

Smart Cookies take message to Oprah

NO FOOLISH SPENDING: They help each other save money, invest

BY SALIM JIWA
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Five young Vancouver women say they've figured out how to stretch the penny and told their story to Oprah Winfrey on television yesterday.

They call themselves Smart Cookies and they say they will not bow to societal pressure to bury themselves in personal debt by spending their money foolishly.

The five teamed up last March and now hold weekly meetings to figure out how to save money, how to trade things they no longer need and how to invest small amounts of funds.

"We are all in our mid-20s and -30s and there is a lot of pressure to wear the right things and drive the right cars and so we decided we were going to get together and see how to save money and not to be pressured into spending," Katie Dunsworth said yesterday as she gathered with thrilled friends and family members of all five women at the Smiley O'Neal's pub in downtown Vancouver to watch the broadcast of the *Oprah* show.

Dunsworth and her four money-saving friends were flown to Chicago last week for a day at Oprah's expense for the taping of the show.

Dunsworth said the friends even invest small amounts of money they contribute each week in trust funds and now their total savings amount to about \$1,700.

Participating with her are close friends Sandra Hanna, Andrea Baxter,

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— *Katie Dunsworth,*
founding member of Smart Cookies

ter, Robyn Gunn and Angela Self.

"The investment is just a small part of it. We find ways to save such as how to get a good cellphone plan, we tell each other about sales and we exchange ideas," said Dunsworth, who sold her car and now takes the bus to her job as a public-relations officer with a local company.

"We also look for ways to make money," said Gunn, a social worker. "We share clothes, tell each oth-



From left, Katie Dunsworth, Angela Self, Robyn Gunn, Sandra Hanna and Andrea Baxter, all part of the Smart Cookies, watch themselves on the Oprah show at Smiley O'Neals yesterday. SAM LEUNG — THE PROVINCE

er about sales, consign our clothes and put that money back into buying new clothes."

"We started last March and so far so good. We've saved a lot of money and we are making more money at our jobs," she said.

The ultimate thrill came when they were invited to appear on an *Oprah* show dealing with debt and personal finances.

"It was awesome to be on her show, she was very down-to-earth. She is amazing, so

inspirational," said Gunn.

The reason for getting family and friends together to watch the show at a pub?

"Hopefully someone will buy the drinks," grinned Dunsworth.

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