

# Next on cable's oddball agenda: Coupon cutters

By David Bauder, Associated Press

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NEW YORK — The supermarket is the latest stop in cable television's search for oddities. J'aime Kirlew takes five hours to prepare for a trip to the grocery store, carrying with her a box of coupons and a list that shows every item the store sells and where it is located. She puts on her "game face," applying makeup before heading to the checkout stand, and dances a jig when a nearly \$2,000 shopping bill is reduced to \$103.72.

"My image is very important to me," says the paralegal from Bethesda, Md., on the hotly anticipated series [Extreme Couponing](#), debuting on TLC at 9 p.m. on Wednesday. The show follows shoppers whose intense devotion to finding bargains can whittle a \$555.44 grocery store bill down to \$5.97.

*Extreme Couponing* adds to cable networks' long list of programs about odd behaviors (*Hoarders*), unusual professions (*Ice Road Truckers*) and human tragedies (*Intervention*). TLC's [My Strange Addiction](#) profiled a compulsive scab-picker, a woman who owned 20 cats despite being allergic to them and a woman convinced that her more than 200 pairs of shoes each have feelings.

Get it right, as History has done with *Pawn Stars*, and you've struck gold with a hit that can help define a network.

*Extreme Couponing* competes for best new show title with Discovery's *Hogs Gone Wild*, about people whose jobs are to chase wild pigs.

TLC, which is owned by Discovery Communications, is excited about the show's potential. The network previewed an episode of *Extreme Couponing* during the holidays last December, giving it little promotion. Executives hoped to get about 1 million viewers, and instead it got more than twice that, said Amy Winter, the station's top executive.

"It just made this absolute connection to our audience, who wish they could save money like these people," Winter said.

Kirlew dove into coupon-cutting when her husband lost his job more than a year ago. Her local newspaper delivers bundles of leftover advertising inserts onto her sidewalk, which she uses in addition to a laptop computer to figure out sales.

Need a paper towel? A shower stall in her home is stuffed with 450 rolls of toilet paper and 250 rolls of paper towels. Her compulsiveness is also obvious in the supermarket aisles, when cameras catch her buying 62 bottles of mustard, even as her husband gently reminds her, "I don't eat mustard." She leaves one plastic bottle on the shelf for other shoppers.

Another shopper profiled in TLC's opening episode uses the house her family of nine owns as a storage area. She had to install storage shelves in her bedroom and stuffs toilet paper under her 2-year-old's bed.

"We have to keep everything everywhere," said the shopper, Tiffany Ivanovsky of Spring, Texas. "I feel like the walls are just closing in on me."

Ivanovsky estimated she's saved nearly \$40,000 in two years of clipping coupons.

Fellow shoppers stand around and applaud when Kirlew and Ivanovsky go through the checkout line. The clerks, who have to punch in every coupon to their cash registers, look less happy.

“You sort of have this feeling like they’re getting away with something, but they’re not doing something wrong,” Winter said. “They’ve figured out the system.”

On a shopping trip shown during the first episode, the Ivanovskys figured out that between a store coupon and mail-in rebate, they were actually OWED \$1 for every box of cereal they took home. So they added to the stockpile of 100 cereal boxes already stored in their home.