

## News-Press

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### Road to Recovery: Creating a budget

In this sluggish economy, many of us are living paycheck to paycheck. We're struggling to buy groceries, pay our mortgages and fill our gas tanks.

**Kathleen Campbell, president of Fort Myers-based Campbell Financial Partners, said there's a way for people to get out of this paycheck-to-paycheck rut: Start a home budget.**

Before you can create a budget, though, you must first understand your spending habits. One way to track your spending is by writing down everything you buy — from a cup of coffee to groceries —for two weeks, Campbell said.

"If you do it for two weeks, it will really show areas where you can cut back," Campbell said. "My clients find this to be an eye-opening experience."

#### HOW TO START

- For the technologically savvy, Campbell recommends using Quicken budget software. But there are other options.
- Setting up an Excel database is even easier and is already on most computers.
- Mint.com is a free Web site that helps you create a budget and more.
- If you're not a whiz with computers, write down your spending on a legal pad of paper.

#### ONCE YOU START

- You can break down your budget in several ways, Campbell said. You can do it like a business with revenues and expenses.
- Divide your expenses into two categories: Which are one-time costs and which do you have to pay every month.
- Look at which are wants and needs.
- Prioritize your wants and needs. What do you need to pay for first? What is your most important want? Is it dinner? Buying clothes? How much do you want to save?

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[roadtorecovery](#)

Our special page offers helpful resources, interactive graphics, video, a job search widget and your chance to share information and exchange ideas.

**A live online chat at 11 a.m. Monday with Kathleen Campbell, president of Campbell Financial Partners in Fort Myers, who can answer specific questions about creating a budget and cutting back on some expenses.**

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