

7 HOT STOCK PICKERS reveal what they're buying now | 32

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PERSONAL FINANCE

YOUR GUIDE
TO MAKING
MONEY WORK

**YOU CAN
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**TOP ONLINE
BROKERS**

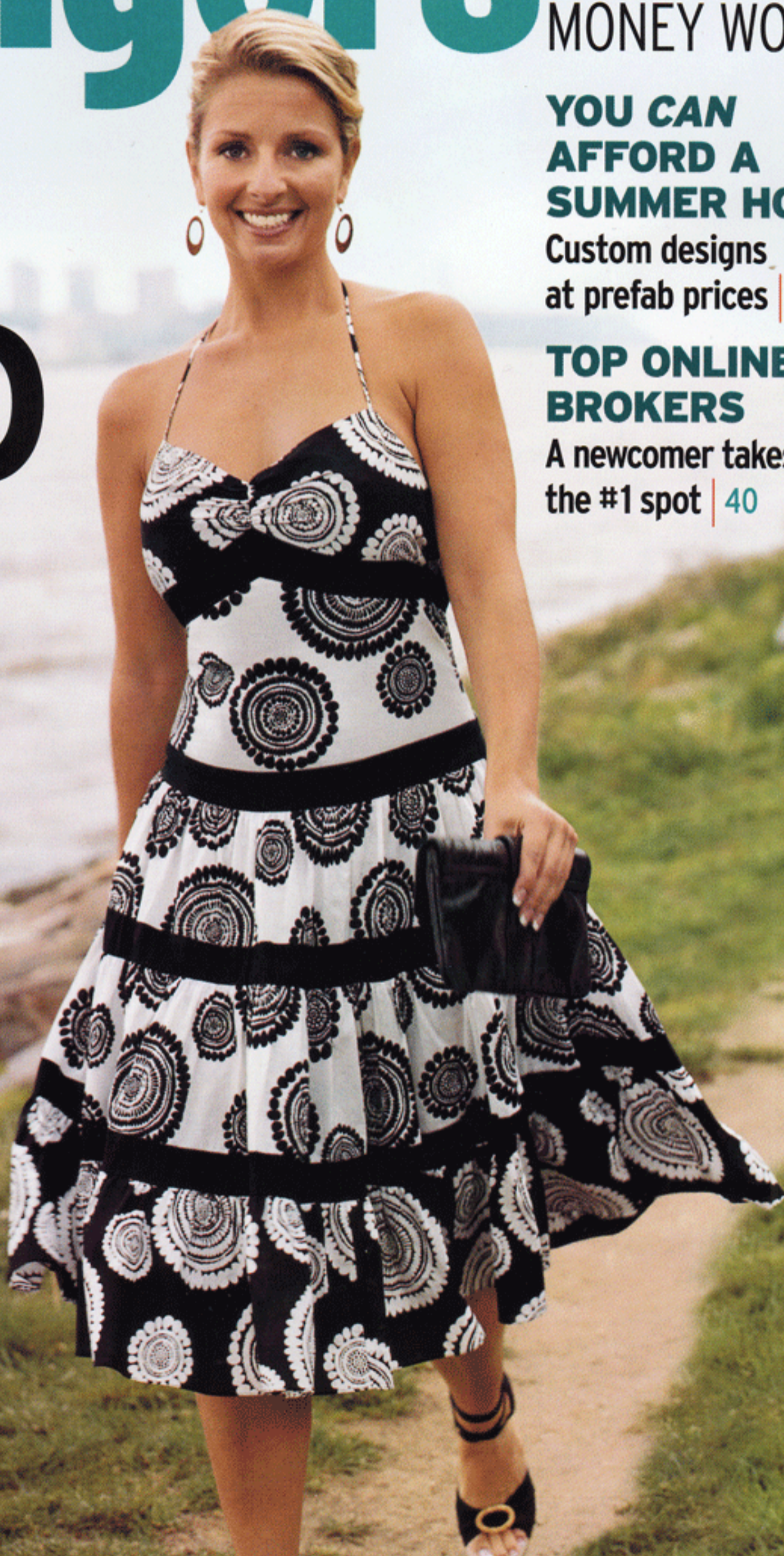
A newcomer takes
the #1 spot | 40

What \$1,000 can do

47 surprising ways a little
investment can pay off big...

- ▶ Help end **POVERTY**
- ▶ Finance an **ADVENTURE**
- ▶ Buy a brilliant **FUND**
- ▶ Jump-start a **CAREER**

...and other grand
inspirations! | 64



JULY 2006 | \$3.50



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DAYNA LANTRIP
had a grand idea:
She invested in a
low-minimum fund
that earned a 40%
return in one year.

Defend against **MOTHER NATURE**

STORM SEASON is coming, and with it the fear that a tree will crash through your roof or a pond will rise in your basement. You can't avoid a natural disaster, but you can prepare for it several ways and buy some peace of mind.

Buy flood insurance. It's not just for oceanfront and riverside property. If a torrential rainstorm soaks your cellar, your homeowners policy will not cover the damage. The National Flood Insurance Program Web site (www.floodsmart.gov) lets you enter your address to see if your home's location qualifies as a "preferred risk." If it does, for \$352 a year you can cover the building for \$250,000 and its contents for \$100,000.

If your home is deemed a moderately risky property (riskier than "preferred"), you can still cover the struc-



KATE POWERS/GETTY IMAGES

ture for \$100,000 and its contents for \$30,000 at a cost of \$669 a year.

Plug home-insurance gaps. Ask your insurance agent if there's something your poli-

cy *doesn't* cover. For example, most homeowners policies do not cover damage caused by a sewage backup. Some insurers may let you buy a sewage-backup rider for \$10,000 of coverage for about \$50 per year, according to the Insurance Information Institute.

Trim threatening trees. It can cost \$2,000 to remove timber that's menacing your roof or your neighbor's—assuming, of course, that your town or neighborhood association allows you to cut down trees. But just having branches trimmed so that they're 6 or 8 feet from the house costs only \$300 to \$500 and should give you two years of protection.

Timing is important. Arborists are busy after storms, so you may get faster service and a better deal when the weather is quiet.

—JEFFREY R. KOSNETT

Shake off the blahs. Find a new **CAREER**

TODD SMILER was unemployed for nine months in 2003 after he abandoned day trading when the market went sour. He wasn't sure how his talents would transfer to a new job, so he sought advice from **ReadyMinds** (www.readyminds.com), a career-counseling service. Smiler, 29, liked the idea of using an objective counselor and maintaining a little anonymity—all contact was

via the Web and by phone—so he signed up for a \$450 package.

After completing an online assessment of his skills, values and interests, Smiler was matched to a nationally certified counselor. In their two hours of phone time, Smiler's counselor worked with him on revising his résumé to best showcase his abilities. Also included: help in mapping a strategy for getting a new job.

At first, says Smiler, he was "kind of lost." But, he says, the counselor "allowed me to focus on the skills that would ultimately help me market myself." He's now a mortgage lender with Homebridge Mortgage Bankers.

A ReadyMinds makeover can take from two to six weeks, depending on your schedule and needs. When it's finished, you'll have a personal Web page (where

all documents and links to resources are stored) and access to help from a counselor (via e-mail) for a year. To find a career counselor you can meet with face to face, check the National Career Development Association's listings (www.ncda.org).

That leaves about \$500 to complete your career makeover with a new suit or a briefcase. We suggest **Tyler Brief** (\$498) from Coach.

—JESSICA ANDERSON