

# BUSINESS

Saturday, November 22, 2008 · D1

## FirstEnergy earns honor

FirstEnergy Corp. was named by Site Selection magazine as one of the top utilities in the country for promoting economic development for the fifth time in six years.

The magazine noted the Akron utility's efforts to create more than 10,000 jobs and attract more than \$2 billion in capital investment in Ohio, Pennsylvania and New Jersey service areas.

**MONDAY:** National Association of Realtors home sales report for October. **TUESDAY:** Gross domestic product report.

Business Editor Larry Pantages, 330-996-3810  
lpantages@thebeaconjournal.com, or fax 330-996-3052

**Citigroup faces restructuring dilemma. D2.** Wal-Mart gets new CEO. D2.

## COUPONING 101

# Today's topic: CVS Extra Care Bucks



By Paula Schleis  
Beacon Journal staff writer

Do you like playing games?

Planning and executing a successful shopping trip is as entertaining as any video, board or card game I've ever played.

It starts with clipping coupons, but real victory only comes from

■ Clipping coupons is just the start of big savings. **Page A1**

timing those coupons with sales and then understanding a store's reward program so you play your cards in the right order.

CVS is a great store for strategy lovers, thanks to a loyalty card that

rewards shoppers with Extra Care Bucks (ECBs) for purchasing certain items at certain times. You can use ECBs like cash for most things in the store. Sign up for a card at the start of your next shopping trip.

In November, for instance, you can purchase a 4.2-ounce Crest Pro Health Toothpaste for \$3.49, and

CVS will issue you an ECB for \$3.49. You'll find it at the bottom of your receipt.

If you have the 75-cent coupon for Crest from an October newspaper insert, then you'd pay only \$2.74, but still get the \$3.49 ECB.

The limit on the Crest ECB reward is four, so this means you

could tear that little \$3.49 ECB off the bottom of your receipt and hand it to the cashier to pay for another toothpaste – and do that two more times.

In the end, you would have four toothpastes and a \$3.49 ECB to take home, and it will have cost you

Please see **Coupons, D7**

# Coupons

Good deals can sell out fast at pharmacy stores

Continued from Page D1

\$2.74.

The monthly ECB deals are listed in a booklet at the front of the store. Deals that last only days are outlined in the weekly fliers.

So what do you do with your \$3.49 ECB? Use it to buy products that will give you more ECBs.

There will never be a better week for doing this. For three days beginning Black Friday, you can pick up nearly \$90 worth of absolutely free items.

Just break up your transactions into small groups, and pay for each using the ECBs from the previous purchase. (But be kind to other shoppers and go to the back of the line after every two transactions.)

## HOW TO DO IT

Through Nov. 26, Giant Eagle is giving a coupon for \$4 off your next order if you purchase \$10 worth of certain products. If you have inserts from *two* Nov. 16 newspapers, you could do this:

**Pick up:**

- 1 Pam Cooking Spray, \$2.99
- 1 Swiss Miss Hot Chocolate, \$1.25
- 4 Parkay Soft Spread, \$7

**Coupons:**

- One 35 cents off Pam (doubles to 70 cents)
- One 30 cents off Swiss Miss (doubles to 60 cents)
- Two 75 cents off two Parkay (doubles to \$1.50 each)

**Checkout:**

- Regular price: \$13.24
- Sale price: \$11.24.
- You pay: \$6.94.
- You receive: Coupon for \$4 off your next transaction. Check the weekly flyer against other coupons you have to get the most out of that free \$4.

Four times a year, CVS will also issue you an ECB equal to 2 percent of whatever you spent the previous three months. And the register randomly grants oth-

er bonuses, like \$3 off a \$15 purchase.

Keep in mind that pharmacy stores don't have a lot of stock on hand, and really good deals can

disappear in hours. If your store is out of what you want by the time you get there, ask when they'll be restocking. You might still be able to do the deal you want later in the week.

At <http://www.iheartcv.com>, a blogger and her boyfriend routinely post pictures of their latest shopping trip and explain their strategy for growing their ECBs so they don't have to use cash. They also have posted the Black Friday flier, so you can get started now planning your weekend shopping strategy.

To see how I got \$55 worth of Duracell batteries and Glade products this week for \$8.70 - and ended up with \$15 ECBs to spend next week - check out my spreadsheet on [ohio.com](http://ohio.com).

We will explore reward programs at other area drugstores in coming weeks.

Send questions or comments on this story to [madclipper@thebeaconjournal.com](mailto:madclipper@thebeaconjournal.com). The Mad Clipper will respond to some in a weekly Q&A column at <http://www.ohio.com/madclipper>, but personal replies should not be expected.