

What You Should Know About Home Equity

(ARA) – Most Americans dream of owning their homes free and clear someday, part of their retirement nest egg. Yet, for many, this dream gets farther and farther from reality as they break into their home equity piggy banks.

"I am somewhat surprised at the number of our loan applicants, even many of our excellent credit quality customers, who have taken equity out of their homes over the last few years via cash-out refinances or home equity loans," says Gary Miller, a 25-year veteran of the credit industry and CEO and co-founder of FirstAgain LLC, a financial services company based in San Diego, Calif. "Now, with larger mortgages and often less equity, particularly with the recent home price depreciation hitting many areas of the country, these people face a longer and more difficult path to debt-free home ownership."

If you have excellent credit, you may qualify for an attractively priced unsecured loan that doesn't require pledging the equity in your home. This type of loan, such as FirstAgain's AnythingLoan, offers highly competitive, fixed interest rates and an ease of use not available with mortgage products. Entirely online and paperless, you can apply in the morning and have \$10,000 to \$100,000 in your account by the afternoon. It takes just minutes versus the days required for a mortgage loan.



Tips To Make Your Home More Energy Efficient

(ARA) - Homeowners everywhere are giving inefficient windows and doors the cold shoulder this year.

To maximize a home's energy efficiency, consider the following tips:

- * Make sure the door does closes properly so there is no draft or a homeowner's utility bills can pay the price.
- * Choosing windows with insulated Low-E glass is an important step in making a room more energy efficient because the special coating helps reflect some of the interior heat back into the home.



In warm weather, Low-E glass reflects the sun's energy and prevents it from entering the home.



In cold weather, Low-E glass reduces the amount of heat loss by reflecting it back inside.

For homeowners who prefer wood windows, manufacturers like JELD-WEN have introduced "pocket" replacement windows that come with Low-E glass and are designed for installation into existing window frames, which makes the process simpler, quicker and less damaging to a home's structure.