

Previous Financial Topics of the Month

June 2016

[How to Retire Happy](#)

Some of us embrace it, others dread its approach, but few escape retirement. No matter how you feel about it, you need to take some steps to make sure you have the mental and monetary resources to make this next phase of life a happy one. This website lists six key questions you need to ask yourself about retirement, as well as some practical tips for improving your financial security.

May 2016

[Retirement Savings: It's Time to Sweat the Small Stuff](#)

Young or old, the lack of retirement savings is epidemic in America. Just two-thirds of workers are currently saving for retirement, and a quarter of them have less than \$1,000.

It's time to sweat the small stuff, especially because every penny counts. Join us in promoting the importance of retirement savings. This resource packet is yours to use as you see fit as part of your existing marketing and communications strategies.

April 2016

[Saving for a Goal](#)

Having a tough time putting money aside for a new TV or that special trip? This calculator can help you determine how much to set aside on an ongoing basis in order to meet your goal.

March 2016

[A New Breed of Con Artists](#)

According to a survey by True Link Financial, older Americans are criminally defrauded of \$12.76 billion annually. This includes identity theft and all those crazy scams you hear about but smugly think will never work on you. Do you consider yourself friendly? Thrifty? Financially sophisticated? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then according to that same survey you are more likely to be defrauded because you may give strangers the benefit of the doubt, are more enticed by bargains and are comfortable moving larger amounts of money around.

February 2016

[A New Tool to Help You Plan for Retirement](#)

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau recently released **Planning for Retirement**, an interactive tool to help consumers make one of the most important financial decisions: when to start collecting their Social Security retirement benefits.

January 2016

[A Consumer's Guide to Choosing a PrePaid Card](#)

A prepaid card that charges low fees, comes with desirable features and offers strong consumer protections can be a good choice for many consumers. This Consumer Action publication will help you learn how to compare your options and choose the best prepaid card for your needs.

December 2015**[Year-End Financial Checklist](#)**

It will begin soon enough – all those "beat the rush!" ads for holiday shopping, activities and events. Right now, you have a great opportunity to beat the rush to organize your year-end finances and make some smart moves for the New Year. Consider the following tasks at this website for your year-end financial to-do list.

November 2015**[Budgeting: Holiday Budgeting Center](#)**

It's the time of year for giving gifts, entertaining, hosting holiday parties – and for many, overspending and financial stress. Setting a realistic holiday budget and making sure to stick to it are the first steps to a more affordable and less stressful season. Use the tips and tools on this website to enjoy the season without letting holiday spending get the better of you.

From this point, MSU Extension Family Economics was doing weekly resources:

October 15, 2015**[Making Sound End-of Life Decisions](#)**

Most of us have probably said to a relative or friend, "If I'm in a coma and living on tubes, just pull the plug." But decision-making toward the end of life isn't that simple. Maybe another few days might bring you around — how long should your family wait?

October 6, 2015**[Educating Your Kids About Money](#)**

It's never too early to start teaching your kids the basics of money management. Exposure to financial education starting at a young age can lay the foundation for a more successful financial future. Consider these fun, age-appropriate activities to help your kids become skilled in money management.

September 25, 2015**[Protecting the Legacy of Social Security for Future Generations](#)**

Social Security reached a major milestone on August 14 — its 80th birthday. This moment gave all of us the opportunity to celebrate and reflect on the great history and importance of the program to workers and their families. President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act into law on August 14, 1935, creating a safety net for our most vulnerable citizens, and protecting them from what he eloquently called the "hazards and vicissitudes of life." Eighty years later, Social Security remains an essential part of the fabric of American life.

September 15, 2015**[Over 50? Supersize Your Retirement Savings](#)**

If you're over age 50 and not sure whether you're going to be able to retire, it's time to focus, get advice and build a realistic plan. You're not alone. The U.S. Government Accountability Office recently reported that most households approaching retirement have low savings, adding that nearly half of households led by individuals or couples aged 55 and older having no retirement savings accounts at all. The first

step is to define where you really stand financially. Consider speaking with a qualified financial and tax advisor to define your present financial circumstances.

September 2, 2015

[Social Security Matters](#)

Check out the newly redesigned Social page. It is now more user-friendly, to adapt to the needs of customers navigating through the pages.

August 21, 2015

[Building a Back to School Budget](#)

Back-to-school spending isn't just about clothes and markers anymore. In 2014, Forbes estimated that nearly half of respondents reported they would spend \$500 or more on back-to-school expenses, including not only clothes and desk supplies, but electronics as well. This means that back-to-school budgeting, even for families with kids in public school, now requires a more holistic, year-round approach to all back-to-school expenses.

August 10, 2015

[Seven Money Habits to Curb Now](#)

Whether it is biting our fingernails, losing track of house keys or procrastinating; we all have some bad financial habits that we'd like to break. Often, we simply "accept" our bad habits without thinking about how they may actually be standing in the way of us living our lives as we want to. When it comes to making the most of your money, consider curbing some of these actions that may be taking a toll on your wallet.

July 31, 2015

[Good News for Your Credit Score in 2015](#)

Your credit report and credit score remain important as you approach pre-retirement or retirement. Whether you cosign for a child's or grandchild's loan, tap your home equity to buy a vacation home, or simply finance the purchase of a new car, you'll need to have good credit.

July 24, 2015

[Securing Social Security's Future: 3 Reasons Why the Program Will Be There For You?](#)

With all the doom and gloom that swirls around the future of Social Security, it's no wonder so many people have questions about what's in store. Only 10 percent of Americans ages 25 to 69 are "very confident" they'll get as much as the program delivers today, and 18 percent believe they'll get nothing, the Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI) 2015 Retirement Confidence Survey found.

July 16, 2015

[Your Mid-Year Financial CheckUp](#)

Setting a few hours aside for a midyear financial checkup in June or July can help you review how you're doing with savings, investing, spending and debt. It can give you the opportunity to spot irregularities and adjust your budget well in advance of year-end.

July 9, 2015

[Gen X Anxiety Grows as Retirement Nears](#)

As far as finances go, Rose Cronin is in better shape than most Americans her age. The 40-year-old has been socking money away into a retirement plan since she got her first job out of college. Still, she's worried about their retirement. "I know we're going to have to set aside more or we won't have enough," she said. "It makes me nervous."

July 2, 2015

[Financial Self-Defense Kit](#)

USA.gov, the federal government's official website, has created a FREE *Financial Self Defense Kit*. It contains a dozen of publications that explain how to make solid investment, shopping and credit decisions. And it is also filled with advice on protecting your consumer rights and recognizing and avoiding scams--especially those aimed at seniors.

June 25, 2015

[A New Way to Save for Children With Disabilities](#)

Parents and guardians of children with disabilities have a new, tax-advantaged savings option to help pay for expenses such as education, housing, transportation and health care not covered by insurance.

Under the Achieving a Better Life Experience Act (the ABLE Act), which President Obama signed into law in December 2014, certain accounts for individuals with special needs will grow tax-free if the money is used for qualified expenses. To be eligible for an account, the beneficiary can be any age, but the disabilities must have been documented before age 26.

June 16, 2015

[Financial Elder Abuse](#)

Anyone could potentially be the target of financial exploitation and should be cautious with their financial matters, especially older adults. Aging adults may be targeted for financial exploitation because of their physical dependence on others for meeting many personal needs, the recent loss of a spouse who handled finances, family or friends handling their finances, or isolation from society. Diminished cognitive capacity due to illness, stroke, or Alzheimer's may also increase the risk.

June 9, 2015

[Many Individuals and Financial Advisors Confused on the Once-Per-Year IRA Rollover Rule](#)

Many individual retirement arrangement (IRA) owners and financial advisors are still unfamiliar or perhaps unaware of the once-per-year IRA rollover rule that took effect Jan. 1, 2015.

A recent poll 30 percent of advisors of IRA programs were totally unaware of this new IRS rule. Many financial advisors are still asking questions about it.

May 22, 2015

[Military America Saves](#)

Join the Military Community of Savers! Military Saves is apart of the Department of Defense's Financial Readiness Campaign and has been a partner with DOD since 2003. Military Saves encourages all service members, their families, and civilian employees to "Take the Military Saves Pledge." Military Saves also works with the defense credit unions, military banks, and other non-profit organizations to promote savings and debt reduction.

May 11, 2015

[Caring for Mom and Dad A Documentary Hits Home](#)

Watching the new PBS documentary Caring for Mom and Dad was like looking in a mirror. The gut-wrenching heartaches, stress, fatigue, fears — but most of all, the love — these families experience reflect my own caregiving journey.

