Wi$e Up Teleconference Call
Financial Recordkeeping
January 31, 2008
Speaker 2 – Dr. Debra Pankow

Jane Walstedt: And now I'd like Frances Jefferson, the Women's Bureau Regional Administrator in Denver, to introduce our second speaker.

Fran--

Coordinator: Excuse me, Ms. Walstedt, we… Ms. Jefferson has not joined the call.

Jane Walstedt: Okay. Then Sarah Miller is going to introduce our second speaker. Sarah--

Sarah Miller: Thanks, Jane.

Dr. Debra Pankow is in her 20th year as the Family Economics Management Specialist for North Dakota State University Extension Service. She is also the chair of the award-winning national eXtension Financial Security for All Community of Practice.

The Community of Practice works to provide consumers information that can help them make sound financial decisions. These experts have provided an extensive library of frequently asked questions and volunteer to answer specific consumer questions within 48 hours.

Dr. Pankow teaches online courses in financial literacy, ethics, and sociology, and has co-authored and authored numerous publications on financial topics.

She received her B.S. in Home Economics and her M.S. in Child Development and Family Science from North Dakota State University and her PhD in Rural Sociology from South Dakota State University.
Welcome, Dr. Pankow.

Debra Pankow: Thank you very much. This is just an exciting opportunity. I'm having a great time. And I hope that you all are receiving some impetus to get your financial affairs in order.

This is a great time--the beginning of the year--to think about becoming more organized. So I… if you can take one or two action steps as a result of this call, you're going to be well on your way to starting off 2008 on the right foot.

On a little more personal note I will - because I enjoyed hearing more of the personal information about Karin--is that I have four children. Two are raised and -- I think they're raised--but they're grown and married.

I have two grandchildren, but I also have a daughter who is a senior in high school and another daughter who is a sophomore in high school. And I was widowed about ten years ago when those two were 6 and 8.

So the importance of keeping household records is - has been - I have lived through the importance of having well organized household records. I was the household record keeper, but my husband owned a house when I married him, and we put an addition on the house, and he came home and said, “Honey, the house is in your name. You don't have to worry. The house is in your name.”

When he died, I found out the house wasn't in my name. It was the mortgage that was in my name. So I think even being a professional in the field of Family Economics, you can never know too much about your household finances and your records. So that has led me to even be more committed to helping people get their financial records in order.
So whether you're single or in a relationship or have children at home or raised children, I think all of us need a financial buddy. And that is somebody who knows your recordkeeping system.

You can have—just like in Karin's example—the best recordkeeping system in the world, but if nobody knows where it is or how to access it, it doesn't do much good if there should be an emergency. And that's just what happens in life is that there are a lot of things that happen when we're making other plans.

So if you have a recordkeeping system, once you have one, have a buddy who knows where it's located, where a list of your pass codes and your account numbers might be, that sort of thing. And I'll mention those later, but those would be some of your very important papers that you could have access to and share that with your financial buddy.

I am an extension specialist. I think many of you are familiar with the Extension Service. But if you are not, we are the outreach arm that's for community education with the Land Grant University System.

And every state in the union has at least one land grant university. And the newest thing in the extension system is eXtension, small “e,” capital “X,” “t,” “e,” “n,” “i,” “o,” “n.” And I did put the link—or the Women's Bureau did put the link—up on the [Wi$e Up] web page [http://www.extension.org/].

We are so excited to be entering this century with a World Wide Web presence. We have… we are attempting to put the best of the best featured resources, answers to consumer questions, access to experts to answer your questions available for everyone 24 [hours a day]/7[days a week]/365[days a year].
So that is eXtension, and my community of practice…a community of practice is a group of professionals who work together to provide resources or develop programs, that sort of thing.

We're…our name is Financial Security for All, so we have a huge amount of material, and it's never going to be finished. But we are in the process of developing resources for consumers. And I invite you to see what we have so far and check back and see what's coming next, because we never know what's coming next.

As far as recordkeeping, I think the kind of recordkeeping system that you have or that would work for you is as individual as you are. You really need a system that fits your lifestyle.

