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News ON THE HOUSE

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Be sure to talk to your real estate professional on how you can protect your home & budget with First American



Being Trueful and Honest with You...



I hope you enjoy this month's newsletter which is full of tips and ideas for you as a homeowner.

As an experienced real estate professional, I have an in-depth understanding of my clients' needs and challenges. I want you to know that my experience is at your disposal, so please feel free to call me for any of your real estate and/or home warranty needs.

Refinancing in a Down Market



Falling home values are a cause for concern for millions of American homeowners, mortgage lenders and the federal government.

To help families dealing with lower home values and other personal crises, the Obama

Administration announced the Making Home Affordable initiative that is designed to help between 7 million and 9 million Americans improve the affordability of their mortgage and prevent foreclosure.

Understand Your Options: There are several programs under the Making Home Affordable initiative. One of these is the Home Affordable Refinance Program (HARP). HARP is a refinance program for homeowners who are current on their mortgage payments, but unable to take advantage of the current low interest rates due to their home's depressed value. The program is also designed to assist borrowers in changing from a risky

loan, like a negatively amortizing adjustable, into a more stable 30-year fixed rate.

There are several eligibility requirements for the HARP program, however the most important one is that your loan be owned or guaranteed by either Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac, and you must work directly through your lender (the company that currently services your loan).

Borrowers interested in knowing if they qualify for a HARP refinance program must contact their lender. You can also obtain general information about HARP, as well as access links to determine whether your loan is Fannie Mae- or Freddie Mac-owned or guaranteed, from the Making Home Affordable web site: http://www.makinghomeaffordable.gov/loan_lookup.html.

Before your lender can make you an offer, you will need to fully document your income, which generally requires providing: your W-2s, recent bank statements and pay stubs. The PMI Mortgage Insurance Co. has a helpful mortgage-assessment form at www.homesafepmi.com, where you can input the information your lender will likely require.

Given the backlog of requests, the process from phone call to decision may take 60 to 90 days. So, don't be surprised if you don't get an answer right away. And be sure to follow up frequently.

DID YOU KNOW...

Having **the right home protection plan** helps ensure that **your home & your budget is protected.**

Call your Real Estate Professional today to find out how you can **save time and money** on home repairs.



First American
 Home Buyers Protection
 Corporation



Get More Miles Out of Your Car or Truck

Due to the current economic climate, many Americans are becoming less willing to make expensive purchases. Even the nation's long-held love affair with the automobile hasn't escaped the penny-pinching trend.

The latest trends demonstrate that Americans are trying to stretch the mileage of their current vehicles. In 2006, the average car owner drove their car for 68 months before trading it in for a new vehicle. By the

fourth quarter of 2008, the average trade-in was 76 months old.

The following simple and inexpensive preventive checks provided by The Automotive Service Association (www.ASAshop.org), which represents thousands of repair shops nationwide, will greatly extend the life of the vehicle and ensure safer operation:

Always consult your owner's manual, but a good rule of thumb is to have the oil and filter changed regularly, every 3,000 to 4,000 miles.

Have all fluids checked, including brake, power steering, transmission and transaxle, windshield washer solvent and antifreeze. These fluids play a large role in the safety and performance of the vehicle.

Keep your engine tuned. A fouled spark plug or restricted fuel injector can reduce fuel efficiency as much as 30%.

Have the chassis lubricated frequently. This step extends the life of the moving components of the vehicle's suspension system.

Check battery cables and connections for corrosion, and clean them as needed.

Have the lighting system checked frequently, including headlights, turn signals and brake and tail lights.

Check windshield wiper blades for cracks, tears and windshield contact. Replace them approximately once a year or sooner if streaking begins.

Inspect engine belts regularly. Worn belts will affect the engine performance. Look for cracks and missing sections or segments.

Have the air filtration system checked frequently. The air filter should be checked approximately every other oil change for clogging or damage. This system ensures that the vehicle is performing at its peak condition.

Always consult the vehicle owner's manual for individual service schedules, as manufacturer maintenance requirements will vary.

In 1980, kitchen appliances accounted for nearly 44% of an average annual home's energy consumption. With innovations in cooking, cleaning and preservation appliances, that figure is just above 10 percent today - and still dropping - much to the delight of consumers seeking green options throughout the home.

In a recent Whirlpool Corporation survey fielded by Harris Interactive, 84% of consumers said that energy - not water or time - is most important to them when it comes to home appliance efficiency. Despite the significant gains in efficiency over the last 30 years, nearly 70% of consumers cited a kitchen appliance as the one that consumes the most energy on a day-to-day basis.

"In the past, consumers did not need to look beyond the kitchen to find the home energy hog," said J.B. Hoyt, Director, Regulatory Affairs and State Government Relations, Whirlpool Corporation. "Even today, cooking appliances are not ENERGY STAR qualified. However, recent innovations in appliance efficiency, particularly when it comes to the refrigerator and dishwasher, can really help consumers conserve resources."

Small lifestyle changes can help appliances run at peak efficiency and conserve energy. For example, running the dishwasher late at night can help consumers avoid peak hours, and keeping the refrigerator stocked and at the recommended temperature can save energy as well.

Similarly, consumers can reduce energy when preparing a meal. Placing multiple foods in the oven can efficiently utilize heat, and selecting an appropriately sized pan for each burner can increase the efficiency of the range.

Cooking appliances also feature innovations to help conserve energy. The Whirlpool range with Energy Save mode conserves electricity when the oven is not in use, while the over-the-range Velos microwave can cook up to 47% faster than a traditional thermal bake oven when in SpeedCook mode.



Evict That Home Energy Hog for Good



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Substitute Yogurt in Your Recipes for Healthier Meals

Eating healthier isn't about deprivation, but replacing low-nutrient foods with healthy substitutes. Incorporating yogurt into basic recipes is the perfect way to start.

By using yogurt instead of sour cream, cream cheese, whipped cream or mayonnaise, meals become not only lower in calories and fat, but also higher in calcium and protein. In baked goods, yogurt can improve texture and keep foods moist. When it's not heated, yogurt provides live active cultures, which can aid digestion and provide immune system support.

Greek yogurt - a thick strained yogurt - is especially versatile in cooking. It can be used in dips, spreads and low-fat desserts, or in any recipe that calls for cream, cream cheese, ricotta cheese, sour cream or other fats. You can even use Greek yogurt as an egg extender by replacing one egg with one-fourth cup yogurt.

For a decadent, reduced-fat dessert, try this recipe for Vanilla Cheesecake Made with Vanilla Oikos Organic Greek Yogurt:

Vanilla Cheesecake - made with Vanilla Oikos Organic Greek Yogurt

Makes 10 Servings

Ingredients:

2 1/2 cups shortbread cookies, finely ground

1/2 stick unsalted butter melted

1 1/2 cups vanilla Oikos Organic Greek Yogurt

4 large eggs

2 8-ounce packages low-fat cream cheese

1 cup super-fine sugar

1 tablespoon cornstarch

Juice and zest of 1 lemon

Directions:

In a medium-sized bowl, mix cookie crumbs and butter. Press into a 9-inch spring form pan and refrigerate for 15 minutes.

Preheat oven to 300 degrees Fahrenheit. Add all ingredients for filling in bowl, and combine using food processor or hand mixer. Pour into cooled crust. Bake for 2 hours. Let cool overnight in refrigerator.