The film is narrated by actress Meryl Streep and highlights several adult children's experiences as they work and care for parents who are dealing with strokes, dementia and other health challenges as they age.

April 17, 2015

[Practical Money Skills for Life: Life Events](#)

Every phase of life has its unique challenges, and some of those are financial. Circumstances and needs change over time, each different and complicated in its own way. Whether you're trying to decide on the best housing option, or planning for your kids' college education or your parents' care in their later years, you'll be able to make better choices if you're well-informed. Let Practical Money Skills help you to build an understanding of the various challenges and opportunities you're likely to face in the years to come.

April 10, 2015

[Affording Fido: A Cost Checklist for a New Pet](#)

Premium food, state-of-the-art veterinary care and creature comforts most humans would envy are now a regular part of life for many American pets. That's why prospective pet owners should consider financial planning before bringing home a dog, cat or other breed of animal.

The wide range of products, services and advanced medical options for American pets have pushed U.S. pet industry expenditures to almost \$60 billion in 2014, nearly double the amount in 2004.

April 3, 2015

[Take This Job and Love It!](#)

Meet the hottest demographic in the labor market: men and women working not only past traditional retirement age but into their 70s, 80s and sometimes beyond. Over the coming decade, they'll be the fastest-growing segment of the workforce, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Among 65- to 74-year-olds, labor force participation is predicted to hit 32 percent by 2022, up from 20 percent in 2002. At age 75 and up, the rate will jump from 5 percent in 2002 to 11 percent in 2022. Meanwhile, participation rates among younger age groups will be flat or will even fall.

March 27, 2015

[Another Tax Scam: IRS Imposters](#)

Tax identity theft is the theme of the week, but it's not the only tax scam we're talking about. Complaints to the FTC about IRS imposter scams have shot up over the last year — by almost 50,000 complaints.

March 20, 2015

[Protect Your Retirement Pension](#)

Many retirees depend on a pension to cover day-to-day as well as occasional unexpected expenses, such as health emergencies or home repairs. We've heard that some retirees with pensions who are facing financial challenges have responded to ads for cash advances on their pensions. Although pension advances may seem like a "quick fix" to your financial problems, they can eat into your retirement income when you start paying back the advance plus interest and fees.

March 6, 2015

[Would Increasing the Minimum Wage Reduce Poverty](#)

The current federal minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour, which means a full-time minimum wage worker earns \$15,800 per year. At this level of income, a three-person household that includes at least one child (for example, a couple with one child or a single parent with two children) falls below the poverty threshold (approximately \$18,500).

February 27, 2015

[Making Sure Loved Ones Are Prepared for Their Retirement Years](#)

What if a sudden, debilitating illness, fraud or economic downturn affected your senior family member's retirement, estate or long-term care issues? Would you be prepared to take over? If the answer is no, you're not alone. According to [2013 research](#) from the Pew Research Center, four in 10 U.S. adults are caring for a loved one with significant health issues. Don't wait for a crisis to initiate this conversation. Starting early can help you plan and even safeguard your own career and retirement planning.

February 20, 2015

[Getting Ready to Invest](#)

Most people invest to achieve specific financial goals. Some of these goals are widely shared. For example, many people want to own their own home and send their children or grandchildren to college. And there's an almost universal desire to retire comfortably, with the reasonable expectation that you will have adequate income for as long as you need it.

February 6, 2015

[How Much Money Will You Need to Retire](#)

So, what's your number? In other words, how much do you need to retire comfortably? By now, you've likely heard the conventional wisdom: that you should aim to have a nest egg of \$1 million to \$1.5 million. Or that your savings should amount to 10 to 12 times your current income.

January 16, 2015

[Take Charge of Your Money at 50+](#)

Where do you stand, financially speaking, compared with your peers? Are you making more than your college classmates? How do your saving and spending patterns stack up against those of the rest of your generation?

December 19, 2014

[New Guide Helps Law Enforcement Detect Elder Abuse](#)

Elder abuse is one of society's most pervasive social problems, and also one of the most difficult for authorities to alleviate. But some help is on the way. The *American Bar Association's Commission on Law*

and Aging has just published “**Legal Issues Related to Elder Abuse: A Pocket Guide for Law Enforcement.**” Information about ordering copies of the pocket guide, at no cost,

December 4, 2014

[Investing Online](#)

Investment opportunities that claim to be low risk and high reward almost always are frauds. It's important to have updated security software and practice basic computer security on any computer you use to access financial accounts.

November 14, 2014

[When You Have the Urge to Splurge](#)

You recently turned 50 — or maybe even 60 or 70 years old — and now you want to buy something big. A vacation home. A cruise around the world. That luxury car you've always wanted. Others might try to talk you out of it, suggesting it's your age or ego speaking to you. Could they be right?

October 3, 2014

[Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Resources for Consumers](#)

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is a government agency whose function is to make rules more effective in consumer financial markets, to consistently and fairly enforce those rules, and to empower consumers to take more control over their economic lives. To those ends, the CFPB offers a number of free digital resources for consumers. The agency offers entries in an Ask CFPB interactive online tool, where consumers can get clear, unbiased answers to common financial questions. The CFPB also offers free financial education materials and publications in English and Spanish.

September 22, 2014

[When to Take Social Security: It Pays to Wait](#)

Did you know that delaying Social Security benefits is one of the best ways pre-retirees can increase their financial security in retirement? The National Academy of Social Insurance has developed a new toolkit to help you make informed decisions about taking your Social Security retirement benefits.

The new toolkit offers clear, concise information on the importance of Social Security and the impact that taking Social Security benefits before, at, or after your full retirement age will have on your monthly benefit for life.

September 8, 2014

[USDA Report-2013 Expenditures on Children & Families](#)

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released its annual report, Expenditures on Children and Families, also known as the Cost of Raising a Child.

The report shows that a middle-income family with a child born in 2013 can expect to spend about \$245,340 (\$304,480 adjusted for projected inflation*) for food, housing, childcare and education, and other child-rearing expenses up to age 18.

August 29, 2014

[When you Have the Urge to Splurge](#)

You recently turned 50 — or maybe even 60 or 70 years old — and now you want to buy something big. A vacation home. A cruise around the world. That luxury car you've always wanted. Others might try to talk you out of it, suggesting it's your age or ego speaking to you. Could they be right?

August 8, 2014

[Keep a Lid on Vacation Costs](#)

Summer vacation is coming to an end. But there may be upcoming vacations still in store. At this site, there are suggestions for creating and some cost saving ideas to help relieve expenses. First, be realistic about what you can afford. If your vacation will take more than a month or two to pay off, you may want to scale back on this year's trip.

July 22, 2014

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July 11, 2014

[Job Search Tips for New Grads](#)

To the roughly 1.6 million college graduates in the class of 2014: You have my heartiest congratulations and my sympathies. I graduated during the early 1990s recession when finding a decent job was very difficult, so I have an inkling of the challenges many of you now face.

Although the job-search technology available has changed considerably since then, as someone who is now on the other side of screening candidates, I can tell you many of the underlying principles for waging a successful search remain the same.

July 3, 2014

[What is the Consumer Action Handbook?](#)

The Consumer Action Handbook is a free survival guide for your money. It can help you make smart purchases on big stuff like cars, or a home. It explains what credit is, and how it works, and how you can protect it. It has great tips so you can be a savvy consumer and protect your hard-earned money.

June 13, 2014

[How to Leave an Inheritance to Your Kids](#)

About \$30 trillion. That's the amount of money boomer parents — i.e., you and me — are expected to leave to our millennial offspring over the next 30 to 40 years, according to consulting firm Accenture. That number will rise or fall depending on many factors, including the economy, the markets, how long we parents live and so on.

Whichever way the tide flows, it's likely to be a considerable chunk of change. And that means if you're among those leaving a tidy sum to those you love, you want to do it right.

June 2, 2014

[Financial Elder Abuse](#)

June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. According to Prevention of Elder Abuse, a program of Big Sky Senior Services, there were approximately 4,000 cases of suspected elder abuse and exploitation in Montana in 2013. Only 933 of these were actually reported. Though financial abuse differs from physical abuse, it can be just as dangerous.

May 23, 2014

[Retirement Planner: Plan for Your Retirement \(Social Security Administration\)](#)

A secure, comfortable retirement is every worker's dream. And now because we're living longer, we can expect to spend more time in retirement than our parents and grandparents did. Achieving the dream of a secure, comfortable retirement is much easier when you plan your finances. This Retirement Planner provides detailed information about your Social Security retirement benefits under current law. It also points out things you may want to consider as you prepare for the future.

May 16, 2014

[Securing Income for Life](#)

We all know — or think we know — that the older we get, the more our money should be kept safe. We gradually hold less in stocks and more in bonds.

