

# The saving grace of the skinflint

LMC offering lessons in frugality

By RALPH HEIBUTZKI  
H-P Correspondent

**BENTON TOWNSHIP** — Those who can spend a dollar can figure how to save one, so Lake Michigan College is offering a week-long event series to help people make their money grow.

Helping students and local residents become sound money managers is the goal of LMC's participation in America Saves, which runs Feb. 23-27 at its Benton Township, Niles and South Haven campuses.

"When do we start learning rudimentary skills about why you save, and how you do it? The college years seem like a pretty fitting time," said Clinton Gabbard, LMC's vice president of student services. "It seemed like the right point to say, 'Let's see if we can help people with financial literacy.'"

Students are the main target, but residents are urged to take part in the events, Gabbard said.

"The theme you'll be seeing on posters and on sign-up is: 'Set a goal, make a plan, and save automatically.' It's not about the quantity of the goal," Gabbard said. "It's about (setting) a good, measurable goal, and how you're going to create a plan so you can follow it through good times and bad."

That's the theme of "Get a Craving for Savings," where local bankers will offer various strategies to help attendees start saving more effectively.

"A banker who's worked with hundreds of people can help them get on the right path. College seems like a good place to do that," Gabbard said.

"Cooking on a Budget" and "Dress For Success For Less" are designed to stimulate equally creative strategies in those areas, too, he said.

"We know groceries are full of opportunities to overspend, and there are some nifty ways to reduce your weekly costs and still eat healthy," Gabbard said, of "Cooking on a Budget."

The same logic applies in "Dress For Success For Less," where three- or four-person teams will receive \$25 to assemble profession-

al quality attire — whose cost is often perceived as a barrier, Gabbard said.

"They need to go 'thrifting,' and find a work-appropriate or an interview-appropriate outfit. Now, that may sound ridiculous, but when you're starting out, using donated clothing can be a great way to find yourself in professional dress at an affordable cost," he said.

America Saves is a campaign offered and overseen by the Consumers' Federation of America, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people build wealth, get out of debt, and save money, its website states.

Anyone interested can sign up at [lakemichigancollege.edu/lmc/saves](http://lakemichigancollege.edu/lmc/saves) to set savings goals and receive additional support through newsletters and text messages from the campaign.

LMC is co-sponsoring the event with Berrien County's Michigan State University Extension office — which also offers money management classes at its offices on 1737 Hillendale Road, Benton Township.

Funding for the costs came through a federal grant, though Gabbard didn't recall which agency provided it.

"There are about 60 campaigns going on across the country, and Lake Michigan College is one of those. It seemed to us that kind of seed money would allow us to put some of our own sweat equity into it (the week)," he said.

Whether LMC's participation in "America Saves" becomes a one-off event or annual tradition depends on the response.

"If we can get that type of seed money again — and people find value in the information that's being presented — then we'll definitely take a look at it," Gabbard said.

For more information about the week's events, contact Nancy Barnes, TRO Student Support Services, Napier Avenue campus, 927-6848; Jeremy Schaeffer, director, Student Services, Bertrand Crossing Campus, 695-2988; or Denise Thomas, director, Student Services, South Haven Campus, 637-7526.

For details about America Saves, visit <http://www.americasaves.org/>. For additional specifics on MSU Extension's money management classes, go to: [mimoneyhealth.org](http://mimoneyhealth.org).

## Lake Michigan College's America Saves events

Students and the public are urged to attend.

■ **Get a Craving for Saving:** Free lunch, get your financial questions answered by local banks, and make your savings pledge; noon to 1:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 23, Napier Campus Hawks' Nest

■ **Cooking on a Budget:** Get ideas to reduce your grocery bill and still make tantalizing meals; 5-6 p.m. Monday, Feb. 23; Bertrand Crossing Campus, noon to 1 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 25, South Haven Campus Student Commons; noon to 1 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 26, Napier Campus Hawks' Nest

■ **Financial Literacy Quiz Bowl:** Test your knowledge and learn from others in fun and lively competition. Prizes will be awarded to the winning teams; noon to 1 p.m. Monday, Feb. 23, South Haven Campus Student Commons; 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 24;

Bertrand Crossing Campus; noon to 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 25, Napier Campus Hawks' Nest

■ **Dress for Success for Less** Teams of students were challenged to spend only \$25 to buy professional attire. See the outfits they assembled on a limited budget and learn tips and tricks to dressing for success for less; noon to 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 24, Napier Campus Hawks' Nest;

noon to 1 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 25, Bertrand Crossing Campus; 5 to 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 26, South Haven Campus Student Commons

■ **Speed Banking:** Spend three minutes with each financial institution, and then take the savings pledge; noon to 1 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 24, South Haven Campus Student Commons; 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 26, Bertrand Crossing Campus.