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# Statement of Programs & Accomplishments

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## **CREDITGUARD OF AMERICA, INC.**

CreditGUARD of America, Inc. is a non-profit organization incorporated in the state of Florida on August 15, 1991. The document charter number is N44696. CreditGUARD of America is also recognized as a federal non-profit organization described in section 501(c)(3).

### **Our Mission**

Our mission is to help the American consumer effectively manage and monitor consumer debt and improve financial literacy. We provide educational tools and personalized plans for consumers with good or bad credit, who are burdened by consumer debt, in financial crisis, prevent bankruptcy, improve credit scores and create a stable financial future, all with the help of a certified credit counselor.

### **CREDIT COUNSELING SERVICES**

CreditGUARD of America's main objective is to help individuals and families get out of debt while teaching them basic financial principles that they can apply to remain debt-free. Our certified credit counselors utilize their extensive knowledge and training to provide customized Debt Management Programs (DMP) to each of our client's unique financial situations. Our credit counselors also provide assistance to our clients with personal budgeting, debt settlement, bankruptcy and Internal Revenue Services (IRS) related concerns.

On average, our clients were able to reduce their monthly payments by 35% to 50%. Our credit counselors work closely with various credit card companies, banks and other financial institutions to lower or eliminate clients interest charges, stop late fees, and reage past due accounts.

CreditGUARD pioneered the phone-based client consultations in order to eliminate the time consuming face-to-face interactions between clients and counselors. As a result, we are able to provide our counseling services nationwide while saving our clients both time and money.

### **Debt Management Program**

A Debt Management Program is a credit counseling service designed to help individuals consolidate their unsecured debt into one easy payment. This program allows the consumer to payoff the remaining debt in a much shorter time period. In addition to lowering monthly payments, many creditors will reduce or eliminate interest charges and stop late fees.

### **Personal Budgeting**

A high percentage of our clients fall behind on their payments as a result of poor money management skills. Before joining our program, the client, with the assistance of a credit counselor will list all income and expenditures in order to design a personal budget. The personal budget will provide a detailed picture of the client's current financial status and the severity of debt. A personal budget is also a great tool in uncovering various hidden expenses that the client can no longer afford.

### **Debt Settlement**

Settling debt with your creditors can be one of the most effective ways of eliminating credit card debt and personal loans while avoiding bankruptcy. Our certified credit counselors will review the client's financial situation to determine if debt settlement is the right option and then refer the client to a reputable debt settlement firm, which is in good standing with the Better Business Bureau.

### **Bankruptcy**

Our credit counselors will review the client's current financial condition to find any alternatives before declaring bankruptcy. After exhausting all debt settlement options and debt management programs, the client and the credit counselor can come to an agreement regarding the terms of bankruptcy (Chapter 7 or Chapter 13).

## **Internal Revenue Services Concerns**

Our credit counselors also assist clients with IRS related charges. Due to various personal reasons, some clients fall behind on their income tax charges and face high interests and penalty fees which could add up to thousands of dollars. We at CreditGUARD of America work closely with the IRS in negotiating and setting up a payment plan that suites the client's current financial state.

## **PERSONAL FINANCE EDUCATION**

CreditGUARD of America strives to promote personal financial education throughout its community and nationwide. Our Financial Education department is dedicated to providing comprehensive financial education programs to our clients, employees and community.

Our website provides various educational resources on credit management, debt collection and money management. In fact, more than 85 percent of our website ([www.creditguard.org](http://www.creditguard.org)) content consists of various financial education related materials. The website also features various free web tools including calculators for household budget, checkbook, auto loan, mortgage and rent vs. buy.

In the following sections, we will take a closer look at some of our existing financial education programs and activities.

### **Press Releases/Media Center**

Our Financial Education department creates and publishes monthly press releases covering personal finance related topics ranging from credit scores to holiday shopping. We publish these press releases through our own website as well as through independent online newswire services. Our press releases have been viewed by more than 2,700,000 consumers throughout the United States and worldwide. Summaries of our previous press releases are as follows. To access these press releases click on the titles or visit [http://www.creditguard.org/media\\_center.html](http://www.creditguard.org/media_center.html).