But is your caution risking your future? Yes, says Michael Kitces, director of research for the Pinnacle Advisory Group in Columbia, Md. On average, we're living longer and not earning much on quality bonds and bank CDs, he says. If we huddle around investments that cannot grow, the risk rises that we'll run out of money.

May 9, 2014

[Be in Charge of Your Credit Cards](#)

Credit cards can offer numerous benefits to consumers, including a convenient way to pay for purchases, the ability to build a credit history, and the potential for rewards. But to make the most of your credit cards, it helps to be an informed consumer. First, remember that any purchase you make with your credit card is a loan that must be repaid. And as with any loan, it's important to select the right product for you and to use it wisely. Source: FDIC Consumer News, Winter 2013/2014

May 2, 2014

[You Call this Retirement? Boomers Still Have Work to Do](#)

For boomers at retirement, it's both the best and worst of times. The good news is that so many are still here: In 1900, the average life span was 47; a 65-year-old today can expect to live nearly two more decades. "It's the dream of history," says the psychologist and gerontologist Ken Dychtwald, whose research firm Age Wave dissects the massive "maturing market" of aging boomers. "For thousands of years we searched for fountains of youth." Now we've found it — or at least a minor tributary of it. We've also found the bad news, which starts with money. It's always money, as my mother would tell me.

April 25, 2014

[Americans Spend More Time Restaurant Hunting than IRA Planning](#)

A new survey shows that American adults still spend more time selecting a restaurant for a special occasion than they allocate to planning their IRA's important investments. TIAA-CREF's annual IRA survey, released this month, highlights that only 15% of the more than 1,000 adults surveyed have allotted two or more hours to planning an IRA investment. Twenty-five percent of the sample said they'd instead spend that amount of time selecting a restaurant, 21% allocate this to buying a flat screen TV and 16% report buying a tablet took up this time. The survey investigated many behaviors and attitudes regarding IRAs, and the results generally show that a lack of understanding of IRAs is still prevalent. Calls for this education can be seen in the annual report, which tracked responses in February. More than one-third of respondents do not understand the difference between an IRA and an employer-sponsored plan. For the Gen Y population, the lack of comprehension reached 45% of the sample, according to TIAA-CREF's March survey.

April 18, 2014

[Demystifying Credit Scores](#)

One of the few positive outcomes of the 2008 financial crisis was that it helped shine a light on the importance of understanding and staying on top of your credit profile. Along with that heightened visibility, however, has come a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding – particularly around the all-important credit score.

Five factors are used to determine your credit score: payment history (usually around 35 percent of your score), amount owed (30 percent), length of credit history (15 percent), newly opened credit accounts (10 percent), and types of credit used (10 percent).

April 4, 2014

[Know Your Financial Adviser](#)

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has published a guide titled "Know Your Financial Adviser". It includes important questions to ask when you are shopping for financial advice or services.

March 28, 2014

[New Guides for Financial Caregivers](#)

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has published four new guides for individuals who manage money or property for a loved one who is unable to pay bills or financial decisions.

March 14, 2011

[Social Security 101: What's In It for Me?](#)

The Social Security Administration has created a 17-minute video introducing Social Security to viewers. The video explains how Social Security works, what the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) is all about, and how to plan for a comfortable retirement by making easy steps now.

March 7, 2014

[Secure Income for Life](#)

We all know — or think we know — that the older we get, the more our money should be kept safe. We gradually hold less in stocks and more in bonds. What if we reversed the conventional rule and gradually held more money in stocks, rather than less, after we retired?

February 28, 2014

[Thinking About Donating, Make Sure Your Donations Count](#)

If you're thinking about giving to a charity, do your research to avoid fraudsters who try to take advantage of your generosity. Here are tips to help make sure that your charitable contributions actually go to the cause you support.

February 21, 2014

[Tax Time Savings Bonds](#)

Tax Time is a great time to kickstart or grow your savings for the future! U.S. Savings Bonds are one safe and easy way to do it. There are a lot of great reasons to buy U.S. Savings Bonds at tax time.

February 12, 2014

[What's the deal with health care credit cards? Four things you should know?](#)

Recently, many patients facing medical procedures have seen their health care providers suggest deferred interest rate credit cards as a payment option. Unfortunately, health care providers don't always explain how these deferred interest credit cards work. We want to make sure that you get the facts you need.

This type of credit card isn't new. You may have seen ads on television, online, or in retail shops for promotional rates like zero-percent interest for the first year. No matter where the credit cards come from—a medical office or a mall store—they have a few features in common.

February 5, 2014

[Five Tips for Discussing Money Matters with Family](#)

Are you worried about your parents' diminishing physical capabilities or your daughter's plans to pay for her child's college education? Is one of your relatives going through an especially difficult financial period?

As you get together with your adult children and aging parents to enjoy home-cooked meals or celebrate your family's holiday traditions, use the following five tips to help you discuss difficult financial issues.

1. Get the Timing Right
2. Engage in conversation, not criticism
3. Highlight the importance of financial documents
4. Focus on one or two key issues
5. Inquire sensitively about current and potential problems.

January 29, 2014

[10 Bad Spending Habits](#)

AARP has announced in its saving challenge "10 Bad Spending Habits" including:

- Out of Network ATM fees: Racking up fees by using ATMs that aren't on your bank's network.
- Bottled Water: Getting your recommended daily amount of water exclusively in bottled form can easily cost more than \$1,000 per year.

- Oil Changes: Regularly changing your oil in vehicles and staying on top of routine maintenance habits to have, but if you're still changing oil every 3,000 miles, you may be wasting money especially on newer vehicles.

January 21, 2014

[FDIC and Consumer Financial Protection Bureau \(CFPB\) Collaborate on Financial Education Resource for Older Adults](#)

In June 2013, the FDIC and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) launched a new financial resource tool, "Money Smart for Older Adults," to help prevent elder financial exploitation. This newest addition to the FDIC's Money Smart financial curriculum family is an instructor-led, stand-alone training module that provides information to raise awareness among older adults (age 62 and older) and their caregivers on how to prevent, identify and respond to elder financial exploitation. Sections of the module also focus on planning for a secure financial future and making informed financial decisions.

January 6, 2014

[The Secrets to Making Financial Resolutions You'll Actually Keep](#)

For 2014, a record number of consumers are considering making financial New Year's resolution, according to a study by Fidelity Investments one reason could be that 26% of survey participants say they are in a stronger financial situation than they were a year ago, compared to 19% last year.

If you also plan to make financial resolution, you may have learned from past New Years that its much easier to make a resolution than to achieve one The same study found that about three in ten people fall off the bandwagon.

December 30, 2013

[Understanding the "Kiddie Tax"](#)

For something whose nickname sounds so innocent, the "kiddie tax" certainly can wreak havoc on unprepared taxpayers' yearly returns.

Congress first introduced the kiddie tax as part of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 to discourage wealthy parents from sheltering their investment income in accounts under their children's names, thereby avoiding paying taxes on the amounts. The rules have been tweaked periodically ever since.

Although the kiddie tax once applied only to the unearned income of children under 14, it now impacts all children under age 19 (as well as full-time students under 24), provided their earned income does not exceed half of the annual expenses for their support.

December 20, 2013

[Don't Let Cyber Grinches Ruin Your Holidays](#)

Whether you're shopping online by computer, smartphone or tablet, here are some common cyber scams to watch out for and security precautions to take. Tips for buying gift cards:

- Only buy from secure websites of trusted retailers (look for an "s" in the "https://" web address and a lock symbol).
- At walk-in stores, only purchase cards from employees who have them locked up. Avoid cards at unattended display racks, since thieves can scan the card's unique serial number; then, after you've loaded it with cash, drain its value with online purchases before the recipient has a chance to use it.

- Never purchase deeply discounted cards or event tickets from online marketplaces like eBay or Craigslist – chances are good that the cards are counterfeit or were stolen.

December 6, 2013

[Beware of Holiday Scams](#)

'Tis the season for shopping, salutations and various seasonal scams as perennial as poinsettias. Among the most common:

- Shopping Setups
- Gift card gotchas
- Courier cons
- Greeting card cheating
- The gift that keeps on taking
- Travel scams
- Charity cons

November 8, 2013

[Women Face Different Challenges than Men](#)

For women, it's a classic "good news, bad news" scenario: The good news is, on average women live seven years longer than men; the bad news is, there's a strong possibility they may have less money to live on during those extra years.

Although the earnings gap is slowly closing, women still make only three-quarters of what men do for the same jobs, on average. This discrepancy can really add up, since at retirement most people live off the money they've accumulated over a lifetime of work. And because women are more likely than men to take time off work to raise children –usually during peak earning years –their Social Security and employer-provided retirement benefits are often much smaller.

