

MetroWest

August 2014

Save Big on Back to School Shopping

Yes, it's that time of year again. School is just around the corner. To make the season easier, here is a list of tips for back-to-school shopping that can save money and one's sanity this time around, out there among the crush of other school shoppers.

First, go through the supply list provided by the school, and then do a quick search around the house for any of the school supplies listed. Search all closets, and every nook and cranny for packs of glue, pencils, paper and other hidden school year needs. This is also a great opportunity to sort through children's clothes that they have outgrown, to be donated or handed down.

Organizing a "Clothing Swap Party" is another great way to get together with other local moms to gain some new, gently used clothing that fits, and new school items needed, while at the same time, ridding one's home of outgrown clothes or unused items. Everyone agrees at the swap to bring their items, such as gently used garments or notebooks and calculators, to swap for other items in similar good condition. A central location and date ahead of the school buying season works best for everyone. Scheduling a semi-annual or annual event like this works well too, because more and more families will save up and plan ahead to be able to swap more items. The general rule is "bring an item, get an item." This lets everyone win.

Don't just shop at your local retail stores. Garage sales, rummage sales, thrift stores, consignment shops, on-line person-to-person selling sites, wholesale discount stores and the dollar stores are superb places to save. Shop around to find great markdowns on brand name clothes, shoes, or backpacks. Get basic supplies such as notebooks, paper, pens and more for just a buck at a dollar store. Yard and rummage sales offer huge savings for bargain hunters, such as finding a \$100 graphing calculator for just a few dollars.

Tax Free Weekend is another great way to save on books, clothes, computers, and school supplies for a short period of time. Florida Tax Free Weekend is this weekend, August 1-3, 2014. When shopping during markdowns on school supplies, buying in bulk for the year will save shoppers from making frequent visits to the store. For example, when crayons are buy-one, get-one, colored pencils are 50% off, and binders are only \$1.75, buy enough to last

the school year for all the children involved. It's better to have a large resource of supplies than to run out and buy them at regular price later on.

To stay within a budget, it is important to stick to the list items as supplied by the school. Oftentimes, children will want the extra items displayed to entice them within the stores, as well. This is a good learning opportunity even prior to school starting. Children view the school supply aisles as toy departments, and the stores know this, and display items in a way that promotes the best sales. Students often want the more expensive binders with their favorite super hero's on them, or glimmering pens and the special lunch boxes with cartoon characters. Budget for one or two such special items of this kind, and let the child choose which he or she would like, within a certain pricing point. Let the child decide if he or she wants two smaller priced items, or one, more expensive item. Then leave the store without all the unnecessary items, but with a wallet with more money left in it, for other needed items. Children will also have gained a growing appreciation from being allowed to make the decision, about how far the same amount of money can go, per type of item purchased.

If one has missed Tax Free Weekend, back-to-school products are often sold at reduced price later on after school has begun, in discount stores and office supply stores. If the crowded aisles and nagging children were too hectic to get all the required supplies during the new school year rush, there is still another chance. Just one or two short weeks after school commences, the same items will often be marked down, and best of yet, this time, no crowds.

Another final tip to save this school year, is to start following local stores on social media for advanced notices on sales and links to coupons. Don't wait for the weekly paper to find out about exclusive deals. Be the first to know and get coupons on-line, to beat the crowds and enjoy more free time and savings.

Headline: Welcome Craig Crenshaw!

Body: MetroWest Master Association and FirstService Residential is excited to welcome Craig Crenshaw to the staff as the new assistant community manager. Craig, a Licensed Community Association Manager, has worked with FirstService Residential for seven years before continuing his career with MetroWest.

A Central Florida resident for a decade, Craig has been in the property management industry for eight years. He will work alongside MetroWest Master Association Community Manager, Julie Sanchez to keep MetroWest running smoothly, covering tasks including administrative jobs, buildings and grounds, financials, events, communications and much more.

"I'm thrilled to be working with a strong community like MetroWest," said Craig. "I can't wait to get out and meet the residents and business leaders

and begin working towards carrying on MetroWest's reputation as a great place to live, work and play."

Give Craig a big "hello" if he's spotted out in the community. Welcome, Craig!