- [\*\*\*Gasoline Credit Cards: What You Need to Know\*\*\*](#) - Soaring gas prices predicted to remain in the high range throughout the year have forced consumers to find their own remedies to ease the pain at the pump. Credit cards that offer cash back are becoming increasingly popular with consumers who are searching for savvy ways to save a couple of bucks at the pump.
- [\*\*\*Banks Step Up Incentives to Attract New Customers\*\*\*](#) - It used to be small radios and toasters, and then came camping gear and milkshake makers; now it is all about Visa gift cards and iPods. According to CreditGUARD of America, Inc., opening a new checking or savings account has never been so attractive as of present day and many consumers are drawn to these new perks offered by various banks.
- [\*\*\*The VantageScore: A New Credit Scoring System\*\*\*](#) - The new 'VantageScore' created in collaboration by the three major credit bureaus will be available to lenders in the coming few weeks. According to the credit bureaus, the new credit score will simplify the credit application process by providing lenders with a more accurate and consistent credit score among the three bureaus.
- [\*\*\*Credit Repair Scams: Don't Believe Their Promises\*\*\*](#) - The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) along with other federal agencies pledged to crack down on companies that claim to remove negative information from consumer credit reports. To address this problem, we at CreditGUARD of America, Inc. have put together the following article to educate our clients and consumers about the severity of this problem, how to avoid these scam agencies and steps to take if you have been victimized.
- [\*\*\*Retirement and 401k's: What You Should Know\*\*\*](#) - Many U.S. based companies have changed the retirement outlook of this country by straying away from traditional retirement pension plans and focusing towards more profitable 401k plans. To help consumers understand the basics of 401k plans, we at CreditGUARD of America, Inc. have put together the following Do's and Don'ts of 401k plans.

- [\*\*\*Charitable Contributions: How to Maximize Your Tax Benefits\*\*\*](#) - The United States has been in the forefront of charitable giving with an estimated \$248 billion raised last year with mostly coming from individual contributions. While the greatest reward for donating to a charity may be in knowing that you have helped someone who is in dire need, your contributions may get you valuable deductions on your income tax returns.
- [\*\*\*After the Hurricanes: Long Term Disaster Assistance Programs\*\*\*](#) - As a company based in Boca Raton, Florida, CreditGUARD of America, Inc. feels the pain and anguish that most of these people suffered due to these hurricanes. As a result, we have compiled and listed some of the disaster relief programs that are designed to provide assistance to residents in various disaster areas.
- [\*\*\*New Bankruptcy Law: How Will it Affect Victims of Katrina and Rita\*\*\*](#) - Victims of hurricane Katrina and Rita who have lost their jobs, homes and businesses are more likely to apply for bankruptcy in the coming weeks and months and the new bankruptcy law will only add more burden to their already unstable financial conditions.
- [\*\*\*Money Saving Tips for New College Students\*\*\*](#) - Apart from getting used to the heavy course loads and assignments, students have to learn to handle their finances in a mature manner which involves good judgments and smart spending. The following tips and guidelines are created to help college students adapt to their new life style in a financially smart manner.
- [\*\*\*Minimum Credit Card Payments on the Rise\*\*\*](#) - Federal regulators are pressuring major credit card companies to increase the current minimum credit card payments from 2% to 4% of the total outstanding balances. The regulators argue that taking such a step would help consumers get out of debt sooner and hence reduce their overall interest charges.
- [\*\*\*Still Dealing with Old Debt? Know your Rights\*\*\*](#) - Generally, a creditor gives up the right to file suit and collect outstanding debt after a period of 6 years

from the time the debt first became delinquent. However, many states have adopted their own limitations which can range anywhere from 2 to 15 years.