November 1, 2013

[Avoid Investment Scams Online](#)

Investment opportunities that claim to be low risk and high reward almost always are frauds. When researching investments, turn to unbiased sources. This article from the Federal Trade Commission explains how to report online investment fraud and about investment risks and computer security.

October 21, 2013

[Borrowing From Your Home in Retirement? Carefully Research Benefits and Risks](#)

For most homeowners, particularly retired Americans who have paid off or nearly paid off their mortgage, their house is a major part of their financial picture. Unfortunately, for retired homeowners who may have limited sources of income, the equity in their house may seem to be one of their only potential sources of additional money for everyday living expenses and healthcare. (The equity refers to the difference between what you owe on a house and its current market value.) While borrowing against their equity can help older homeowners, there also are potential pitfalls.

October 7, 2013

[Can You Be Saving More? Take Simple Steps to Make the Most of Your Money](#)

Your savings grow faster when you use every available tax break. All you really need to understand are the key differences in 401(k) plans, traditional IRAs, Roth IRAs, SEP-IRAs, and ordinary taxable accounts.

September 20, 2013

[Does My Child Need a Guardianship?](#)

This newsletter describes circumstances in which a guardianship and or conservatorship would be appropriate. As a child with cognitive disabilities nears his or her 18th birthday, parents often wonder whether they should seek guardianship over their child. The short answer to this question is, "it depends."

September 13, 2013

[Life Reimagined](#)

Life Reimagined from AARP is a digital experience that helps users build focus, confidence, skills, and connections in order to achieve their goals. Life Reimagined enables you to:

- See new possibilities
- Prepare for change
- Make your ideas real

September 6, 2013

[FDIC: How Credit Scores Affect the Price of Credit and Insurance](#)

Ever wonder how a lender decides whether to grant you credit? For years, creditors have been using credit scoring systems to determine if you'd be a good risk for credit cards, auto loans, or mortgages. Learn about credit scoring, credit scores and credit reports, how credit scoring system developed, ways to improve your score, and much more.

August 30, 2013

[Retiring Soon? Don't Forget Tax Implications](#)

If your retirement is not far off, you've probably already started to estimate what your living expenses will be after the regular paychecks stop. Most would-be retirees remember to include routine expenses like housing (rent or mortgage), medical bills and prescriptions, insurance premiums, transportation – even food and entertainment. But don't forget to factor in taxes, which can have a substantial impact on your cost of living, depending on where you live and what your sources of retirement income will be.

August 21, 2013

[Your Conversation Starter Kit](#)

The Conservation Project is dedicated to helping people talk about their wishes for end-of-life care. No guide or no single conversation can cover all the decisions you and your family may face. What a conversation can do is provide a shared understanding of what matters most to you and your loved ones. This can make it easier to make decisions when the time comes.

August 13, 2013

[Smart About Money Calculators](#)

Smart About Money has a series of online calculators on the following topics: Daily Decisions, Crisis and Emergencies, Debt Management, Life Transitions, and Work and Money.

August 1, 2013

[Back to School Money Shopping Tips](#)

Many parents dread back-to-school shopping. It's a hassle figuring out what the kids need for the coming year and dragging them to the mall. Plus, it's just so expensive.

July 26, 2013

[Saving for College](#)

A college education is the ticket to the middle class in the United States. But it's an expensive ticket, and the cost rises every year. The overall annual cost for a college education ranges from about \$7,000 for community college to \$35,000 for a private school, according to U.S. News & World Report.

July 18, 2013

[99 Great Ways to Save](#)

AARP is now offering its fourth annual 99 Great Ways to Save. This year's list is once again packed with creative ways to save money. Together, the tips underscore the key to saving. Spend less! Save even more money by checking out the savings tips.

July 12, 2013

[Practical Money Skills for Life: Saving for College](#)

A college education is the ticket to the middle class in the United States. But it's an expensive ticket, and the cost rises every year. The overall annual cost for a college education ranges from about \$7,000 for community college to \$35,000 for a private school, according to US News & World Report.

June 26, 2013

[Voluntary Financial Education in the Workplace a Solution for Lost Productivity](#)

New research and case studies show that employee money worries negatively affect productivity. This article discusses new data from Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions survey and how money woes are affecting productivity.

June 21, 2013

[7 Money-Smart Activities for Kids](#)

A local financial representative had the following information in her newsletter. I thought the 7 Money-Smart Activities for Kids would be of interest to parents and grandparents who are searching for ideas about teaching children about money.

June 14, 2013

[Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Rules Establish Strong Protections For Homeowners Facing Foreclosure](#)

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) issued rules to establish new, strong protections for struggling homeowners facing foreclosure. The rules also protect mortgage borrowers from costly surprises and runarounds by their servicers.

June 6, 2013

[Pocket Cents](#)

The National Credit Union, Administration offers this financial literacy website offering personal finance information for youth, teens, adults, seniors, students, educators, and service members in clear, easy to understand language and visuals.

May 23, 2013

[Financial Literacy for Children and Teens](#)

This website from the University of Minnesota Extension has a section for financial literacy for children and teens with student, parent, and educator resources.

May 16, 2013

[Plan, Save, Succeed!](#)

The Actuarial Foundation offers the seventh installment of its Expect the Unexpected With Math curriculum. Students follow 14-year-old twins Jason and Amy as they use key financial literacy topics, such as budgeting, income, saving, and credit, to purchase a used car when they turn 16. In a companion online challenge, students practice what they have learned by answering questions on financial concepts while racing the clock.

May 9, 2013

Six-Month Initiative: Retirement Components and Concepts

The National Retirement Planning Coalition and the Insured Retirement Institute are sponsoring this six-month initiative focusing on important retirement planning components and concepts. Topics include understanding Social Security, the basics of investing, fraud prevention and diminished capacity, longevity, health care in retirement, and managing your assets in retirement. The general site is at: www.retireonyourterms.org. Retirement Realities Checklist is at: www.retireonyourterms.org/?p=429

May 1, 2013

[FDIC Publishes a Money Guide for Young Adults and Teens](#)

The FDIC has published a collection of simple, practical tips for young adults and teens on saving, managing money, and avoiding financial scams. This special edition of the agency's quarterly FDIC Consumer News (Fall 2012), entitled "For Young Adults and Teens: Quick Tips for Managing Your Money," also includes suggestions for parents and caregivers on saving for a child's future and teaching youngsters about money. Financial educators are encouraged to use FDIC Consumer News as a supplemental handout for students. See this issue of the newsletter and subscription information.

April 22, 2013

[My Classroom Economy](#)

Vanguard, an investment company has developed an interactive program that includes an instructive website that contains program guides and downloadable student materials. Materials are for elementary school Grades (K-1, 2-3, 4-5) middle school (6, 7-8) and high school (9-10, 11-12, Investing).

April 12, 2013

[Bank It Elementary](#)

Bank It is a one-stop resource for parents, youth and workshop leaders to learn about and educate on making positive choices with money. Comprehensive program resources for 12 Bank It Workshop topics including ready-to-use session materials, guides and evaluations are available at the site.

April 5, 2013

[Pocket Cents: National Credit Union Administration](#)

Designed to introduce young people to the benefits of credit unions and the importance of setting financial goals. The site also has information for seniors, marriage and family, and service members.

March 28, 2013

First Command Educational Foundation Money Matters Online

The Money Matters online web-based program was developed specifically to meet the Texas State Board of Education requirement for secondary school personal financial literacy instruction.

To obtain access to the curriculum, send an email with your First Name, Middle Initial, Last Name, and School to edufoundation@fcef.com. The foundation will answer your questions and provide you with access to the program.

March 22, 2013

[360 Degrees of Financial Literacy](#)

The American Institute of CPAs provides tools and guidance of talking to children about money. The site also provides information for specific life stages such as tweens & teens, college students, couple, and parents and children just to cite several.

March 6, 2013

[Investors More Worried About Long-Term Care Than Retirement Planning](#)

UBS Wealth Management Americas has issued a new report that indicates that today's investors are more worried about long-term care than retirement planning. Being able to afford health care and paying for long-term medical care after retirement ranks highest on a survey of concerns for American Investors.

February 27, 2013

[More Americans Delaying Retirement](#)

Nearly two-thirds of Americans between the ages of 45 and 60 say they plan to delay retirement, according to a report to be released by the Conference Board and detailed by Lauren Weber in the Wall Street Journal. This is a significant increase over the just 42 percent of respondents who expressed intent to delay retirement two years ago. Researchers cite financial losses, layoffs, and income stagnation sustained during the last few years of recession and recovery for the increase. The report is based on a 2012 survey of 15,000 individuals. Weber's article also explores the implications of a more senior workforce in the future.

