

MONEYWISE

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The New FRUGALITY

Syracuse resident and financial book author Me'Shae Brooks-Rolling was a convert to thriftiness before the current financial crisis

SPEND LESS TO SAVE MORE

It's not easy, but you can find places in your budget to cut back, says Syracusan Me'Shae Brooks-Rolling

By Sarah Kestenbaum
Contributing writer

In these difficult financial times, many consumers are carefully watching their savings and wondering what the

future holds. Often, just learning more about your current financial situation or making small changes can save you big money.

Me'Shae Brooks-Rolling, a resident of Syracuse and author of "How to Save

Money & Organize Your Finances: Tales of an Urban Consumer," offers simple advice on how to save more and spend less.

"Financial literacy is a matter of becoming a financially astute consumer," Rolling said. The book covers tips on how to save more money day to day, eliminate credit card debt, prepare for

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owning a home, and even some advice on small business entrepreneurship.

Rolling lived in New York City for about fourteen years as a young professional, first as an auditor for the federal government then studying to become a certified events planner following the closing of her New York office. She struggled to save money.

Frustrated with her own situation, she carefully analyzed her spending, identified her financial goals and made an effort to limit her spending. Passionate about the idea of financial literacy and organization, while simultaneously pursuing her career in event planning, Rolling made a commitment to share her wisdom with others.

“By and large, we live in a financially illiterate nation, and I felt I needed to do something about that,” Rolling said.

Although the book offers tips specific to city dwellers, acknowledging that New York City is one of the most expensive cities in the country, it is also a book for someone looking for basic tips and resources.

“The book is for anyone fed up with their financial situation and wants to take action,” said Rolling.

With each piece of advice, Rolling lists helpful Web sites, phone numbers and addresses for more information. These include online financial calculators, government agencies and Web sites supplying discount services.

Rolling’s advice, in a nutshell:

Start by creating a budget. A budget template can be found in the back of the book. Take a careful look at how much money is coming in and exactly how much is going out. Keep track and write down all your expenses. Include the amount, the method of payment, and due date. By carefully recording and planning expenses, it eliminates the guesswork, said Rolling.

Assess needs versus wants versus desires. Make sure needs are met before wants or desires. This may seem simple, but too often the difference between needs and wants becomes blurry. Food, shelter, and clothing are all needs. Owning a pair of shoes is a need. Owning several pairs of the same shoe in every color, however, is not.

Devise a filing system. It is impor-



Li-Hua Lan/The Post-Standard

ME'SHAE BROOKS-ROLLING, with her book, "How to Save Money & Organize Your Finances: Tales of an Urban Consumer."

tant to be financially organized and “tame the paper tiger,” Rolling said. Eliminate clutter by shredding sensitive documents and discarding other unnecessary paperwork. Keep bills and notices easily accessible, especially if you need to resolve a discrepancy or a customer service issue.

Find ways to reduce consumerism. Make little changes and a conscious effort to spend less money, and therefore save more. A small change such as making your lunch or bringing your coffee to work can add up to big savings. Rolling, who keeps a running total of her spending and money saved, estimates that she saves about \$300 a year just by making her own coffee.

Avoid impulsive shopping. Take inventory before leaving the house. Make a list of what you really need and stick to it, she said.

Once you’ve made the commitment to overhaul your finances and become better organized, take it one step at a time to avoid becoming overwhelmed, Rolling said.

She also encourages people to search for small business opportunities, or ways to create a second “passive” source of income. Rolling has done so for herself by co-founding Rolling Enterprises Inc. with her husband, James, five years ago.

Through Rolling Enterprises, Rolling sells her book and markets her services

as a speaker, writer and consultant on financial organization. She tutors clients about financial software, advises on personal budgeting, and helps create a filing system. Her husband, also an author, markets his books at Rolling Enterprises as well.

The small business serves as a supplemental stream of revenue, and something Rolling enjoys doing on the side. After returning to Syracuse, where she completed a master’s degree in public administration at Syracuse University years before, she now holds a full-time position at SU as director of special events and public relations for the Burton Blatt Institute and a senior administrator in the College of Visual and Performing Arts.

“Find something you would do for free,” said Rolling, “and find a way to make money at it.”

CHECK OUT ME'SHAE'S BLOG

Me'Shae Brooks-Rolling keeps track of her savings on her blog, **blog.rollingerprises.com**.

WHERE TO BUY IT

To purchase “How to Save Money & Organize Your Finances: Tales of an Urban Consumer,” by Me'Shae Brooks-Rolling, visit www.amazon.com, www.barnesandnoble.com, www.rollingerprises.com for a complete list of online retailers.

It also can be purchased locally at Sacred Melody Bookstore, Follett's Orange Bookstore or the Syracuse University Bookstore, all in Syracuse.