

## Program Overview

### Contacts:

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The program consists of several components. These various components are designed to be selected and tailored to the individual situations of the clients. Some of the components, such as promoting financial self-sufficiency books at local libraries, are offered in a cost effective manner to attract clients. Those clients, who cannot afford the cost, if any, of a program, will be asked to do volunteer work to “pay” for the program. A commitment of time or money demonstrates a willingness to work to achieve financial self-sufficiency.

The program components are as follows:

**Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program** - This IRS sponsored program is conducted by the Roane County United Way at its Midtown location. Volunteers provide free tax assistance to the people of Roane County by helping clients with basic tax returns and electronic filing. In 2005, the average refund amount was \$1,182 and the average Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) amount was \$1,514.

**Financial Peace University Program** - *This program is offered through a partnership with the Kingston Church of Christ*

This is a 13 week program produced by Dave Ramsey. There is a two hour session each week consisting of a video tape followed by group discussion. The group is interactive and shares financial learnings and challenges. Participants encourage each other to make major changes in their financial self-sufficiency. Nearly 100,000 families and individuals attend this program each year. The average participant pays off \$5,300 in debt and puts \$2,700 into savings during the 91 day period. This is a net favorable gain of \$8,000 in only three months.

**Self-Improvement Books Program** - *This program is offered through a partnership with the Rockwood and Kingston Public Libraries*

These books are available to all county residents at the Rockwood library:

*The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren

*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen R. Covey

*The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* by Sean Covey

*Financial Peace Revisited* by Dave Ramsey

*Financial Peace, Jr.* by Dave Ramsey

*Rich Dad Poor Dad* by Robert T. Kiyosaki with Sharon L. Lechter

*Boundaries* by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend

*The Millionaire Next Door* by Thomas Stanley and William Danko

*Job Hunting for the So-Called Handicapped* by Richard Nelson Bolles and Dale Susan Brown

*48 Days to the Work You Love* by Dan Miller

**Easy and Nutritious Meals Program** - *This program is offered through a partnership with the University of Tennessee Extension*

Many people rely heavily on “fast food” and prepared (e. g. microwave ready) foods. This four session program teaches participants how to plan menus and demonstrates the preparation easy and fast dishes. Participants are involved in the preparation and tasting of the dishes. Recipes and menu planning materials are provided. Healthy snacks, how to save time by preparing foods in advance, and packing lunch for work are discussed. Family members 12 years and older are encouraged to participate in the program. Participants are given tips on how to involve small children in the meal preparation process.

**Effective Grocery Shopping Program** - *This program is offered through a partnership with the University of Tennessee Extension*

This program is incorporated into the Easy and Nutritious Meals program. It shows participants how to value shop. It will focus on unit pricing, selection of alternate brands, and the effective use of coupons. Participants focus on the items they typically purchase. Classes include in-store instruction at Kroger, Food City, and Walmart. Family members 14 years and older are encouraged to participate.

### **“Basic DOs and DON'Ts of Personal Finance”**

This information sheet is designed to be selectively used by representatives of helping organizations that make the initial contact with people asking for assistance. The concept is take advantage of a “teachable moment” with a client in order to get the client to be willing to learn more about personal finance. For example, if a client is looking for utility assistance because they paid their credit card bill instead of their electric bill, the organization representative can identify the appropriate “DO” and discuss it. Also other appropriate items, such as free income tax prep or the cooking and shopping class, can be discussed. Ideally the client will read and practice the DOs and DON'Ts of interest and, thereby, start on the path toward financial freedom.

**Counseling and Mentoring Program** - *This program is offered through partnerships with selected charitable organizations*

Many people seeking charitable financial assistance continue to do so as often as they are permitted. They seem to do little or nothing to break the financial assistance cycle. Charitable organizations often find that their good intentions are not yielding the kinds of results that they would like to achieve. They are giving the apparently needy “a hand out” instead of a “hand up”. This program is designed to help identify those who are willing to expend the effort to significantly improve their finances. The willing will work with an organization that will offer in-depth, individualized counseling, mentoring, and assistance. The goal is to help the willing achieve financial freedom. It is expected that less than 5% of those asking for help are willing to expend the necessary .

## Program Implementation Comments

Roane County United Way’s approach to the Project Freedom programs is to identify organizations, such as churches and community oriented organizations that will take over the ownership of the various programs. They collaborate with United Way and manage, staff, continuously improve, and fund the minor, miscellaneous expenses of the program.

Two comments on the costs of the program. First, the extensive use of volunteers to conduct the various program components keeps costs down. Second, the use of the already established facilities of United Way and other Roane County organizations provides a minimal overhead environment for this program.