February 20, 2013

HelpWithMyBank.gov

HelpWithMyBank.gov Web site provides answers to approximately 250 commonly asked banking questions. The site answers many questions common to all banking consumers and provides useful information about contacting regulators of state banks, thrifts, and other financial institutions.

February 12, 2013

[FREE Consumer Financial Protection Bureau publications](#)

Order FREE Consumer Financial Protection Bureau publications from this site. You may download products by clicking on each product's name. Adobe Acrobat Reader is required to view the products. Please allow 4-5 weeks for delivery if you order bulk copies.

February 4, 2013

[Education on Credit Card "Checkout Fees" Draws Large Scale Interest](#)

In December, Consumer Action released a guide to help consumers understand potential new costs when they use a credit card at some retailers. As a result of a settlement between retailers (online and offline) and the payments industry, consumers may see retailer surcharges, or 'checkout fees,' when using their credit cards at brick-and-mortar stores or online merchants.

January 25, 2013

[Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Rules Establish Strong Protections for Homeowners Facing Foreclosure](#)

Today the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) issued rules to establish new, strong protections for struggling homeowners facing foreclosure. The rules also protect mortgage borrowers from costly surprises and runarounds by their servicers. "For many borrowers, dealing with mortgage servicers has meant unwelcome surprises and constantly getting the runaround. In too many cases, it has led to unnecessary foreclosures," said CFPB Director Richard Cordray. "Our rules ensure fair treatment for all borrowers and establish strong protections for those struggling to save their homes."

January 18, 2013

[Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Accepting Financial Consumer Complaints](#)

Consumers can alert the CFPB with mortgages, credit cards, student loans, checking accounts, payday and auto loans, lending discrimination complaints.

January 11, 2013

Tricks of the Trade: Outsmarting Investment Fraud

Seen on PBS stations nationwide, this FINRA Foundation documentary uncovers the psychology of investment scams and reveals ways to protect yourself and others. Order free DVD by [clicking here](#)...

January 4, 2013

[New Year's Resolutions to Improve Personal Finances](#)

Many people dread making New Year's resolutions because they're afraid they'll fall short. However, one minor setback doesn't mean having to write off the rest of the year. Success can be attained by starting out with small steps. Improving personal finances is a popular New Year's resolution.

December 27, 2012

[Knowing Which Financial Records to Save or Toss](#)

Many people hold onto mounds of receipts and account statements because they're not sure when it's safe to toss them.

December 19, 2012

Know your card? If not, visit Consumer Action's newest website

Credit, debit, prepaid and gift cards look pretty much the same but the rules and regulations for their use vary widely. Consumer Action launched KnowYourCard.org, a new website to help consumers make smart decisions about how to pay and where to shop.

December 5, 2012

Hey, didn't I 'opt out' of that email?

Delaney,* an Ohio woman, contacted the Consumer Action hotline to ask what she could do about a company that continued to send her emails even though she had submitted three opt-out requests. Delaney says, "I receive a promotional email each month from this company on my company email. There's an "Opt out" button to remove your name from the list and I have asked three times to be taken off the through this link, but nothing happens." We informed Delaney that if the emails don't stop in 10 business days of her opt-out request, she should report the company to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), which enforces the CAN-SPAM Act. ("Spam" is unsolicited or unwanted commercial email.) To submit a complaint to the FTC, call 877-382-4357 or go online to: www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov.

November 9, 2012

[WreckCheck Mobile App to Assist Motorists Involved in Car Accidents](#)

The Missouri Department of Insurance is offering a new smartphone app that walks drivers through the crucial steps to take if they're in a car accident. Although car accidents happen every day, a recent survey from the National Association of Insurance Commissioners showed many Americans don't know exactly what to do after an accident. The NAIC's new WreckCheck mobile application helps remove the guesswork. It's free and available for iPhone and Android users.

October 25, 2012

[Medical Identity Theft](#)

Medical identity theft occurs when someone steals your personal information to obtain medical care, buy drugs, or submit fake billings to Medicare in your name. Medical identity theft can disrupt your life, damage your credit rating, and waste taxpayer dollars. In some cases the damage is not just a paperwork hassle, but is also life-threatening. The scariest threat of medical identity theft is the inaccurate information that ends up in your medical records.

October 12, 2012

[Halloween Budget & Planning](#)

Scary costumes and haunted houses are part of what makes Halloween fun. But the parties, candy and other costs can add up during the holiday, which is second only to Christmas in consumer spending. Before you shop, set a realistic budget using this Entertainment Calculator. Whether you're having a party or going out, these tips can help you have big fun without spending big bucks.

September 21, 2012

[Helping Aging Parents Move](#)

This "Life Transitions" article from AARP gives advice on how to help aging parents to make the change of moving. It includes topics on The Downsizing Marathon, Survival of the Fittest, and what to do after the move.

September 12, 2012

[What Do You Know About Caregiving?](#)

Family caregivers provide an average of 20 hours of care per week. Access your knowledge about caregiving by taking the AARP online mini-quiz.

August 9, 2012

[Tips on Buying a CD, Paying for Education, Financing a Car and much more!](#)

Big purchases -- and the financial decisions that come with them -- can have major implications for consumers. The Spring 2012 issue of FDIC Consumer News features practical tips for buying a certificate of deposit (CD), paying for higher education, and financing the purchase of a car.

August 2, 2012

[Money as Your Grow](#)

Money as You Grow, developed by the U.S. President's Advisory Council on Financial Capability, is a new interactive tool that help kids learn the 20 things they need to know about money. The site was launched May 10, 2012, during the first White House Summit on Financial Capability and Empowerment. The Youth Subcommittee of the President's Advisory Council on Financial Capability spent 16 months combing through dozens of the best studies, guidelines, and standards in order to present the most essential money milestones that children need to know as they grow.

July 26, 2012

[How can you tell if a certain credit counseling agency is reputable and nonprofit?](#)

Sometimes it can be difficult to distinguish a reputable nonprofit credit counseling agency from a dishonest for-profit firm that embezzles clients' money, charges excessively high fees, and/or keeps clients' initial payments instead of prorating them among their clients' creditors.

July 19, 2012

[Do you need a Social Media Will?](#)

What happens to your Facebook account and your email address when you die? Who will pay the online bills if you're too ill to log on? These and other "e-issues" are prompting the need for social media wills. Find out how they work and about the consequences of going without one.

July 10, 2012

[Help Your Savings Grow](#)

Consumer Action's "Help Your Savings Grow" is a question-and-answer format backgrounder guide covering the ways individuals can start to save successfully.

This 20-page web publication and PDF booklet includes information on savings accounts, individual development accounts (IDAs), money market deposit accounts, certificates of deposit (CDs), U.S. Treasury investments, retirement and education savings accounts and how to figure one's net worth.

June 29, 2012

[FINRA Enhances BrokerCheck® to Help Investors](#)

FINRA has enhanced BrokerCheck® a free tool that lets you research the professional background of firms and investment professionals. Now, in addition to being able to look up FINRA-registered firms and brokers, you can also check out the backgrounds of investment advisor firms and representatives.

June 21, 2012

[Interest Rates 101](#)

Before your children fly the nest, they need to know how interest rates work. Especially rates paid on loans or credit cards. One key lesson is that your credit score can have a huge impact on what rate you're able to secure. Find how you can instill these skills in them while they're young by listening to this Podcast.

June 13, 2012

[Building a Trusted Environment for APP Users](#)

In April, Consumer Action's DC-based Senior Associate for National Priorities Michelle De Mooy traveled to Silicon Valley for a conference convened by the Future of Privacy Forum in partnership with the Application Developers Alliance and the Stanford Law School Center for Internet and Society. The conference was a groundbreaking event, bringing small and large developers of applications (or apps) together with policymakers and advocates to discuss how to improve both privacy protection and consumer experience using apps.

May 31, 2012

[Save and Invest.org](#)

SaveAndInvest.org is a non-profit organization dedicated to your financial health. It includes information on Financial Basics, Controlling Debt, Saving, Protecting your Money and other numerous Financial Tools. Also includes a Military center for military families for their financial needs and a Fraud Center to help protect yourself and others from fraud. An emailed newsletter is also available to sign up for.

May 18, 2012

["Safe Accounts", Mobile Banking, and Prepaid Cards](#)

The FDIC's Advisory Committee on Economic Inclusion met on April 26, 2012 to discuss the results of the FDIC's model "safe accounts" pilot program, the role of mobile banking, and how prepaid cards differ from debt and credit cards with respect to federal consumer protections for the cardholder.

