September 2024

Member Insights

MERCK EMPLOYEES
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

From the desk of the President/CEO:

Back to School, The Fed and Fraud Fighters

Just like that the sun is setting on summer and for many parents and students that means preparations are being made to go back to school.

Don't let your star student leave home without the proper financial tools to stay safe and be prepared at college.

Did you know you can equip your college bound student with a pre-paid credit union Visa Card? This is a safe and effective way to allow your student to make purchases on a budget and be prepared for unexpected expenses. If your student is like most college students, they are well-versed in using their phone's digital wallet to make purchases. College campuses have increasingly moved to touchless digital payments at their point-of-sale locations. Interestingly, adding your Visa card to your digital wallet and using that card via the digital wallet at college retailers and other retailers is by far the safest way to utilize a credit card today as all transactions are tokenized and very safe. Your credit union is abreast of all fraud trends and receives regular training and digital wallets have the lowest incidents of fraud among payment methods. Ensure your star student has this credit union tool so they can make safe and sound purchases when away from home. Don't forget, even a secured Visa card is reported to the credit bureaus so this is also a great way to get your student to build credit history which will be vital when they are out on their own.

You can also equip your student with a credit union debit card and set up cross-account transfer so you can add funds should your student run into unexpected expenses. The debit card can also be added to your student's digital wallet.

Here Comes the Fed…

On September 18 expect the Federal

Back to School Financial Checklist: Equip Your Student for Success

As the school year approaches, it's time to think beyond backpacks and books. Ensuring your student is financially prepared is just as important as stocking up on school supplies. MEFCU is here to help with our Back-to-School Financial Checklist—designed to give your student the tools they need to manage their finances responsibly and efficiently.

1. Secure Visa® Card

Empower your student with a Visa® card that's secure and convenient for making purchases, whether they're on campus or grabbing a coffee between classes. Our cards offer strong security features to protect against fraud, providing peace of mind for both you and your student.

2. Debit Card

A MEFCU debit card gives your student easy access to their funds with the flexibility of a credit card but without the risk of overspending. It's perfect for everyday purchases and helps them develop good spending habits early on.

3. Checking Account

Make sure your student is set up with a MEFCU checking account that offers all the features they need for everyday banking. With online and mobile banking, they can easily manage their finances, track spending, and set up direct deposits from a part-time job or financial aid.

4. Apple Pay, Google Pay, & Samsung Pay

In today's digital age, convenience is key. Using a digital wallet linked to their MEFCU accounts, your student can make secure, contactless payments straight from their smartphone. It's perfect for busy students who are always on the go.

Equip your student with the financial tools they need to succeed this school year. Visit MEFCU today to learn more and check these items off your Back-to-School Financial Checklist.



Reserve to lower interest rates, marking the first time they have lowered rates since the Covid era when the Fed swung into action with emergency rate cuts. Of course, rate cuts have all sorts of financial impacts, but in general the Fed is hoping to avoid a recession by lowering borrowing costs and stimulating economic activity. We were just talking about college bound students having the correct payment tools when at school. If you're a parent working to pay for college costs, as Fed rate cuts come into play borrowing costs will drop giving you more bang for your buck in borrowing. One of the most popular ways we see parents pay for college is through home equity loans. Those loan rates will come down in line with the Fed rates, so be aware of that if you are in this college mode.

For the savers out there, this is a good time to lock in a CD, but as always be sure you won't need that money in the near term. Your credit union's CDs are fee-friendly, and should you need to exit it prior to maturity you will forego interest, but not pay a fee.

Aside from all the personal impacts of the Fed's coming cuts, we should all hope that the Fed is on the mark, not too late to cut, and we avoid a major economic swoon, and the job market stays strong. We have seen some weakening in jobs, but certainly nowhere near recession levels.

Our Fraud Fighting Members

As we've worked hard here at the credit union to educate our members on preventing fraud, we have noticed many members taking action to avoid fraud. More and more members have reduced their physical check writing, opting for ACH and bill pay. We have seen many members move away from mailed paper statements in lieu of eStatements. We advocate for eStatements here at the CU to avoid having account data being put in the mail and subject to interception from fraudsters. Remember the more data fraudsters have the easier it is for them to compromise your identity and accounts. Sadly, there is virtually no fear from criminals in stealing mail. Mail theft is at an all-time high. In a funny but not so funny story, one woman was so frustrated with mail and packages being stolen from her house she put an Apple Air Tag on a package and mailed it to herself. It was stolen and the Air Tag led authorities to the thieves who had stolen mail and packages from dozens of people. Many members don't believe us when we tell them, but mail theft is no longer an oddity, it's sadly common so eStatements is a great way to take your account information out of the mail system. Members can download eStatements and conveniently store them on their computer. Some members worry about digital issues with eStatements but do note the credit union by regulation has to retain statements so at any time we can retrieve a statement should you need it.

Other ways we've seen members fight fraud is adding their credit union plastic cards to their digital wallets, making a conscious effort not to swipe at gas stations (a frequent place where skimmers are placed to steal card data), not responding to retail-looking texts or emails they are not familiar with, and of course not providing data over the phone to sources they are unfamiliar with. These all may sound like simple solutions, but it's great to see more of our members utilizing these tactics to protect themselves. As I always say to our team here at the CU, we would rather be slow and deliberate in processing our member transactions than move too quickly and see fraud. Our credit union continues to be a leader in fraud prevention by still calling members to confirm large transactions, reviewing all mobile deposit checks, ensuring we verify members with out-of-wallet questions and many more preventative tactics. If you want to do your part like a growing contingent of our members use some of the techniques mentioned above.

As more members become aware of our leading fraud preventative standing, they are also adding more of their direct deposits here. This is a great way to take advantage of our current offer of $100 for any member who moves a regular monthly direct deposit of $500 or more to the CU. It's an easy, simple offer to take advantage of by moving a payroll, social security payment or pension to one of the safest institutions in the country. We're happy to help you in anyway.

As summer comes to an end, we urge our members to stay safe financially and start using some of the fraud preventative tactics mentioned here so you can spend less time worrying about your finances and more time enjoying the things you love to do!

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MERCK EMPLOYEES FEDERAL CREDIT UNION
Your Prescription to Financial Health.

Member Services: 732-484-4811 Opt. 5
Loan Department: 732-484-4811 Opt. 2
Debit Card Lost/Stolen: 800-554-8969
Credit Card Lost/Stolen: 800-237-6211

Established in 1936, Merck EFCU is federally-chartered and federally insured by the National Credit Union Administration.

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

NCUA

Featured Loan & Deposit Rates

Auto Loans as low as 5.35% APR*

E-Checking 0.125% APR*

Credit Cards as low as 13.50% APR*

Share Cert. 6 months 3.85% APY*

Share Cert. 12 months 4.50% APY*

IRA Cert. 6 months 3.85% APY*

IRA Cert. 12 months 4.50% APY*

Savings 1.25% APR*

IRAs 1.80% APR*

Home Equity as low as 8.50% APR*

**Annual percentage rate. Visit www.merckcu.com or visit a branch for more information.*