Like most young girls around 10 years old, I remember spending hours combing my doll's hair, giving haircuts, and making her outfits. After a while, I became the self-appointed hair stylist for all my neighborhood friends. I was the best around (at least in my own mind).

When I went off to college, one of the ways I made a little extra money was by doing hair --applying relaxers, trimming, and styling. Although I never pursued a license in cosmetology, I still enjoy giving my friends mini makeovers (hair, makeup, clothes) when they ask for my help-and even sometimes when they don't. I realize that God created me with certain gifts, interests and abilities in the makeover arena, and I have used these gifts to earn money while helping people.

What's your gift from God? What are you really good at? Are there particular skills or abilities which you possess that friends and family are always talking about? Well, this is a perfect time to put it to work for you. If you are between jobs or need extra money to supplement your full-time position, then listen up. There are many hobbies and skills that can earn you big bucks-here are a few ideas.

Enjoy Gardening or Yard Work?
Make $$ by offering your mowing and other green-thumb services to busy neighbors. If you do a good job, word will travel fast, and you could have more customers than you can handle! Also, if you are an avid gardener, consider selling some of your excess plants when they become too large for the space. A friend of ours just made over $100 by trimming, then (using recycled plastic pots) repotting some of his overgrown perennials (plants that come back year after year and multiply). Finally, if you like strategically arranging flowers and plants, offer a landscape design service.

Enjoy Photography and Picture-Taking?
Make $$ by offering lower cost services for graduations, family reunions, or family portraits. I know of someone who combined her love of photography and poetry to create a unique service that provides custom photo framing accompanied by original poetry fit for the occasion.

Enjoy Using Your Mad Baking (or Cooking) Skills?
Make $$ by offering your famous pound cakes, cobblers, or pies during the holiday seasons. In addition, weddings and baby showers are always in need of baked goods. Our wedding cake was outstanding, and we saved a lot of money by passing up the fancy bakery and going with the lady who made cakes from her home. It even tasted good when we pulled it out of the freezer one year later to celebrate our anniversary.

Enjoy Piano Playing?
Make $$ by playing at a local church (or two). Regardless of the instrument you play, you could always teach lessons to beginners. Lastly, you may be inspired to play your heart out as a summer street-corner musician in the downtown area. Use your instrument case as the money collector-you may want to throw in a few of your own dollar bills to give passersby the idea to do the same.
Are you feeling the stress of money at the end of the month? Spend a bit of time taking inventory of YOU – your skills, abilities, and gifts. Determine which are most marketable, and

then get to work. What may start out as a way to help make ends meet may turn into a new and improved opportunity for you to earn a living pursuing your true passions. Enjoy!

Marcia Humphrey is an interior decorator and home stager who specializes in achieving high style at a low cost. A native of Michigan, she and her husband, Lonnie, have three children.