From Nov. 20, 2008 News Briefs:

Store Discounts Not Always a Bargain

MANHATTAN, Kan. - Merchandisers hoping for holiday sales are offering a variety of incentives for shoppers, but not all of the incentives will be a bargain for everyone, said Carol Young, Kansas State University Research and Extension financial management specialist.

Early price reductions and sales tactics -- such as a buy one item at regular price and get a second item for half price or less -- can benefit shoppers if the items are on their shopping list, Young said.

"Incentives for applying for a store credit card - a 10, 15 or 20 percent discount on merchandise purchased the same day, for example - aren´t always a bargain," she said.

Stores´ high credit card interest rates will quickly override any savings unless the buyer has cash available to pay off the card balance as soon as the bill arrives, she said.

"For many shoppers, the promise of a discount will also seem like a license to overspend," Young said.

In addition, shoppers who pay with a credit card will often view their credit limit as their buying power, rather than the money they have available in an account to pay bills.

"To hold down holiday bills, shop with a list and stick to it. Pay with cash, a check or debit card to avoid stacks of after-holiday bills," Young said.

More information on managing money successfully is available at county and district K-State Research and Extension offices and on Extension Web sites www.oznet.ksu.edu and www.oznet.ksu.edu/financialmanagement.