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STRICTLY BUSINESS

Used car
can be a
bargain

CHARLES ROSS

Your
Personal
Finance

It was pretty hard to find a good used car a few years ago. Now the supply of nearly new autos is up because auto makers have been buying back their cars from rental companies after only three or four month's use. The makers then auction off the buy-backs to dealers at wholesale prices. Dealers are then selling them to the public at about 30 percent off the new car price but with warranty coverage and financing terms similar to those of a new car deal.

Car dealers call them "nearly new," "previously titled" or "pre-owned cars." The key to getting a good deal is to know which category to buy and which "nearly new" cars to steer clear of. Company cars and program cars are your best bet.

Company and program cars

You can often get a good deal in the company car category, one that's been driven by an auto executive. These vehicles usually have a lot of options and have been driven no more than 3,000 to 9,000 miles. They are then auctioned to dealers at 30 to 35 percent less than sticker price. The good news is that the warranty goes with the car.

Some car makers lease cars to their employees. These autos generally have more mileage on them than executive cars but can still be good buys. Program cars are the ones manufacturers buy back from rental or leasing companies. They have an average of 10,000 miles.

Car makers give these cars a thorough once-over before auctioning them to dealers, but it's best to buy the more recent models to minimize your risk.

The big risks

Cars that come under the designation "Special" can be good — special or disasters. These are cars that have come back to the auto maker and are put up for sale again. They may have been damaged in transit or by weather, or they might have some real problems. Lemons, as they are called, are sometimes put back up for sale but in the states where this is allowed they must be labeled cars with a problem. Some repossessed cars set for resale might be in good shape. Some cars that are labeled Customer Dissatisfaction cars must be sold with new-car war-

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Avis severs ties with franchise

By Martha Waggoner
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH — Avis Rent-A-Car's new owner has ordered the company to sever all ties with a franchise accused of racial bias.

Earlier this month, three black women sued Avis and New Hanover Rent-A-Car, claiming they were denied rentals because of their race.

Two of those joining the lawsuit are South Carolina women: Vietta Ratliff of Cheraw and Lerline Wilson of Salters.

Parent company HFS told Avis on Tuesday to take legal action to terminate the New Hanover franchise, which is owned by John Dalton and has outlets in North and South Carolina.

HFS Chairman Henry R. Silverman said the class-action lawsuit has "enough smoke" to

3 African American women
sue over rental discrimination

hurt Avis, though he said he did not yet know if the case has merit. HFS, which acquired Avis on Oct. 17, hired a law firm to determine if Avis franchises are complying with civil rights laws.

"If there is a problem, we cer-

tainly will be in a position of fixing it," Silverman said.

Dalton has denied racial bias. He said the move to terminate his franchise was unfair since the claims have not been proven.

Former Avis workers, howev-

er, have said Dalton trained his staff to avoid renting cars to blacks. Plaintiff lawyers on Tuesday released affidavits in which former workers said top executives were present when discrimination was discussed.

Former employee Carolyn Williams said Avis had received complaints about Dalton's franchises for at least a decade. She worked for the company from

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Money
ManagementCharity
and tax
breaksBy Amanda S. Danchi
SPECIAL TO THE POST

December is the month when people are most likely to open their hearts and their checkbooks. Whether you're touched by the season or motivated by a tax deduction, the North Carolina Association of CPAs suggests that you familiarize yourself with the rules covering charitable deductions — and you'd better hurry.

In order to claim a deduction on your 1996 tax return, you must mail your check or deliver donated property by the last day of the year. In order to claim a charitable contribution, you must itemize your deductions on Schedule A of your federal tax return. And your gift must be made to a qualified organization, such as a nonprofit religious, educational, scientific, or charitable organization that meets IRS standards. The amount of your deduction may depend on both the type of charity and nature of property contributed. However, donations to needy individuals and families are not deductible.

Most donations are in cash

In most cases, cash donations are fully deductible. However, if you get something in return, you may not be able to write off the full amount of your contribution.

Say, for example, that your \$150 ticket to a fund raising charity ball includes dinner. If the value of the dinner is \$50, your deduction is limited to \$100, the difference between the price of your ticket and the value of what you received in exchange. For gifts of more than \$75, the law requires charities to advise contribu-

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PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

T. Anthony Lindsey, a broker at Skynet Realty leads a seminar Tuesday at Outreach Revival Church. The seminar introduced prospective home owners to professionals who shared tips on how to become owners.

HOME SHOPPING NETWORK
Seminar stresses ownershipBy Herbert L. White
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Owning a home can be as easy as going to church.

Prospective homeowners showed up Tuesday at a seminar at Outreach Revival Church on the basics of financing. Westside residents who usually go to church for spiritual nurtur-

"A lot of people look to their pastor for guidance and advice not only in spiritual matters, but other matters,

too," he said.

The seminar, which received support and assistance from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Urban League and the Fannie Mae Partnership, is an attempt to help people get past the initial fear of buying a home.

"If we help one family get into a home, we've been successful," Lindsey said. "All we're trying to do is stimulate interest in home ownership. There are people in position to move into homes, but they haven't been exposed to programs that can help them."

Linking with churches has proved successful with similar programs around the

country, something Skynet is trying to duplicate in Charlotte. The church is often the bedrock institutions in black neighborhoods, which makes it a logical location for the seminar.

"We've taken a concept we've seen employed and trying to make it a little larger scale," Lindsey said.

The seminar's focus is primarily home ownership in west Charlotte, which is in the midst of several efforts to revitalize the area. Real estate professionals from lenders to home inspectors provided information and answered questions about the process of ownership. Along with the better-known

public and quasi-public ventures to bring affordable housing to the westside is the knowledge that single-family units help build successful neighborhoods.

"The westside is an area that traditionally is viewed as slighted in terms of economic development," Lindsey said. "You can't continue to be neglected forever."

Of course, helping people move into homes can improve the bottom line. Although participants weren't obligated to work with Skynet, there's the possibility they could at some point.

"Not only do we see it as good for the community, but it makes good business sense," Lindsey said.

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