

## CUB helps consumers cut phone charges

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ALTON - One by one, they stepped to the front of the line, phone bills in hand. And most of them went away happy.

"A lot of people left here with smiles on their faces," Jim Chilsen said about the group of concerned consumers who participated last week in a free clinic designed to help them cut telephone costs.

Many consumers overspend on plans that include more minutes or special features than they need, said Chilsen, the spokesman for the Citizens Utility Board, which co-sponsored the event held Tuesday at Alton Square.

"Half of the battle is just getting people to take a look at their phone bills," he said. "They're floating in a sea of confusing calling plans, and we try to be an island."

The clinic was designed to help residents cut their calling costs and beef up their consumer savvy. It was co-sponsored by state Rep. Dan Beiser, D-Alton.

Participants brought their landline and wireless phone bills before CUB's professional counselors, who then analyzed their statements and offered advice in one-on-one sessions.

A mix of 57 individuals and couples kept counselors busy, and most participants discovered specific changes to make in order to save money.

"We're the good guys here," CUB Outreach Director Sarah Moskowitz said. "Of the 10 people I've talked to this morning, only one couldn't save any money."

Those who missed the event may obtain free advice about switching or amending their calling plans at (866) 688-4282. CUB's Web site at <http://www.citizensutilityboard.org/> features an event calendar and information about how to get involved.