May 11, 2012

[FDIC Consumer Newsletter Features Banking Tips for Small Businesses](#)

The Winter 2011/2012 edition of FDIC Consumer News offers a collection of articles entitled "Minding Your Own Business: Banking Tips for Small Companies." The issue also includes articles on protecting senior citizens from financial fraud and theft, suggestions for recipients of federal benefits such as Social Security, and guidance for consumers turned down for a checking account because of mismanagement..

April 11, 2012

[Protect Your Identity](#)

This site provides a variety of resources on how to protect your identity including

- First Steps for Victims
- Take the ID Quiz
- Consumer Tips
- Videos
- Statistics
- And much more

April 3, 2012

[New Realities and Directions for Credit Cardholders](#)

In 2009, Congress passed a new law for credit cards that helps protect consumers from most instances of sudden interest rate increases and other unfavorable changes in fees and account terms. Within the FDIC Consumer News, this issue includes articles on:

- 8 ways to avoid pitfalls in areas such as interest rate and fee increases
- Using an agent or broker to place a bank deposit

March 27, 2012

**[Advice for Seniors: Understand the Risks and Costs of Borrowing with a Reverse Mortgage](#)
[Conversation Starters: How to Have the Money Talk with Your Loved Ones](#)**

Conversation Starters is a series of open-ended questions designed to help families' kick-start an ongoing dialogue about budgeting, saving, investing and avoiding scams and frauds. Whether you are just starting out as a newlywed or entering retirement, there are questions to get you and your loved ones talking about the often difficult issue of money.

March 13, 2012

[A Quick Guide for Consumers on Credit, Debit, and Prepaid Cards](#)

The FDIC has issued a guide to help consumers understand the differences between debit, credit and prepaid cards. The guide is intended to help consumers, who routinely use cards to pay for goods and services but who don't always understand the differences in how these cards work or the applicable consumer protections.

February 23, 2012

[Do your parents need a financial intervention?](#)

Most people prefer to keep their personal finances close to the vest. But when parents get older and haven't shared details of how they manage their money, it can be difficult for their children to step in and help, when needed. Find out what to watch for and how you can begin helping them now!

February 6, 2012

Free Publications from Consumer Action

There are free publications available from Consumer Action (Limit is 100 copies):

- [Using Mobile Data Wisely](#): Being connected has many benefits, but it's important to know your needs and manage your usage to avoid unanticipated charges.
- [Choosing and Using Mobile Devices](#): Explains how to select a smartphone or other data-ready wireless device and service plan, monitor and manage your usage, and get the best value for your budget and your needs.

February 6, 2012

[SmartyPig](#)

SmartyPig is a savings platform that allows you to create an online piggy bank, with a .70% interest rate. You can use it to save for specific purchases that would cost you much more if you charged them to your credit card and made only the minimum monthly payment. SmartyPig is FDIC-insured and use of this program teaches the principle of savings first.

January 11, 2012

[Can gift certificates have an expiration date or charge service fees?](#)

Yes, but expiration dates and service fees are subject to federal rules that apply to gift cards sold on or after August 22, 2010.

January 4, 2011

[New Year's Resolutions to Improve Personal Finances](#)

Many people dread making New Year's resolutions because they're afraid they'll fall short. However, one minor setback doesn't mean having to write off the rest of the year. Success can be attained by starting out with small steps. Improving personal finances is a popular New Year's resolution.

December 29, 2011

[Consumer Action and Microsoft Team up to Teach Internet Safety](#)

In early October, Consumer Action and Microsoft co-hosted a roundtable as part of their ongoing partnership to promote Internet Security which boasted a blend of instruction and interactive exercises to help participants teach consumers how to protect themselves and their personal assets when using the Internet.

December 22, 2011

[Save Money: Get a Head Start on the Holidays](#)

AARP.org has a Savings Challenge Save Money: Get a Head Start on the Holidays. The best time to start planning your holiday purchases and travels is when the year-end holidays are several weeks away. It makes for a less stressful holiday season and you will save some serious money.

December 6, 2011

[Few Ways to Handle Gift Giving: Without Breaking the Bank](#)

It's the time of year for gift giving, entertaining, holiday parties, and for many—overspending and financial stress. This year, enjoy the season without letting holiday spending get the better of you; the tips and tools below will help. Setting a realistic holiday budget and making sure to stick to it is the first step to enjoying a more affordable and less stressful season. For a few ways to handle gift giving and celebrations without breaking the bank go to

November 23, 2011

[Kids Count: Engages Children with Basic Concepts!](#)

Kids Count® is a complete financial literacy program developed specifically for elementary age kids. Students learn the basics of managing money from earning an income to setting spending priorities, from developing budgets to tracking financial accounts, and even the importance of giving to their communities. Each lesson in the Kids Count® curriculum is mapped to relevant Department of Education Standards, so teachers can effectively meet and exceed learning objectives.

November 17, 2011

[A New VISA Credit Score Survey](#)

A new Visa Inc. survey finds that many Americans don't know what determines a credit score. Among the findings, 60% of those surveyed incorrectly believe work history factors in to a credit score and 17%

who think gender has an impact. [Read more](#). [Click here](#) for more information on 2011 Credit Score survey.

November 10, 2011

[The Secret Millionaires Club](#)

The Secret Millionaires Club offers a series of animated webisodes, games, and activities created for children in grades 3 - 6. "Learn to Earn" promotional materials will also be available throughout the year for teachers and volunteers to complete after watching the webisodes.

October 12, 2011

[The Centsables: Superheros Kids Can Bank On!](#)

The Centsabables program focuses on promoting ages 6 - 11 preparing them to deal with the financial decisions they make on a daily basis. It educates through entertainment, with six lovable superheroes who turn sophisticated concepts into kid-lessons they can grasp easily. The program uses a multimedia approach to reach and teach youngsters in the ways they like best with an interactive animated website.

October 4, 2011

[Consumer Action INSIDER-October 2011](#)

Consumer Action has been a partner for many years with their resources complimenting topics. It is extremely important to provide consumers the latest financial information and "be in the know." -Sahara Navarro-Garcis, Director of Education, Consumer Credit Counseling of Orange County. This month's tip "Avoid the lure of social media scams".

September 1, 2011

[40 Money Management Tips for College Students](#)

This guide offered by National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) includes tips to stretch dollars during college. This booklet is aimed to help young people learn how to take control of their money.

August 23, 2011

[FDIC Consumer News: Delivering Timely, Reliable, and Innovative Tips and Information About Financial Matters](#)

The Spring 2011 Edition of the FDIC Consumer News contains information on:

- Strategies for choosing a mortgage
- Lower-cost alternatives to traditional and expensive overdraft programs
- Suggestions to avoid mistakes when applying for credit card and loans
- Reminder that Stocks, Bonds, and Mutual Funds not sold at banks are not FDIC insured.

August 10, 2011

[Getting Cash in Retirement Using a Reverse Mortgage: Pros, Cons, and Resources](#)

According to AARP, more than 78,000 reverse mortgages were insured last year by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). According to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), while there are potential benefits to reverse mortgages, they don't make sense for everyone. They generally are not advisable if you plan to stay in your home for less than five years or need extra monthly income for relatively small expenses. The FDIC also warns that some unscrupulous individuals or companies have promoted reverse mortgages that were not in the consumers' best interest or that involved extra payments for unnecessary services.

June 1, 2011

[Avoiding Mortgage Modifications Scams and Foreclosure Rescue Scams](#)

Financially troubled homeowners can avoid foreclosure prevention scams by working with housing counselors approved by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Assistance from HUD-approved housing counselors is free, and homeowners can reach them by calling 1-888-995-HOPE (4673) or visiting makinghomeaffordable.gov.

May 24, 2011

[Visa Unveils New Financial Education Video for Kids](#)

With the release of two new video games in April, Visa is providing kids with a more engaging way to learn about money. Peter Pig's Money Counter allows kids ages 4–7 to practice counting coins, while Money Metropolis allows kids ages 7–12 to save for a goal, navigating a world and making decisions that affect whether their savings will shrink or grow.

May 18, 2011

[AARP's Benefit of Spending Less Calculator](#)

Reducing your spending can be worth more than you might think. Use this calculator to see just how much your budget reductions may be worth, if you were to invest them. View the value of this new potential nest egg both with and without taxes factored in.

May 10, 2011

[*Retirement Made Simpler News*](#)

This resource is sponsored by three organizations. Because these organizations know that Americans are not saving enough for retirement, they want to help by combining resources and expertise.