- [\*Truth about Payday Lending\*](#) - In the last couple of years, the government and consumers have come down hard on the payday lending industry, accusing them of loan sharking and lending fraud. This article will review how payday lenders operate within legal limitations, the benefits it offers to consumers, the risks of obtaining payday loans as well as alternatives to payday loans
- [\*Planning a Money Smart Vacation\*](#) - Summer is just around the corner and soon many Americans across the country will embark on their well-deserved summer vacations. Vacationers need to carefully plan their summer getaways to make their vacations financially feasible. To help consumers effectively manage their summer finances, we at CreditGUARD of America have put together the following tips and guidelines
- [\*Credit Cards for Teenagers?\*](#) - Nowadays, credit cards are freely available to teenagers, but unfortunately most of them lack the maturity and responsibility of making credit smart decisions. Visa has introduced the new Visa Buxx card, which is a prepaid and rechargeable debit card that allows parents to deposit money into the account as needed. Teenagers can use this card anywhere Visa debit cards are accepted. The users are also protected from any unauthorized purchases making the card safer than carrying cash.
- [\*Five Smart Ways to Spend Your Tax Refund\*](#) - The IRS estimates that the average refund for this year will be close to \$2,000. This has many Americans across the country struggling with the decision of whether to buy a vacation package to the Caribbean or to utilize the extra income towards something more useful. If you are one of the millions of people caught in the middle of such a debate, CreditGUARD of America has five smart ways on how to put that income tax return to good use.
- [\*Financial Relief for Active Military Personnel\*](#) - It is a known fact that most military service men and women who are called to active duty go through many

financial hardships. As a result, many military personnel fall behind on their rent/mortgage payments, default on their credit card payments and auto loans and may even have to file for bankruptcy. Many of them are not aware of some of the important protections available to them under the provisions of the Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act (SSCRA).

- [\*\*\*Holiday Shopping: Helpful Tips to Shop Smart While Staying Under Budget\*\*\*](#) - Holiday shopping can be a fun activity for most of us and it might be one of the things that we look forward to this season. For others, holiday shopping can be stressful and nerve wrecking, especially when they think about their credit card bills early next year. This article will provide you with some basic tips and information on how to be a smart shopper this holiday season without dealing with any anxiety or unpleasantness.
- [\*\*\*New FICO Score: Lenders Assess Credit Risks through Non-traditional Sources\*\*\*](#) - The FICO Expansion score is geared towards consumers who have limited or no credit history to generate a traditional FICO score. The new score is compiled by using information from non-traditional sources such as, payday lenders, rent-to-own stores and companies that monitor and blacklist people who bounce checks.
- [\*\*\*Disaster Relief: Programs Offering Help for Hurricane Victims\*\*\*](#) - As a non-profit credit counseling company based in Florida, we understands the challenges that people face repairing and rebuilding after Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne. Our credit counseling service has compiled a list of disaster relief programs to help hurricane victims locate emergency disaster relief and long-term disaster relief services they need.
- [\*\*\*Back to School: Credit Concerns for College Students\*\*\*](#) - College students are back in school and will soon be starting their credit “rite of passage” by applying for credit cards and student loans. CreditGUARD of America offers some startling statistics on undergraduate credit usage and the debt burden these college students are carrying. Our non-profit credit counseling agency offers valuable credit tips on how to borrow responsibly and avoid credit problems.

- [\*\*\*Gasoline Prices: Filling Up on The Card\*\*\*](#) - *Gasoline Prices: Filling Up on The Card* reviews gas rebate credit cards to find out whether or not these credit cards offer real savings. CreditGUARD of America, a non-profit credit counseling agency, shows you additional ways to save on gasoline prices.
- [\*\*\*How Criminals Are Phishing to Commit Identity Theft & Fraud\*\*\*](#) - Phishing is a technique that criminals use to commit identity theft and fraud. CreditGUARD of America, a non-profit credit counseling agency, explains how to spot phishing and protect yourself from identity theft.
- [\*\*\*Buy Now, Pay Later: Generation Y's Budget Deficit\*\*\*](#) - *Buy Now, Pay Later: Generation Y's Budget Deficit* explains how Americans' spending habits affects pre-teens, teens and young adults. CreditGUARD of America, a non-profit credit counseling agency, explains how youth marketers target our children and what parents can do to correct their child's spending habits.
- [\*\*\*Debt Trap Grows Larger for Consumers Living Paycheck to Check\*\*\*](#) - While credit card companies are lowering interest rates and discontinuing annual fees, there is a new trend in the credit industry to boost income by increasing penalty fees. These new fees are estimated to bring an additional \$1 billion dollars to credit card companies.

## **Client Education**

At CreditGUARD of America our clients always come first. When a client first joins our program, our Financial Education department compiles a comprehensive package of educational materials, brochures and workbooks for the client. The following are some of our educational brochures. To view these brochures please click on the titles. All the educational materials are also available on our website free of charge at [http://www.creditguard.org/media\\_center.html](http://www.creditguard.org/media_center.html).

