

The Road To Financial Health

(NAPSA)—Anyone who has ever run a marathon knows that endurance is one of the most important fundamentals to a successful race. The same holds true for your financial health. “Like training for a race, building financial endurance doesn’t just happen overnight,” said Wade Lagrone, personal finance expert at Yahoo! Finance. “You must have patience, a well-balanced plan, and most importantly, commitment.”

Try the following steps to establish a healthy financial training program:

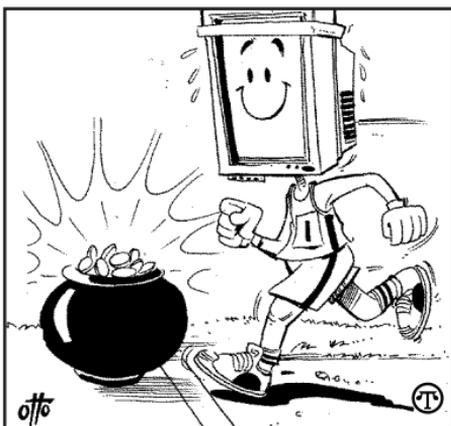
Mapping your course and getting started

Many financial experts agree that one of the biggest obstacles to achieving a healthy financial outlook is simply devising a plan. Most of us are guilty of procrastination when it comes to our finances, but by taking the first step and drawing a realistic road map, goals are easier to achieve than you may think.

Start by visiting one of the major Internet finance sites, such as Yahoo! Finance (<http://finance.yahoo.com>). These sites provide many educational resources free of charge, as well as secure, easy-to-use tools that make financial management a breeze. These sites are great for beginners who need to grasp the basics; they also have more sophisticated tools for experienced users. Evaluate the tools available and choose the ones most appropriate to your needs.

Changing your financial course

Start by observing your spending patterns. In many cases, you can trim expenses by reviewing your spending habits on a regular basis. Tools like Yahoo! Money Manager (<http://moneymanager.yahoo.com>) can help you jump-start your routine by categorizing and tracking your expenses on a monthly basis, customizing a prac-



The information superhighway may help you on your way to success.

tical budget, and providing suggestions for a long-term financial plan. At month’s end, check back over your income and expenses to see how closely they map to your budget and savings goals.

Keep in front of the race

Stay ahead of expenses and avoid late fees or a damaged credit rating by maintaining monthly bills and expenses. Online bill payment services allow you to automate recurring payments and schedule payment reminders so that you never miss a payment again.

Set short- and long-term goals

Start planning early for retirement and saving for college tuition. Internet sites like Kiplinger.com offer free advice on saving for retirement and college expenses. The Yahoo! College Savings Center (<http://finance.yahoo.com/college>) provides easy-to-use online calculators to determine how college budgeting fits into your overall financial goals, as well as live advice from savings experts.

Train for the long haul

Set attainable financial goals and institute an easy-to-manage regimen. Save and invest at a steady pace—by following these tips, you will be well on your way to a healthy financial future.