



AROUND *the* HOUSE A NEWSLETTER FOR HOMEOWNERS & HOMEBUYERS

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FINANCIAL EDUCATION IS FOR YOU!

Whether you are considering buying a home, currently in the market, a first-time or long-term homeowner, struggling to make your payments, or just want to improve your credit, financial education is for you! PHFA offers financial education through our statewide network of housing counseling agencies. The first step is signing up for our workshop series where you'll learn how to better manage your money. The workshops are provided in a group setting and are available to you at no cost.

After you've completed your workshop series, you're eligible to meet with a counselor one-on-one to get help with your personal finances. These private coaching sessions can be either face-to-face or on the phone, and are also free of charge! To locate a counseling agency in your area please go to phfa.org.

Program topics include:

- Goals, Assets, and Earnings
- Spend, Save, and Invest
- Review Taxes, Manage Risk, and Protect Your Money
- How to Get, Use, and Manage Credit

**REGISTER WITH YOUR
[LOCAL COUNSELING AGENCY](#)**

Check out our podcasts about homebuying ("Close to Home") and money management ("Master Your Money") on [iTunes](#), [Spotify](#) and [PHFA.org](#).

HOME MAINTENANCE...Ask Handy Hank



THE ISSUE: What do I do if I've had flood damage to my home?

HANK: First check to see if you have a flood insurance policy. If you do, contact your insurance agent. Take photos of the damage and take an inventory of what was damaged. You'll need this information to submit to your insurance. Other recommendations include contacting your local fire department to help remove water from your basement and reaching out to a local church, fire department, or the Salvation Army if you need a place to stay while repairs are being done. There are also possible grants and/or loans that could be helpful to you, too.

Here's a list of disaster resource websites:

- <https://www.disasterassistance.gov/>
- <https://www.floodsmart.gov/>
- <https://www.fema.gov/assistance/individual/program>
- <https://disasterloanassistance.sba.gov/ela/s/>
- <https://www.pa211.org/get-help/disaster-services/>

THE TOP FIVE SPENDING TIPS FOR THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!

It's only October, but the holidays are right around the corner! It's also the perfect time for some tips to keep your holiday spending in check.

1. **Map out your holiday spending**, whether it's your gift list, postage/shipping expenses, holiday feasts, or travel. If your resources don't cover the expenses, make decisions now about what to cut out to limit disappointments or avoid credit card hangover.

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2. **Before going to the store, make a list and stick to it!** Shopping without a list can lead to unintended purchases and overspending. Limit trips to the mall to avoid the temptation!
3. **Start now and watch for sales.** Black Friday and Cyber Monday sales don't necessarily mean the best prices. Also consider buying last year's model as new ones may not be on sale.
4. **Do it yourself with handmade gifts.** With all the crafty websites out there, you're bound to find unique, handmade gifts you can make yourself that will fit your skill level, budget, and recipient.
5. **Know your gift cards.** Gift cards may come with fees such as activation and inactivity fees. Also, know the difference between gift cards and pre-paid cards. Gift cards are intended for a set amount to spend and can be used by anyone. Pre-paid cards can be registered and reloaded by the buyer. They can also be used for banking services like direct deposit, cash withdrawals at an ATM, etc.

FALL MAINTENANCE TIPS

Here's a list of a few maintenance tips for fall to help keep your home investment in tip-top shape!

1. **Clean your gutters and downspouts.** Blocked gutters can mean water in your basement or garage.
2. **Check smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) detector batteries and expiration dates.** Smoke detectors are typically good for 10 years, and CO detectors last for about six years.
3. **Remove garden hoses from outdoor faucets and turn off any shutoff valves on exterior faucets.** Leaving hoses attached can cause water to back up in the faucets and in the plumbing pipes just inside your exterior walls. If freezing temps hit, that water could freeze, expand, and crack the faucet or pipes.
4. **Check your chimney.** With a flashlight, look up inside your fireplace flue to make sure the damper opens and closes properly. Open the damper and look up into the flue to make sure it's free of birds' nests, branches and leaves, or other obstructions. You should see daylight at the top of the chimney. Check the firebox for cracked or missing bricks and mortar. Always hire a chimney sweep for cleaning your chimney.
5. **Check your furnace.** Schedule an appointment with a heating and cooling pro to get your heating system checked and tuned up for the coming heating season. Change your furnace filters, too. This is a job you should do every two months anyway, but if you haven't, now's the time.

Scroll down on [PHFA's YouTube channel](#) to see videos about Home Repair and Maintenance.

Tell us your homeownership story

We'd like to hear how owning a home has positively changed your life. What does homeownership mean to you? Tell us your story and send us a photo, too. If we pick your story for sharing in a future issue of *Around the House*, we'll send you a \$25 Visa gift card. So, please, only submit if you are okay with us sharing your story and photo. Check out other PHFA homeownership stories on our website at [PHFA.org](#).

Send YOUR story to AroundtheHouse@phfa.org



Eduardo, Philadelphia
Millennial homeowner and PHFA customer



Need help with housing?

Assistance is a call or a click away!

Customer Solutions Center • 1-855-U-Are-Home (827-3466)

Mon – Fri 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Email your questions to: AskPHFA@PHFA.org