- [\*\*\*Rebuilding Good Credit\*\*\*](#) - Most consumers that have had credit problems in the past feel like their bad credit history will never go away. *Rebuilding Good Credit* gives practical advice for overcoming bad credit and rebuilding your credit

portfolio. Good credit is not impossible, it just takes time and a strategy to approaching your credit problems.

- **[Budgeting Made Easy!](#)** - Budgeting is a way to turn your dreams into a reality by setting realistic goals and priorities. *Budgeting Made Easy!* shows consumers how to create a personal budget and give advice on how to stick to it. This educational pamphlet also contains worksheets for income, credit card, fixed expenses, flexible expenses, discretionary expenses and an end-of-the-month budget analyzer to help consumers keep track of their income and expenditures.
- **[Shopping & Saving](#)** - The best way to save is to spend your money more wisely. *Shopping & Saving* gives tips on how to curtail bad habits that cause consumers to overspend. This educational pamphlet shows ways to save money on transportation, insurance, investments, credit cards, major appliances and utilities.
- **[Make the Most of Your Credit Score](#)** - *Make the Most of Your Credit Score* discusses the factors that create a credit score, how to effectively manage your credit score and the negative items that can have negative consequences on your credit score. Finally, this educational pamphlet discusses how a debt management program can affect your credit score.
- **[New Families & Finances](#)** - “First comes love, then comes marriage...” and for many couples next comes financial problems. *New Families & Finances* discusses how marriage accommodates debt and how to manage your finances together so the honeymoon does not end too early. This educational pamphlet gives strategies on how to communicate about financial problems and work together towards financial freedom.
- **[Budgeting: Your Money Guide for Getting Through School](#)** - Learn how to successfully manage your money and avoid credit problems from *Budgeting: Your Money Guide for Getting Through School*. This educational pamphlet has useful tips for managing debt, how to use credit cards, student loan strategies and ways to save money.

- **[Credit Cards: What You Need to Know](#)** - Today, your credit report affects more than your ability to get a personal loan, hence it is important to avoid credit problems. *Credit Cards: What You Need to Know* shows consumers the pros and cons of using credit cards. This educational pamphlet gives advise on how to get a credit card, what to look for before you get one and what your consumer credit rights are. The pamphlet will also educate consumers on the proper steps in building credit history.
- **[Divorce & Your Credit](#)** - Thinking about divorce? Avoid credit problems by making intelligent financial decisions to protect yourself. *Divorce & Your Credit* explains what to do if you are going through a divorce and provide quick facts about how divorce affects your overall credit. If divorce has already destroyed your credit, this educational pamphlet will give you additional advice and recommendations on how to rebuild your credit.
- **[Happy Holidays!](#)** - No matter how much you love the holidays, studies show that holidays are some of the most stressful times for consumers. *Happy Holidays!* offer strategies for creating a less stressful and a cost effective holiday season. This educational pamphlet encourages consumers to look at the most important part of the holiday season, your loved ones.

### **CreditGUARD Coach™**

CreditGUARD of America recently created the CreditGUARD Coach, an internet based application that educates consumers about their credit report and credit score. The CreditGUARD Coach provides a detailed analysis of the consumer's credit report and provides insight into how their credit worthiness is evaluated. The consumer is given clear and concise instructions on which elements of their credit report will affect their score. It also provides specific steps they can take to enhance their score based upon their specific credit report. For additional information, please visit [www.creditguardcoach.com](http://www.creditguardcoach.com).

### **Online Calculators**

Our clients and consumers can take advantage of an array of online calculators that

have been created to improve their money management skills. Please visit [www.creditguard.org/free\\_calculators.html](http://www.creditguard.org/free_calculators.html) to access these free online calculators.

- ***[Household Budget Calculator](#)*** - Debt-to-income ratio is the comparison of your income and your expenses. Our household budget calculator examines debt-to-income ratios, which helps you determine your monthly savings. By examining your debt-to-income ratio, you will be able to see where you are overspending and how to manage your finances better.
- ***[Checkbook Calculator](#)*** - Consumers can use our free checkbook calculator to balance their checkbook accurately. This financial calculator reviews the checks you have written and deposits you have made to give you a snapshot of your current financial status.
- ***[Rent vs. Buy Calculator](#)*** - Thinking about buying a home? Our rent vs. buy calculator examines the financial factors of renting versus buying a home. Find out which is best for you and your family with this free calculator.
- ***[Mortgage Calculator](#)*** - Our mortgage calculator can help you calculate your monthly mortgage payment based on the amount your house is selling for and the terms of loan and interest rate. This free calculator will compute how much mortgage and interest you will eventually pay. The mortgage calculator will also show you how much you can save on interest payments based your down payment.
- ***[Auto Loan Calculator](#)*** - Our auto loan calculator is a free financial calculator that gives you the versatility in determining what type of car you can afford based on your monthly payment or purchase price.

