

BLACK FRIDAY IS THE SUPER BOWL OF SHOPPING

For Immediate Release on November 25, 2008 McKinney, Texas - When you play to Win, you must play a mistake-free game. If consumers want to come out in the Win column on Black Friday, they'll need to study the game plan before ever taking the field. Consumer Credit Counseling Service (CCCS) of North Central Texas offers the following keys to the game:

Don't get penalized for buying a gift card with high fees or from a store that is on shaky financial ground and could file bankruptcy. If the store goes under, the recipient may only get cents on the dollar when they redeem their card, if anything at all. The better play is to purchase a card with many options for spending, such as a mall card that can be used at any of their stores. Avoid injuries by checking the store's return policy before making your purchase. Some stores don't allow returns, particularly if you bought the item on sale. Others will accept the return, but only for store credit. If the store offers a gift receipt, be sure to include that with the gift, as that makes for a "no questions asked" return. Have a spread offense by making your purchases in both November and December. By doing so, you'll spread out the bills, thus spreading out the payments, and stand a better chance of paying the bill in full when it arrives. Play to win by not charging more than you can pay off by the end of first quarter 2009. Pay as much as you can toward your debt each month to avoid excessive finance charges that can negate any good deals you found. Avoid piling on. Don't put new debt on top of old. Some people are beginning to shop for holidays 2008 while still paying for their holiday 2007 purchases. When you carry a balance from month to month, you don't get a grace period for new purchases. Interest begins accruing at the point of sale, making it even harder to dig out. Avoid unsportsmanlike conduct by buying more than you need. There will be lots of sales and mark-downs this year, and even though they're tempting, don't buy anything that's not on your list, regardless of how good a deal it is. Watch out for trick plays. When you're busy and distracted, you're more open to pick-pockets and thieves. Stay alert, never take your eye off your credit card, and guard your purchases. Run up the score, credit score that is, by keeping your charges under 30 percent of your available credit line. The card issuer will let you charge 100 percent of your credit line, or perhaps even more, but doing so could compromise your future borrowing power if your bank raises your APR and lowers your credit line. "Even though we're in hard economic times, consumers can still come out on top if they'll follow the rules of the game. When you head to the stadium (mall), put on a determined game face, eat a pre-game meal of discipline and self-restraint," said Deb Taylor. "Even if you do get injured for over-spending, the good news is that there's help available. Find the closest emergency room (CCCS of North Central Texas) where the doctor (certified credit counselor) can get you off the injured reserved list and back into the game in record time." CCCS of North Central Texas stands ready to help at any time of the year. To find an agency near you, call 800.856.0257 or go online to www.ccsnct.org. - 30 - CCCS is a member of the nation's largest and longest-serving national nonprofit credit counseling organization, the National Foundation for Credit Counseling, Inc. (NFCC). Our collective mission is to provide services to consumers to help them achieve financial wellness through financial management counseling, financial education and when appropriate debt reduction services through debt management plans. Be informed; Knowing the Difference Can Make All the Difference is assurance provided through CCCS and the NFCC. As a condition of membership, CCCS is required to maintain high quality services through standards set by The Council on Accreditation and the NFCC, along with Credit Counseling Consumer Protection Standards. To read more about these guidelines visit www.nfcc.org or you may call 1-866-600-CCCS (2227) for pre-recorded information. For direct access to CCCS locally, call 1-800-856-0257 for a confidential appointment with a certified credit counselor or to learn more about educational seminars and workshops provided by CCCS. Visit us online at www.ccsnct.org. About the NFCC The National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC), founded in 1951, is the nation's largest and longest serving national nonprofit credit counseling organization. The NFCC's mission is to promote the national agenda for financially responsible behavior and build capacity for its members to deliver the highest quality financial education and counseling services. NFCC members annually help more than two million consumers through close to 900 community-based offices nationwide. For free and affordable confidential advice through a reputable NFCC member, call 1-800-388-2227, (en Español 1-800-682-9832) or visit www.nfcc.org.