Family Economist Studies Household Debt, Savings, Credit Use, and Family Economic Issues.

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I am a Family Economist scholar who is interested in studies on household debt, savings, credit use decisions, and relevant family economics issues. I received my MS degree in Family Ecology from the University of Utah and my PhD in Consumer Economics from the University of Missouri-Columbia. I have taught a number of different classes for the Human Development and Family Studies Department over the past 19 years here at Utah State University. My area of research centers on family financial behavior and issues, with an emphasis on young adults, women, baby boomers, and the elderly. My research interest is helping individuals and families in their money matters, because money management knowledge and skills will have an important impact across their lifespan.

I have done research on household financial behaviors and debt issues for young people, financial management issues for the middle aged, and financial well-being for those later in life. I am currently doing several research topics on financial issues such as emergency savings of young millennials, student loan debt and saving issues of middle-aged households, and financial wealth issues during retirement. I am interested in the mortgage debt issue among those nearing and in retirement. I am wondering if paying off the mortgage debt before retirement is important or not. Some people choose not to pay off the mortgage debt before retirement and put their money in an investment that pays a higher interest rate. I want to examine whether or not this is a beneficial decision. There is evidence that more retirees are carrying mortgage debt later in their lives, which takes a large hit on their retirement income. I want to continue doing this line of research so that I can develop and provide education materials with people about the role of mortgage debt in pursuing the ultimate goal of their financial well-being.

I also focus on how younger generations can implement good financial behaviors to secure their economic future. My favorite quote is “An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.” – Benjamin Franklin. Family finance is related to financial investment and return, but investing in human capital is the most valuable thing a human can do. College has become very expensive, but this human capital investment idea can expand to more than just a college degree. It can relate to knowledge, health, and relationships with your spouse and others. In my professional position, I view mentoring students as very important. When I was a graduate student at University of Utah, my mentor, Dr. Cathleen Zick inspired me to study the family economics field. She helped me to develop analytical thinking skills and apply economic principles to a wide range of consumer and family economic questions. Because of her mentorship, I then followed a career path that led me to pursue my doctoral degree and caused my own desire to be a mentor just like her.

I love to invite undergraduate and graduate students in my office and talk with them. I ask for their originality, and work together on research articles that can be published. I want to develop an area that I can recruit more graduate students in this HDFS department. For example, how to deal with family financial and relationship issues among family members. I wish I could have a research lab to work with many graduate students. I would call it the “Family Finance Research Lab.” I am excited to help students reach their academic and professional goals. In a long-term, I hope I can create a program that several others in this HDFS department can work together and develop important family finance topics that are also relevant to family relation and human development fields.

Utah State University is a great school and has a safe campus! Students and faculty are welcoming. Living in Logan for almost 20 years have been a great pleasure to me. Logan has a great environment such as beautiful canyons and hiking trails, many fun events happen during the summer. There are great places for outdoors
recreation for everyone, especially if you like to ski in the winter time and camping during summer time! In addition, as a family finance person, I think Cache Valley is an affordable place to live, and I have learned it through my experience traveling to Korea and other big towns or cities in the United States. Another plus is how everything, from restaurants to shopping, is within ten minutes. It seems that I love USU and Logan; Yes, I do! In my spare time, I like to do Zumba, hiking, spontaneous fun with good friends around me. Especially, I love to do cooking and my absolute favorite is to cook Korean foods and have my friends enjoy it; I am the happiest when my friends are happy with my food. I can say that my favorite Korean dishes to cook are Bulgogi, Japchae, and Bibimbap.