## **Newspaper Articles**

In the past, staff members of CreditGUARD's Financial Education department has written personal finance related articles for various newspapers. The media often calls on CreditGUARD's staff members for their expertise regarding personal finance issues.

The following summaries are of three newspaper articles contributed by CreditGUARD.

- [\*\*How Can you Get Rid of Credit Card Blues?\*\*](#) - *USA Today*. Credit card craziness peaks every year in December. Many of us spend much of the next year paying for our indiscretions. Guest Article Reviewer, Nema Perera of CreditGUARD of America wrote *“Debit cards are a great option for teenagers to learn about basic credit and money management skills without actually getting caught in the vicious cycle of credit card debt. Consumers of all ages should only use credit cards for emergency purposes.”*
- [\*\*Silent Killers: #1 Credit Card Debt\*\*](#) - Credit card debt is at epidemic proportions, making unsecured debt one of the most dangerous “silent killers”. Over a period of 30 years, consumers can pay up to 200% in interest payments because of original debt. CreditGUARD of America offers credit counseling for consumers who want to beat this silent killer. Take our credit quiz to find out if you are suffering from too much debt.
- [\*\*Credit Card Debt?\*\*](#) - Relief is on the horizon. CreditGUARD of America has established an Educational Fund to assist consumers with increasing their credit ratings. Our non-profit credit counseling agency offers free debt relief consultations for consumers who have difficulties paying their bills on time.

### **Personal Finance Booklets**

In early 2005, CreditGUARD’s Financial Education department published its first personal finance booklet, namely Identity Theft. The author of this booklet conducted in depth online research and data mining to produce this booklet, which covers all aspects of identity theft. Since then, CreditGUARD has produced three more personal finance booklets. Short summaries of these booklets are shown below.

- [\*\*Identity Theft\*\*](#) - Identity theft is a serious crime, which in the past has disabled and disrupted millions of consumers credit ratings and their overall financial well-being. Identity theft occurs when a person wrongfully obtains and uses

another person's personal data in some way that involves fraud or deception, typically for economic gain.

- [\*Guide to personal Budgeting\*](#) - When it comes to improving your overall finances and economic well-being, there is nothing more important than knowing where your money is coming from and how you spend your income. The best way to attain this objective is to create a personal budget and follow the budget as though your life depends on it.
- [\*The Beginner's Guide to Investing\*](#) - Nowadays, more and more people are beginning to invest their hard earned money in various investment projects in hope of gaining profitable outcomes. This publication will cover various types of investment products, timeframes, risk factors, portfolio management and diversification.
- [\*Kids and Money\*](#) - CreditGUARD of America has produced this publication to educate parents and guardians about the proper way to teach children the value of money. This publication will cover all significant topics relating to kids and their finances as well as suggestions and tips for parents about tackling this difficult subject.

### **Online Quizzes**

CreditGUARD of America has developed a series of short, informative articles and related quizzes. These quizzes are designed to educate our clients on a variety of finance related topics such as credit management, identity theft, saving, budgeting, retirement and etc. The clients are first given an informative article followed by a quiz. After taking the quiz, the client can view the results and the correct answers with additional information on the relevant topics. The quizzes are distributed every quarterly to all our clients. The summaries of the quiz series are shown below.

- [\*Buy Now Pay Later\*](#) - Credit cards allow customers to buy goods and services now and pay for them later. This informative article and quiz covers the basics of credit card management. The quiz touches on subjects such as, benefits and

risks of using credit cards, how credit card interests works, controlling your expenses and etc.

