

Garage Sale Gal

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC



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I'm the Garage Sale Gal", I thought as I drove to the sale. Golly gee, I have plenty of experience garage saling and I can wrangle a deal just as well as the next guy or gal, I reassured myself trying to build confidence as my sweaty palms grasped the steering wheel. I wasn't headed to just any sale. I was on my way to the Scottsdale home of the king and queen of cheapness---Steve and Annette Economides (pronounced econo-mee-dis). Yep, the "cheapest" people in America were selling off some of their belongings. I was excited to see their sale but a bit nervous, too—even intimidated. I was sure it would be picture perfect—set up nicely and well organized—and would likely put my sales to shame. Sure enough when I arrived, I thought I'd crashed a crowded, backyard picnic. "We make it entertaining for us and the customer," Annette tells me.

"America's Cheapest Family" (as they've been called) is in the business of living frugally and passing along their advice to readers of their book, on-line newsletter and column in the *Republic*. So, you can bet their garage sales are a tightly run ship. "We plan the date for the sale months ahead so we can keep the weekend clear. The kids have to be involved and clear out their own stuff. And everybody works the sale," says Steve.

The Economides' garage sales are big shin digs--- merchandise displayed on cafeteria-sized tables, clothes hung on racks and tents shelter shoppers from the scorching sun. They even have a concessions stand where shoppers can buy breakfast (muffins and coffee) or lunch (hotdogs and soft drinks). "We make it fun. In the past if someone spent \$20 we'd ring a bell and give the buyer something free from the concessions stand. Or we'd highlight an item of the hour. We always have a great time but the best part is that clean garage," says Steve.

Economides Share Tips

The Economides are experts at knowing how to make money by *saving* money. They paid off their first home in just nine years on an income of \$35,000! So, here are some of their garage sale tips.

1/Sell other people's stuff- The Economides often come across "freebies" while helping friends move. So, when offered something free the Economides never turn it down. You can always sell it at a garage sale.

2/A store for a day- Operate your sale like it's a retail store. "We display things by categories—electronics, toys, clothes. And the more tables (you have) the better. You gotta get your stuff off the ground. The more organized you are the more you're going to sell," says Steve.

3/Be watchful- Have one person keeping tabs on the cash. And make sure the doors to your home are locked. "At one of our sales someone walked in and took our baby backpack. We left the door unlocked. So, you do have to be very, very careful. Don't let people use the restroom, don't take checks," says Annette.

4/Gifts from garage sales- With the economy the way it is buying gifts at garage sales is a smart move. "We have a used table in the garage and my mom loves it. She's getting it for Christmas and she doesn't mind that it's used," says Annette. (I didn't want to spoil a surprise, so I doubled checked and yes, Annette's Mom knows the table will be under the tree (or close to it) come Christmas morning!)



Annette and Steve Economides recently held a garage sale at their home in Scottsdale. The financial experts say garage sales are great way for all of us to make extra money. "I think they're hugely important because very often people have stuff around the house they can make money with," says Annette.

Lynda Hammond is a former television anchor who left the anchor desk for the love of garage sales. Contact her at Lynda@GarageSaleGal.com. Lynda also does garage sale segments on 3-TV's Good Morning Arizona. List your next garage sale on www.GarageSaleGal.com the internet's most fabulous site for fanatical garage salers.