

Consumer News & Views

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Consumers Aren't Afraid to Spend Money on Halloween. There's a ghoulish scent in the air this month as Halloween approaches. Retailers are anxiously rubbing their hands as consumers prepare to spend a record amount for costumes, parties, and treats this Halloween. Katherine Harvey of the U-T reports that "This Halloween will be filled with more treats than tricks for retailers as the average American consumer plans to spend \$77.51 on Halloween-related items. "

With the growing popularity of vampire books and shows, and The Walking Dead television series, teen-agers and 20-somethings are creating a buying frenzy for retailers who offer costumes that scream bloody murder!



The National Retail Federation expects total Halloween spending to reach \$7.4 Billion this year, up by nearly \$400 Million over last year. For anyone who is counting, Halloween remains the eighth-most popular holiday in terms of consumer

spending, just ahead of St. Patrick's Day.

Drop in Oil Prices is a Good Sign for Consumers. The average price of a barrel of oil (based on the Brent crude oil price) fell to a 47-month low settling at \$84 a barrel. The steep drop was attributed to faltering global growth and less demand for fuel at a time of heavy oversupply. Oil saw its biggest daily fall in more than three years this week after the West's energy watchdog slashed its forecasts for world oil demand for this year and 2015.

The abrupt acceleration of an over 26 percent slide in prices since June was triggered by three news items that epitomized the market's turn: a downgrade in global oil consumption forecasts; projections for another big boost in shale oil; and, reluctance by OPEC members to cut output.



Experts believe the drop in oil prices will continue for the next quarter, which is good news for consumers who rely on gasoline and heating oil as part of their daily expenses.

Oil is struggling to find a floor after Saudi Arabia made clear that it was focused on maintaining market share, not supporting prices with unilateral production cuts. Other OPEC members appear to be taking a similar tack. A source familiar with oil policy in Iran, normally one of the first in OPEC to call for production cuts, followed Kuwait in saying there was no need to rein in supplies.

Thomas Hinton, president of the American Consumer Council, said, "This drop in oil prices is welcome news and will bring long, overdue relief to consumers who have been gouged at the pump for the past eight years."

ACC's Wellness Series Ready for Mid-November Launch. The American Consumer Council will launch its Financial Wellness series with several programs starting on November 17 as ACC upgrades its web capabilities to offer more educational programs via webinars. As part of ACC's commitment to help its members better manage their finances and make better financial decisions, ACC has developed a series of eight programs that will be offered free to members.



The programs series include the following topics:

- Exploring your Retirement Decisions.
- How to Save and Pay for College.
- Smart Budgeting for Twenty-Somethings.
- A Crash Course on Cash and Credit Cards: How not to Over-spend.
- To Buy or Rent: That is the Question!
- Where to Bank and Where to Invest: How to Get the Best ROI on Your Money.
- How to Get Health Insurance and stay Insured
- Managing Your Credit and Pay-off Your Debt

A complete schedule of programs and podcasts will be published next month. ACC is partnering with the National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) to provide these programs. NEFE is a leading private nonprofit 501(C)(3) foundation dedicated to inspiring empowered financial decision-making for individuals and families through every stage of life.



Fleet Financial is a National Finance and Insurance Marketing firm that focuses on Auto Refinancing.

We offer auto finance solutions with the customer's well-being in mind. There are a lot of companies out there that can provide a loan or refinance your vehicle. Fleet Financial focuses on setting our customers up for success by saving them money and educating them about what is best for their particular financial situation.

Whether you are looking to save money by refinancing your vehicle, want to avoid excess fees and penalties when you're buying out your lease, or you want to build resale value by buying out your company car- Fleet will guide you through the process and make sure you understand what's going on every step of the way.

Fleet Financial also works with companies of all sizes to help employees purchase their own company car or any car from the company fleet. By using this process, employees can buy cars at below market rates. It also helps employers avoid the expensive and pain-staking process of selling their cars to a dealership.

If your company doesn't have a fleet, we can still help you purchase a vehicle for a very reasonable price through our inventory of fleet cars that are available to the public.

Our expert loan consultants will take the time to educate you about auto finance, ensuring that your past mistakes don't continue to affect your credit and your life. Let us help get you out of a difficult financial situation.

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Green CSM Certification Accepting Applications for 2014 Fall Cycle:

If your company or organization would like to increase its credibility with consumers, you should consider applying for the **Green CSM Certification**. Applications for the 2014 Fall cycle are now being accepted through December 12, 2014.

It's a proven fact that consumers want to do business with companies that are eco-friendly and practice Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The process is straight-forward and all applicants are recognized by ACC and the Green USA Institute.

All applicants complete the criteria and submit their responses to ACC's Green Consumer Council for review, assessment and feedback. Program details and the **Green CSM Certification** criteria can be viewed at ACC's website located at: <http://americanconsumercouncil.org/greenc.asp>

