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Communiversity Offers DIY Home-Automation Class

With the cost of living increasing and paychecks remaining stagnant, homeowners look for ways to save on utilities. One option is turning your house into a "smart home" using Wi-Fi devices such as thermostats, lighting and door locks.

Date: 6/13/2017 3:00:00 PM
By: Stephanie Smith

"Home automation is a way to keep track of what's going on in your home, basement, living room, at the front door when you're not there," said Peter Standhart, owner of Fine Line Construction in Columbia-Tusculum and instructor of the new DIY Home Automation class at University of Cincinnati's Communiversity.

The two-hour class on June 19 at UC's Victory Parkway campus will provide students with information on how to create an affordable, energy-efficient and cost-cutting network of smart devices.

"I'm inspired to teach this class because I'm a Dave Ramsey guy, debt free and all about freedom — financial, spiritual, and emotional," Standhart said. "It bothers me that people are being duped out of their money for things that cost almost nothing or they can do themselves. I need people to wake up financially and this class may help."

Standhart will introduce students to digital door locks, integrated electrical and lighting, and moisture and leak detectors. For those with high heating and cooling bills, Standhart also will discuss the benefits of controlling gas and electric with a smart thermostat.

By using an app on a tablet, smartphone or computer, users can remotely control a smart thermostat to adjust their heating or air conditioning wherever they are, see how much is spent on heating or cooling costs, and make further adjustments to save money. Other smart thermostats such as the Nest Learning Thermostat learn from the homeowner's behavior and adjust accordingly.

Homeowners who used a smart thermostat saved an average of 10 to 12 percent on heating and 15 percent on cooling, or about $131 to $145 in savings per year, according to a 2015 white paper published by Nest Labs.

There is a perception that turning a "dumb home" into a "smart home" is costly. According to Standhart, most home-automation devices are in the $150 range. The most Standhart spent on his setup was around $450 to $600.

"Here's the thing that you're being duped on. I pay $600 and I'm done. You pay $40, $50, $60 a month forever. Poor people say, 'What's the payment?' Wealthy people say, 'How much?' Home automation can plug the slow leaks in your financial life," he said.

DIY Home Automation is 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on June 19 for $49. To register call 513-556-6932 or go online at uc.edu/ce/comm.

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