- **[Paying Bills on Time](#)** - Paying your bills on time is an integral part of keeping your overall financial status in balance. This article and quiz will covers significant topics such as, how paying bills late will affect your credit report and credit score, what are the best method for paying you bills on time, late penalty charges and etc.
- **[Personal Budgeting](#)** - A personal budget details all your income and expenditures and will help you to maintain control over your finances. The article and quiz provides in depth information on how to build a personal budget and also gives professional advice on how to stick to a personalize budget.
- **[Balancing Checkbook](#)** - Balancing your checkbook is an important step in keeping your overall financial status organized and in control. This article and quiz will show you the importance of utilizing check ledgers and how writing bad checks can possibly land you in jail.
- **[How Interest Works](#)** - Interest rate can be defined as the fee that a borrower must pay to the lender in return for the use of money. The article and quiz will teach the consumers the basic principles of interest rates and the three major factors that determine your interest charges for a given period of time. The quiz also covers important terms such as, annual percentage rate (APR), inflation, average daily balance and etc.
- **[Credit Card Fees](#)** - Credit cards have become part of our lives and it would be extremely difficult to get along in today's world without one. This article and quiz covers significant credit card terminologies such as, annual fee, cash advance fee, balance transfer fee and etc. The article and quiz also covers general misconceptions regarding credit cards and teach consumers how to avoid high interest charges and other related fees.

- [\*\*\*Credit Scores\*\*\*](#) - A credit score can be defined as a method of determining the likelihood that credit users will pay off their bills. The article and quiz provides in depth information on how credit reporting companies compile your credit score using various factors such as, employment history, credit history, credit usage and etc. The article and quiz also lists the top 4 myths commonly associated with credit scores.
- [\*\*\*Protecting Credit\*\*\*](#) - Information in your credit report influences almost all major aspects of your life and protecting that information is crucial for your financial well-being. This informative article and quiz will help you distinguish potential signs of identity theft and offers instructions on how to report unusual activities to proper authorities. The article and quiz also evaluates the latest identity theft preventive tools such as, high tech firewall protection software and credit monitoring services.
- [\*\*\*Being Creditworthy\*\*\*](#) - This informative article and quiz shows consumers how different creditors use various formulas and methods to determine their creditworthiness. The article and quiz closely examines the ‘Three Cs’, which the creditors use to review customer loan qualifications. The article and quiz also covers the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA) and other consumer credit rights related regulations.
- [\*\*\*Paying for Education\*\*\*](#) - The government of the United States offer many loans, grants and scholarships to residents who meet their standard qualifications. This article and quiz educates consumers on various loan and grant programs available to them as well as instructions on various application processes. Other topics covered include, loan forgiveness, federal student loans, private and NGO loans and etc.
- [\*\*\*Saving For The Future\*\*\*](#) - Saving money is a basic concept of personal financial planning and is a key to your overall financial success. This quiz and article discusses various consumer saving options such as, savings accounts, money market accounts, certificates of deposits, money market funds and etc. Other topics covered include, initiating an emergency fund, Federal Deposit

- [\*\*Facts About Retirement\*\*](#) - A comfortable retirement is the result of smart planning, sound advice and mature investing. This informative article and quiz educates consumers on how to effectively and safely set a side a nest egg in order to retire without any difficulties. The article and quiz also covers various topics including, 401k plans, individual retirement accounts, lifetime healthcare costs, social security benefits and etc.

## **ONLINE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES**

The Financial Education department of CreditGUARD has compiled a comprehensive online catalog of educational resources, which covers three significant personal finance topics namely Credit Management, Debt Collection and Money Management.

### **Credit Management**

In this segment, CreditGUARD of America offers information on credit analysis, credit reporting, consumer rights, consumer alerts and methods to improve credit.

Understanding your credit and what affects your credit can be the first step to mastering your personal finances.

- [\*\*Credit Analysis\*\*](#) - This section of our Credit Management Series explains the basics of credit analysis. Learn the factors credit reporting agencies use to determine your credit score. Find the “strings attached” with a free credit report and how a credit report differs from a credit score. Finally, our credit analysis section provides you with baseline scores so you know how to rate your credit score.
- [\*\*Credit Reporting\*\*](#) - The Credit Management Series also explains how credit reporting works. Learn who the credit reporting agencies are and what they look at when creating your credit report. Discover who has access to your credit report and what circumstances allow them to legally access your credit report

without your permission. Like it or not, our credit report affects many aspects of our life. Understand how your credit report defines you.

