

Kelly Pressy started clipping coupons in 2008 after she and her husband both lost their jobs on the same day. As a result of her "coupon addiction," she says she's able to save 70 percent each time she goes shopping! Today, she's a stay-at-home mom to 5-year-old Connor, and is teaching others in our community about the art of couponing.



The Coupon Tutor

By Charlotte L. Bowman
Photo by Mike Haskey/Ledger-Enquirer Chief Photographer

There's an old saying: "When life hands you lemons, make lemonade."

"Just be sure you use a coupon and buy the sugar at the lowest possible price!" laughs Kelly Pressy, 34. For the Columbus mom, saving money at the grocery store is like an addiction. The savvy shopper saves up to 70 percent every time she goes shopping.

Kelly hasn't always been addicted to coupons. In the past, she only used them when she had them. "I used coupons for the stuff we were already buying, but I never saved much money," she recalls. Both she and her husband, Paul, worked for the same company. He was in management, and she was an administrative assistant. They lived a comfortable, middle-class lifestyle in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

Then one day in November 2008, life handed the couple a huge lemon. Paul was laid off in the morning; Kelly was let go that afternoon.

"It was six weeks before Christmas," Kelly recalls. With no severance – other than three months of health insurance – and no unemployment for six weeks, she was terrified. "I

started freaking out because we were living paycheck to paycheck," she says. "We didn't have any money."

She called the South Carolina Department of Social Services for assistance, but the Pressys only qualified for \$390 a month because they made too much money. "I went to get food stamps and was given \$76 a month to feed two adults and a baby. I used to spend that much and more on groceries each week!"

Several days later, Kelly saw Stephanie Nelson, "The Coupon Mom," being interviewed on "The Oprah Winfrey Show." Stephanie talked about how to be a strategic shopper and gave several savings tips.

Kelly was riveted and immediately went online to learn more. "Basically, being a strategic shopper means using coupons when the items you need hit their rock-bottom prices. Then, you stock up for a few weeks at that point," Kelly explains. "Once you get into the sales cycle, your grocery bill will decrease dramatically."

The Pressys moved to Columbus, where Paul's parents live, in December 2008. Today, practically every nook and

cranny in their house is filled with items Kelly has stockpiled. “Technically, I don’t have to go grocery shopping for several months,” Kelly says. “We could live off our stockpile for weeks.”

By shopping strategically, Kelly spends less than \$30 per week on groceries at Publix. “Yes, I shop at Publix and, yes, I buy name-brand items,” she says. “I love standing in the checkout line and watching my total sales drop as they scan my coupons.”

Even her 5-year-old son, Connor, is learning how to use coupons. “His job is to collect all the coupons from the blinkie machines, and he knows I won’t buy him a toy unless we have a coupon.”

“I like to follow other shoppers at Publix to see what they’re buying and give them coupons,” Kelly says. “Everyone always asks me if I teach a class.” With her husband’s encouragement, Kelly started teaching a regular class called “The Coupon Tutor” at the Columbus Public Library.

On March 3 of this year, she launched her Web site, www.KellysCouponAddiction.com, so she could share news about local deals and discounts with friends and family. Within a few weeks, she had over 4,000 hits.

Today, Paul is a driver for Wade Linen and Kelly is a stay-at-home mom. “I couldn’t find a job,” Kelly says, “so basically I’m making my own job – one coupon at a time.”

Kelly Pressy’s Strategic Shopping Tips

- Buy a Sunday paper every week and save the coupon circulars.
- Visit the Internet for more coupons. Some of Kelly’s favorite Web sites are: www.SouthernSavers.com; www.HotCouponWorld.com; and www.IheartPublix.com.
- Make a list of what you need and buy only what is on your list. “I pay with cash so I’m not tempted to overspend,” Kelly notes.
- Keep your out-of-pocket expenses as low as possible. “Just because you have a coupon doesn’t mean you have to use it,” Kelly says. “Also, if you miss a sale, don’t worry. It will come around again in a few weeks.”
- Build a stockpile of items you use on a regular basis. “Take your time building your stockpile,” she advises. “Don’t try to do it in a single weekend.”