It might be very elaborate. It might be all electronic on computer or it might be a special drawer in the kitchen, or a file cabinet in an office space -- whatever works for you--but it does need to work for you.

And any time--and I think I'm echoing what Karin said--any time that you spend organizing your records will be saved many times over in the time you save whenever you need to locate a document or a record. So it's something you can do for yourself, and I think you're getting the impression that it's also something you do for your loved ones.

I think…and if you don't think you really need to get organized and you don't have much of a recordkeeping system, you probably aren't aware of the recordkeeping systems that you already have.

You…your wallet is a mini-recordkeeping system. In your wallet, you might have things like emergency information--who to contact in case of an
emergency, your driver's license, credit cards, maybe organizational membership cards. Those are records.

One thing that shouldn't be in your wallet that many of us have had at one time or the other is a Social Security card. And due to identity theft concerns, that is not recommended--to carry your number, a photocopy of your card, or the card itself in your wallet. It would be too easy for somebody to access your identity if they came upon that.

Some other places or types of records you probably have somewhere is old stuff, like 20-year-old Christmas cards. Someplace you probably have some old stuff that you…and that….Those are records of some sort that you don't want to get rid of. And then there's probably an area in your home or in your office where you keep current materials.

And among all three of those types of recordkeeping systems, there are some very important papers. And those are the permanent documents that you want to be very careful with.

And I should say they might not be in your home. They might be in a safety deposit box or in a fire safe somewhere, but there are all those different kinds of records that you probably have somewhere in your life.

I think we've talked already about and I think we…about why you should keep records and the importance of keeping records. But the thing that you can do to get your records in order is have an…one tool would be an inventory of important records.

And there is a link on your…on the web page [http://www.extension.org/pages/Record_of_Important_Papers] that would take you to a form that's interactive where you can…just by filling out the
form, you become aware of what types of important records you might have and want to keep an inventory of so people know. And this would be something you'd share with your financial buddy.

You can fill it out. And it's a Word document. Fill it out, save it on your computer, print it off, and then go back in and update it. It's nice to have a financial checkup and that would also be a recordkeeping checkup every year, where you'd take a look at your records--your important things--and make sure that nothing has changed too dramatically.

Another tool that's available is a household inventory. And that again is interactive, where you can…you could put on the computer, or on paper and… with using paper and pencil whatever you have in your house for insurance purposes, for determining your household assets purposes.

You can also do that with a video camera or photos or that sort of thing. But there is a household inventory, and there is a link to that [http://www.extension.org/pages/Household_Inventory].

Another important [thing]- or maybe it's important for some…somebody who wants to get started with a household recordkeeping system--is having a household filing system.

And there is - I tried to find the link to it and I found out that it - we develop our materials for the eXtension in an area called a Wiki--like Wikipedia, where people go in and work on documents. It's in the Wiki, but it wasn't published. I just published it today to the public site, but it doesn't have a link yet. [Note: The link is now available-- http://www.extension.org/pages/Household_Filing_System.]
If you would go to eXtension.org and look under personal finance and type in household filing system, there is a nice chart of headings that you might want for folders, as you're organizing your household papers, if you need some help with that. You might already have a good idea of what you need to keep track of. But if you're just getting started, that might be very useful.

I think that family records are a really important part of your household. And I wrote a publication at one time where we said families are mini-businesses, and you have a lot of businesses that you're transacting in your family or your household, and having a good recordkeeping system allows you to keep on top of that mini-business.

And I know you're going to have time for questions and answers at the end. And I will be more than happy to answer any questions and look forward to hearing from you.

Jane Walstedt: Thank you very much, Debra. And we can…when we post the transcript on the Wi$e Up Web site, if there's something you want to add there….

Debra Pankow: If that inventory filing system is available …

Jane Walstedt: We can put that in in brackets in the transcript if it's ready by the time we put the transcript online.

Debra Pankow: Thank you.

Jane Walstedt: So thanks very much, Debra.