May 3, 2011

[*Take the Interactive Web Quiz: Containing Essential Credit Score Information*](#)

Credit Score Quiz.org is a unique tool that with widespread use will increase consumer knowledge about credit scores. Credit scores are important, influencing whether consumers can purchase a wide range of important services and/or at what price.

April 19, 2010

[*Credit Reports, Credit Scores, and Specialty Reports*](#)

These publications contain information on what goes into the credit report and score, interpreting the credit score, improving credit rating, types of specialty reports, who should request their report, how to get your reports, your rights under the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) and the Fair and Accurate Credit Transaction Act (FACTA). To access the publication list go to:

April 5, 2010

[*Peanuts and Crackerjacks*](#)

The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston sponsors this interactive baseball game that promotes financial literacy by testing participants on their knowledge of economics and professional sports trivia.

March 22, 2011

[*Uncle Ted's Barbershop*](#)

The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia offers "Uncle Jed's Barbershop," a book students can listen to. The book is about an African-American barber who, despite significant setbacks, manages to save enough money to buy his own barbershop. From Uncle Jed's story, students learn about saving, setting savings goals, opportunity cost, and segregation. The students can also play a card game that teaches them how to establish and reach savings goals.

March 15, 2011

[*Quiz on Financial Scams*](#)

To help test people's knowledge about financial scams, the Fall 2010 issue of FDIC Consumer News features a quiz on common frauds and their warning signs. Other articles discuss FDIC insurance coverage, solutions to mortgage and other debt problems, "credit protection" offers, student loans, ways to save money at tax time, and automated overdraft payment programs.

March 8, 2011

[*Financial Literacy: Teach It*](#)

This financial literacy program is sponsored by the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board in cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions, and Wisconsin Public Television. The multi-media and professional development resource is based on Wisconsin's new Personal Financial Literacy standards. The program includes 21 short videos that demonstrate effective teaching methods for each of the seven standards for elementary, middle, and high school classrooms.

February 23, 2011

[Introducing the New Practical Money Matters Podcast](#)

Listen to the free, new iTunes podcast series dedicated to exploring key personal finance issues. The weekly series features tips and information for consumers of all ages about managing their finances. Subscribe to the free iTunes podcast to listen to this week's segment, How Good is Your Retirement Game Plan?

February 15, 2011

[Using the Web to Raise Money-Savvy Kids](#)

The Alliance for Investor Education promotes 10 of the best Web-based resources that parents can use to teach their children how to save and invest, even in tough financial times.

February 7, 2011

[Building Your Future](#)

The Actuarial Foundation, a nonprofit organization that is offering donated classroom sets of Building Your Future, a financial literacy curriculum resource, to high school teachers across the country. Building Your Future is an Institute for Financial Literacy 2010 Curriculum of the Year Award winner. To receive a free set of teacher and student workbooks, send you name and mailing address to programs@actfnd.org.

January 31, 2011

[Get the Most Out of Your Gift Cards](#)

If someone gave you a \$50 bill, you probably wouldn't just stick it in a drawer and forget it. But that's essentially what happens to billions of dollars' worth of gift cards each year – people either lose or forget about them, or never use up their balances.

January 18, 2011

[New Year's Resolutions to Improve Personal Finances](#)

Many people dread making New Year's resolutions because they're afraid they'll fall short. However, one minor setback doesn't mean having to write off the rest of the year. Success can be attained by starting out with small steps. Improving personal finances is a popular New Year's resolution. To find out how to have success in improving personal finances go to:

January 10, 2011

[Teaching Kids About Saving and Investing](#)

Parents can now benefit from a new resources being made available from the nonprofit Alliance for Investor Education (AIE) highlighting 10 of the best Web-based resources for parents to teach their kids about how to save and invest in today's tough financial times, including: Teaching Your Kids About Saving and Investing: A Guide for Parents.

January 3, 2011

[Consumer Action Insider--January 2011 Issue](#)

Through multilingual financial education materials, community outreach, and grassroots "make your voice heard" advocacy, Consumer Action empowers underrepresented consumers nationwide to assert their rights in the marketplace and financially prosper. This month's insider includes topics on:

- A banner year for consumer protection
- Privacy Work in 2010
- Phony Debt Collectors
- And much more...

December 22, 2010

[Money Exchange: Money Lessons for Children](#)

Money can be a tricky topic and therefore, teaching the younger generation money management and personal finance skills is of utmost importance. This Web site contains links to resources for:

- Financial Lessons for Kids 5-12
- Financial Lessons for Teens 13-18
- Financial Activities and Lesson Plans for Teachers
- Financial Lessons for College Students

December 15, 2010

[Right at Home](#)

Right at Home is an educational video coupled with a resource filled Web site to help homeowners solve mortgage problems and avoid foreclosure in these challenging economic times. Experts in the field of housing counseling, mortgages and money management brought together in this practical non-commercial guide for consumers. The 40-minute DVD contains information on mortgage products, money management, avoiding foreclosure and finding trustworthy help. The video also contains interviews and advice from actual homeowners who have successfully avoided foreclosure. Additional resources on the Web site include a downloadable workbook and referrals for assistance to housing and financial counselors, community services, and credit unions.

December 6, 2010

[Legally Secure Your Financial Future](#)

Legally Secure Your Financial Future: Organize, Communicate, Prepare, is a three-part educational program that teaches participants to 1) Organize important legal, financial, and family records 2) Communicate with loved ones about legal, health and financial issues; and 3) Prepare and understand estate planning.

November 29, 2010

[NEFE Revised All-in-one Booklet" Your Savings, Your Spending, Your Future"](#)

The National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) has revised its all-in-one booklet, "Your Savings, Your Spending, Your Future: A Beginner's Guide to Financial Readiness" for the use of financial counselors and their clients. This combined educational text and workbook addresses financial goal-setting, getting out of debt, using a checking account and credit card, monitoring and controlling spending, and boosting savings and investments.

November 22, 2010

[MoneyWi\\$e](#)

The University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service is helping people access up to-date information regarding financial decisions through its MONEYWi\$E website. Almost every decision a person makes during the day will influence that household's bottom line. This website provides information, decision aids, and financial calculators directed at all aspects of everyday living, from

household budgeting tools to farm management. Updated on a monthly basis to provide consumers with timely and accurate information.

November 8, 2010

[How Can I Make My Retirement Funds Last Longer?](#)

A retiree's money lasts longer when assets are withdrawn in a tax-efficient manner. This resource offered by eXtension explains ways to make retirement funds last longer.

November 1, 2010

[Refinancing After 50](#)

Refinancing a mortgage after 50 might not seem like the most logical course of action. After all, it's a time in life when you're at least thinking hard about retirement, if you're not already there. The last thing you want to do is to add more years to the end of your home loan. However AARP, gives examples of why refinancing may make perfect sense. Things to consider when refinancing:

- Factor in retirement plans
- Look at what's left on your mortgage

October 25, 2010 Topic of the Week

[FTC Issues Final Rule to Protect Consumers in Credit Card Debt](#)

Starting on October 27, 2010, for-profit companies that sell debt relief services over the telephone may no longer charge a fee before they settle or reduce a customer's credit card or other unsecured debt.

Three other Telemarketing Sales Rule provisions to take effect on September 27, 2010, will:

- Require debt relief companies to make specific disclosures to consumers;
- Prohibit them from making misrepresentations; and
- Extend the Telemarketing Sales Rule to cover calls consumers make to these firms in response to debt relief advertising

October 4, 2010 Topic of the Week

[Financial Fitness means a lot of Things! It's Not Just About Money!](#)

This Web site shows provides Recipes for Financial Fitness and shows you how credit, financial fitness, and owning a home are all connected. Our recipes are designed to guide you to the result you seek: a simple, decent, place to live a Habitat for Humanity home!

September 27, 2010 Topic of the Week

[Helping Kids Gain the Power to Make Smart Financial Choices](#)

Meet six super friends with a mission to teach children to be financially fit for life! At the heart of the program is an interactive website where kids aged 6 – 12 can explore the wealth of materials that entertain, engage and educate. Though the site takes a fun-ancial approach, content is real-life based, offering practical applications on money, basic banking, saving and investing, plus games, activities and a valuable parent link.

September 6, 2010 Topic of the Week

Experian Financial Resources

Experian converted all of their educational materials to electronic formats and developed a mini CD that enables educators to access and use the information easily. Brochures, PowerPoint Presentations, and even more videos are now available by simply dropping a wallet care sized disc into your computer's CD-Rom drive. To request a free disk, email: consumer.education@experian.com.

