/19/01 Paid Electric Bill— \$79, Check # 1111
- Keep a calendar that indicates when bills are to be paid and when direct payments or automatic withdrawals are made.
- When you pay a bill, mark the statement with the date, amount you paid and the check number. Maintain these statements in chronological order in labeled file folders. Example— Gas, Water, Electricity, Visa, MasterCard, etc.
- Track your variable expenses— eating out, entertainment, gasoline, food, etc. If you note a trend, adjust your habits, your budget, or both.
- Keep at it! Regular maintenance of your finances requires time and effort. Letting things pile up will just overwhelm you.



Budgeting leads to better credit!

## WHAT'S YOUR CREDIT SCORE?

Mistakes and fraud in your credit report can greatly reduce your chances of obtaining credit or re-establishing a positive credit rating.

The Federal Trade Commission recommends that consumers review their credit reports at least once a year.

CCCS is pleased to offer CREDIT REPORTS AND CREDIT SCORES to our community. For only \$50, you get a copy of your credit report from all three credit bureaus, a 3-4 page credit score analysis that tells you why your score is where it is and what you can do to improve it, and you get a

one-hour review with a certified consumer credit report reviewer who will go over the report with you, discuss all areas of your credit history, and provide you with a summary of your rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

Call 661-324-9628 today to schedule your review.

*“The Federal Trade Commission recommends that consumers review their credit reports at least once a year.”*

## CLIENT CORNER

Our office will be closed on the following days:

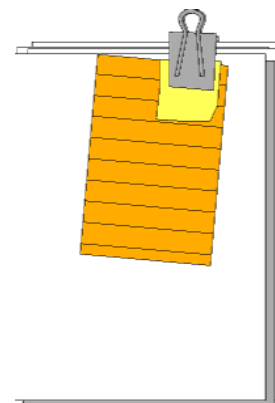
**New Year's Day**  
January 1, 2004

**Martin Luther King Jr. Day**  
January 19, 2004

**President' Day**  
February 16, 2004

Call CCCS today at 661-324-9628 to sign up for automatic DMP payments! It's easier, more affordable and more convenient than money orders! You can also download the authorization form from our WEB site [www.californiacccs.org](http://www.californiacccs.org) and mail it back.

**REMEMBER-** in order for your funds to be disbursed to your creditors on Friday, your payment must be received in our office by 4:30 p.m. on the day before. Payments received after 4:30 on Thursday will not be disbursed until the following Friday. Thanks for doing your part to make your DMP a success!



Consumer Credit Counseling  
Service™ of Kern & Tulare Counties

5300 Lennox Avenue, Suite 200  
Bakersfield, CA 93309

**We're on the WEB!**  
**[www.californiacccs.org](http://www.californiacccs.org)**

*Email: [ccsktc@att.net](mailto:ccsktc@att.net)*

**WORKSHOP SCHEDULE** Pre-registration is required for ALL workshops. Please call 661-324-9628 ext. 6108 to register.

**First Time Homebuyer Workshop**

Have you been dreaming of owning your own home? Take the first step and attend our homeownership workshop. Budgeting for homeownership, getting pre-approved, shopping for a loan and closing are just a few of the topics covered. FREE.

**Comprehensive**

Thursday, February 12, from 5:30 to 9:30 pm

**Basic**

Monday, January 12, from 5:30 to 7:30 pm

Wednesday, February 18, from 5:30 to 7:30 pm

Tuesday, March 9, from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

**Budgeting Basics**

Join us for one evening as we cover the budgeting basics. This class will teach you what you need to do to develop a spending plan that will help you accomplish your financial goals. \$5 materials charge.

**Monday, March 8, from 5:30 to 7 pm**

**Improve Your Credit Score!**

This class will cover all areas of your credit. Join us as we discuss the dispute process, identity theft issues, credit reporting laws and much more all as it pertains to YOUR personal credit report. When you attend this class, you get a copy of your credit reports AND a credit score and score analysis. The cost is only \$50, all inclusive. Pre-registration is required for this class and, for your protection, you must have a valid photo ID for us to pull your report.

**Wednesday, February 4, from 5:30 to 7 pm**

**Credit When Credit is Due**

Learn to use credit wisely and gain possible incentives from lenders by completing this nationally recognized, award-winning program. Course fee includes book, testing materials, national registration fee and national registration card. Program Cost \$50. Bakersfield City Employees Federal Credit Union and Kern Schools Federal Credit Union offer financial incentives to members who successfully complete the program.

**Self-study. Call or come by to register!**