- [\*Your Credit Rights\*](#) - This portion of the series provides an overview of major US credit laws and how they affect your life. Our credit rights section answers common questions associated with the following credit laws: Truth in Lending Act, Fair Credit Reporting Act, Equal Credit Opportunity Act and Fair Credit Billing Act.
- [\*Credit Alert\*](#) - This section of our Credit Management Series alerts consumers about the dark side of the credit counseling industry. We provide smart tips for spotting dishonest credit counseling agencies. Our goal is to provide you with the tools you need to make informed decisions on what type of credit counseling agency to work with and how to get the credit help you need.
- [\*How to Improve Your Credit\*](#) - Our Financial Education department has put together some important and helpful guidelines on how to improve your credit. By following our four basic steps, you can manage your credit and improve your credit score. Our credit improvement section provides additional resources for getting help to improve your credit.

## **Debt Collection**

CreditGUARD of America is dedicated to educating individuals on debt collection practices and their consumer rights. Our Debt Collection Series is designed to help you manage your creditors and keep you informed about debt collection practices and consumer rights. Learn the credit laws that protect your rights and also protect you from creditor harassment.

- [\*Fair Debt Collection\*](#) - This section of our Debt Collection Series explains how the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act protects consumers against unscrupulous debt collectors. By understanding your consumer credit rights, you can better protect your interests when negotiating with debt collectors.

- [\*\*Creditor Harassment\*\*](#) - Our Debt Collection Series also explains the types of creditor harassment and what credit laws protect you against abusive creditors and debt collectors. We provide examples of creditor harassment to help you determine when a debt collector is being abusive.

## **Money Management**

We at CreditGUARD of America strive hard to promote money management skills to our clients as well as to the community. This segment covers all aspects of money management including buying a home, home financing, household budgeting, car loans and computer financing. We strongly believe that most of our clients' debt problems can be solved using basic money management tools.

- [\*\*Buying A Home\*\*](#) - This section of our Money Management Series provide tips and guidelines to consumers who are thinking or are in the process of buying a home. These home buyer guidelines outline important details that you need to be aware of during the home buying process. Learn what “pre-qualified” means and how it can help make the home buying process smoother. Review the factors that you should consider when buying a home. Get advise on choosing the right realtor. Learn about the extra details such as getting a home inspected and using a title company.
- [\*\*Household Budgeting\*\*](#) - The Money Management Series also provides consumers with advice on how to manage a household budget. These budgeting guidelines offer detailed descriptions of basic budgeting tools and credit smart ways to shop and save. Learn about “impulse” buying and how it causes you to go over your budget. Find out how to change your buying strategies so that you can get the things you want for a much lower price tag.
- [\*\*Car Loans\*\*](#) - Buying a car can be a scary and frustrating process. This section of our Money Management Series reviews the fundamentals of auto financing and the process of getting a car loan. Discover how your credit report affects your chances for auto financing. Learn your auto financing options and get the best deal on your car loan.

- [\*Computer Financing\*](#) - This section of our Money Management Series discusses different financing options for buying a computer. Learn which computer companies offer the best online financing. Learn how to weigh your options to get the computer financing that is right for you and your budget.

## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

CreditGUARD of America takes pride in getting involved in the community and encourages its employees to follow a similar path. Members of our Financial Education department act as Financial Education Consultants to many local and national community groups and offer our services to its members at no charge. The Financial Education department of CreditGUARD is also in the process of setting up a series of financial education seminars at local schools and colleges. Our credit counselors also volunteer to attend many local events and festivals in South Florida to answer credit related questions from consumers and hand out free educational materials.

### **Personal Finance Seminars**

CreditGUARD of America plans to set up a series of free personal finance seminars geared towards young adults. Our education department has already put together three PowerPoint presentations and is in the process of setting up a one-hour seminar at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida. These seminars will cover important personal finance topics such as,

- [\*Understanding Credit\*](#) - This presentation will cover all the important factors of credit including, credit report, credit score, identity theft, protecting your credit, debt management programs, credit management and how to improve your credit.
- [\*Personal Budgeting\*](#) - This one hour presentation will show how to build a personal budget and offer advice on ways to cut down expenses. All attendees will receive free budgeting workbooks so that they can create their own personal budget without any difficulties.

- [\*Establishing Credit\*](#) - This presentation covers all aspects of building credit and offer various advice in what to do and what to avoid when applying for credit for the first time. The seminar will also cover important topics such as, identity theft and credit monitoring.