August 16, 2010 Topic of the Week

[Money Smart News-Summer 2010](#)

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation creates an online newsletter on financial education called "Money Smart News." In the summer 2010 issue, there are articles on Ways to Introduce College Students to Financial Education, Credit Cards, Depositing Funds through an Agent or Broker, and Reverse Mortgages.⁹ For more information, go to:

August 2, 2010 Topic of the Week

[Be Prepared!](#)

Are you prepared in case of a natural disaster? While you should prepare an emergency kit in case you need to protect yourself or leave your home quickly, it's also important to remember that natural disasters don't just affect us physically and emotionally, they also affect us financially. The following are a couple of ways to make sure you are prepared financially should disaster strike.

- a. Get a lock box at your bank or buy safe
- b. Back everything up
- c. Make copies of everything
- d. Make lists and lots of them

July 26, 2010 Topic of the Week

[Saving Money](#)

While it's important to pay your bills and build a solid credit history, it's also necessary to pay yourself and build up a savings account – for emergencies, for the future, and for the unexpected. Your options for setting money aside vary greatly, and can include savings accounts, CDs, money market accounts, and investments in stocks, bonds, and mutual funds. You can compare interest rates, fees, and minimum deposit requirements for various financial institutions.

July 19, 2010 Topic of the Week

Correcting Errors on Your Credit Report

Incorrect information on your credit report can be damaging, as it can lower your credit score or indicate fraudulent activity such as identity theft. If you find inaccurate information on your report, it is important to notify both the credit reporting bureau and the creditor (or company that provided the information to the credit reporting agency) of the specific information you believe is mistaken.

If you have any questions about the process of filing a dispute or would like the contact information for reporting a dispute with each of the credit bureaus, please visit the [Federal Trade Commission's web site](#).

Source: Iowa State University, Financial Counseling Clinic, Weekly Financial Tip-Correcting Errors on Your Credit Report, July 8, 2010

July 12, 2010 Topic of the Week**[What does it Cost to Raise a Child?](#)**

Raising children takes a great deal of time, energy and resources. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has estimated the annual costs of raising a child from birth to age 17 since 1960 and shares the numbers in the Expenditures on Children by Families report. The answer varies by household (two-parent or single household), numbers of children in the household and levels of income. Housing costs have been the largest part of total expenses for raising children. Childcare and education have increased considerably over the. This category makes up 17-22 percent of what it costs to raise a child. Expenses on food vary from 17 to 34 percent of child-rearing expenses, depending on a two-parent or single parent household. Based on 2009 figures, transportation expenses for children were about 15 percent of the total amount spent to raise a child for a two-parent home and 20 percent for a single parent home. Clothing expenses took up about 5-7 percent of the total amount spent, and healthcare accounted for about 6-8 percent. For more details on child-rearing expenses by types of households or levels of income.

June 28, 2010 Topic of the Week***Free Consumer Action Publications about Credit Cards***

Consumer Action has two new educational publications that can help families in your community to learn about the new federal credit card law. Consumer Action has partnered with American Express to bring you the opportunity to order bulk copies of: "Credit Cards: What You Need to Know," and "Families and Credit Cards."

If you want to learn more about these two publications, you may view them online, clicking on these links below:

[Credit Cards: What You Need to Know](#)
[Families and Credit Cards](#)

Source: MU Financial Tip of the Week-Learning to Fly, June 10, 2010

June 7, 2010 Topic of the Week**[New Suite of Financial Calculators](#)**

Need help turning a bunch of numbers into a real financial goal? Whether you want to figure out your bonus after taxes, create a budget for a baby, plan for retirement or something else, our new suite of financial calculators makes it easy to define and reach specific financial goals.

May 31, 2010 Topic of the Week**[FTC Issues Final Rule to Protect Consumers in Credit Card Debt](#)**

Starting on October 27, 2010, for-profit companies that sell debt relief services over the telephone may no longer charge a fee before they settle or reduce a customer's credit card or other unsecured debt. The Final Rule covers telemarketers of for-profit debt relief services, including credit counseling, debt settlement, and debt negotiation services.

May 24, 2010 Topic of the Week**[Help With My Bank: Get Answers about National Banks](#)**

Helpwithmybank.gov helps find answers to National Banking questions. Use the shortcut keywords to visit the category that or your interest, or use the search window located at the top right corner of every page.

May 17, 2010 Topic of the Week**[Real Money Real World](#)**

Each year, America's high schools graduate thousands of young adults who are unprepared in matters of employment and financial decisions. Ohio State University Extension professionals developed the Real Money, Real World curriculum that simulates real-life experiences to help make youth aware of the money management skills they need.

May 10, 2010 Topic of the Week**[Office of Financial Success Financial Tip of the Week](#)**

The Office for Financial Success is a service of the Personal Financial Planning Department at the University of Missouri. This site is dedicated to improving the financial wellbeing of individuals and families by providing affordable, unbiased education and counseling in all areas of personal finance.

May 3, 2010 Topic of the Week**[Money Smart News-Spring 2010](#)**

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation creates an online newsletter on financial education called "Money Smart News." In the spring 2010 issue, there are articles on Quick Tips for Consumers over the Internet, Credit Card Changes Taking Effect, Online Banking, Overdraft Costs, Medical Debts, and Financing a Small Business.

April 26, 2010 Topic of the Week**[My Money.gov](#)**

MyMoney.gov is the U.S. government's website dedicated to teaching all Americans the basics about financial education. Whether you are buying a home, balancing your checkbook, or investing in your 401(k), the resources on MyMoney.gov can help you maximize your financial decisions.

Throughout the site, you will find important information from 20 Federal agencies and Bureaus designed to help you make smart financial choices.

April 19, 2010 Topic of the Week**[Consumer Publications on Privacy Rights](#)**

Some of the following Consumer Action publications are available in bulk for non-profit or government agencies to distribute for educational purposes including:

- a. Identity Theft and Account Fraud
- b. Internet Safety
- c. Workplace Privacy

April 12, 2010 Topic of the Week**[New Overdraft Rules for Debit and ATM Cards](#)**

Federal Reserve Board rules that have taken effect on July 1, 2010, prohibit financial institutions from charging overdraft fees for ATM and one-time debit card transactions unless a consumer consents, or opts in, to the overdraft service for those types of transactions.

What You Need to Know: New Overdraft Rules for Debit and ATM Cards provides an explanation of how the rules will affect existing and new account holders. It contains basic information about types and typical costs of overdraft services and defines common terms consumers may encounter in communications from their bank about overdrafts.

April 5, 2010 Topic of the Week

New disclosures for advertising Free Credit Reports

Starting April 1, advertising for "free credit reports" will require new disclosures to help people avoid those allegedly "free" offers for credit reports available at AnnualCreditReport.com, or 877-322-8228. The "free" offers often require people to spend money on credit monitoring or other products or services. The Credit CARD Act of 2009 required the Commission to issue a rule to prevent deceptive marketing of "free credit reports."

March 29, 2010 Topic of the Week

[Money Sense: A New Online Educational Resource for Consumers to Improve Their Money Management Skills](#)

With literally hundreds of financial education resources available to consumers, NYSE Euronext Money Sense seeks to help connect consumers to valuable content, tools, and online resources. It encompasses a wide spectrum of personal-finance topics, connecting consumers with a variety of leading sources and experts in the financial industry to provide insights on topics ranging across five category umbrellas: (1) Earn (2) Spend (3) Save (4) Borrow (5) Literacy.

March 15, 2010 Topic of the Week

Teachers, Technology Play Key Roles in Experian Consumer Education

Experian converted all or their printed educational materials to electronic formats and developed a mini CD Rom that enables educators to access and use the information easily. Brochures, PowerPoint presentations, and even videos are now available. To request free disc, send an email to consumer.education@experian.com.

March 8, 2010 Topic of the Week

Money Smart News-Winter 2010

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation creates an online newsletter on financial education called "Money Smart News." In the winter 2010 issue, there are articles on Households Struggling to Survive a Job Loss, Unemployment and Strained Budgets, How to Avoid ATM Fees, Paying with Plastic, Using Safe Deposit Boxes For more information, go to:

March 1, 2010 Topic of the Week

[Tips and Trends: Living Green without Spending Green](#)

Its official, the eco-friendly movement is in full swing. As consumers, we've become more and more in tuned with messaging about the environment and how product X is going to save the world. With no disrespect to these groundbreaking efforts, the problem for many of us living on a budget is that installing solar panels, channeling wind energy and shopping at our favorite Eco designer's boutique isn't an option right now. Fortunately, there are plenty of simple things we can do daily to support a greener lifestyle that do not cost a thing upfront. Better still, these greener habits can save your household money, and the environment, some of its precious resources. Even if you only adopt one or two of these 16 suggestions, it's a great start. At home, at school and out in the world, consider these greener habits in 2010.