## **Community Partners**

As we mentioned earlier, CreditGUARD of America has created many partnerships with other local and national non-profit organizations to promote personal finance literacy among the under-served population. We not only offer our full support and dedication to these organizations, we also offer our expertise and knowledge on credit related issues. CreditGUARD of America has active partnerships with the following organizations.

- [\*Jump\\$tart Coalition for Personal Finance Literacy\*](#) - CreditGUARD has partnered with Jump\$tart coalition in working together to promote personal finance education among young adults. The coalition's main objective is to develop financial education resources and encourage school administrators and teachers to follow a curriculum enriched with personal finance education, so in the future students can make credit-smart decisions.
- [\*Adopt-A-Family\*](#) - CreditGUARD of America sponsors families for Thanksgiving and Christmas to ensure the family has holiday dinners, gifts and basic necessities. Adopt-A-Family helps families in crisis by restoring their stability and self-sufficiency.
- [\*Children's Home Society of Florida\*](#) - CreditGUARD is a supporter of the Children's Home Society of Florida. The Children's Home Society provides adoption, foster care, family counseling, emergency shelters and pregnancy services to support healthy families.
- [\*Community Development Corporations \(CDC\)\*](#) - CreditGUARD of America has teamed up with CDC to promote financial literacy for low-income families. The partnership's objective is to resolve their credit issues to help them

[CDC Grant Program website](#) for more information.

- [\*\*\*Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)\*\*\*](#) - CreditGUARD of America is working with HUD approved agencies across the country to help consumers become more financially sound through financial management and budget counseling. The mission of HUD is to create strong sustainable communities with affordable homes for all individuals across America. CreditGUARD's "Help America Get Out of Debt" campaign is providing financial educational tools and its debt management services to help HUD meet its mission.
- [\*\*\*American Association of Christian Counselors\*\*\*](#) - CreditGUARD has developed online financial tools to help Christian counselors educate individuals about personal finances. The American Association of Christian Counselors equips professionals, ministers and caregivers with necessary tools to provide financial counseling to the community as well as nationwide.
- [\*\*\*Gilda's Club \(South Florida\)\*\*\*](#) - CreditGUARD is a supporter of the Gilda's Club, South Florida chapter. Gilda's Club is a non-profit organization, which provides emotional and social support to cancer-stricken men, women and children.
- [\*\*\*Christmas Ornament Drive\*\*\*](#) - Every Christmas, CreditGUARD of America encourages its employees to donate an ornament for the company Christmas tree. For each ornament collected, our credit counseling agency donates \$5 to a local charity like the Cancer Society or the Diabetes Foundation.
- [\*\*\*Public Libraries \(South Florida\)\*\*\*](#) - CreditGUARD of America also donates various personal finance related educational material, books and video tapes to

### **Community Events/Festivals**

Employees of CreditGUARD of America are encouraged to take part in various community events in order to educate consumers about personal finance education and to answer any credit related questions. At least once a month, our credit counselors attend various community events and festivals in South Florida to distribute free personal financial literature to consumers. Some of the recent community events attended by our counselors include, Fiesta Ft' Lauderdale, Family Day and Park in Delray Beach and Boynton Beach Mall Expo.

### **Corporate Employee Outreach Programs**

CreditGUARD of America cooperates with many local companies in setting up various employee outreach programs. These outreach programs are initiated in combating employee theft and finding alternatives to stealing. Our credit counselors provide credit and debt counseling to “at risk” employees and assist them in getting out of debt. By being proactive with employee outreach, loss prevention managers are able to stop employee theft before it initiates.

CreditGUARD of America has also established the Coach Team Network to provide real estate, mortgage, auto financing and other credit counseling professionals with the financial tools they need to assist consumers. The CreditGUARD Coach™ can support your face-to-face counseling efforts by providing comprehensive credit analysis, step-by-step instructions on how to improve your client’s credit and credit monitoring services to monitor progress and protect against identity theft.

## **A FINAL WORD**

We at CreditGUARD of America, take pride in educating our clients and consumers so that they are able to live life without worrying about debt or financial obstacles. CreditGUARD's management and credit counselors work endlessly towards this objective to help people realize the benefits of living life, debt free.

To learn more about CreditGUARD of America and its programs and services,  
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