



JANUARY • 2008

MERIDEN SCHOOLS FEDERAL CREDIT UNION: WHERE PEOPLE ARE WORTH MORE THAN MONEY

Credit Card Theft and Fraud

The cost of credit and charge card fraud—to card holders and to card companies alike—may be as high as \$500 million a year. Everyone pays for credit and charge card fraud in higher prices, whether or not they are personally defrauded.

How to Guard Against Credit and Charge Card Fraud

Here are some suggested precautions you can take to help protect yourself from credit and charge card fraud. You may also want to instruct any other person who is authorized to use your account to take these same precautions.

- Sign your new cards as soon as they arrive.
- Carry your cards separately from your wallet.
- Keep a record of your card numbers, their expiration dates, and the phone number and address of each company in a secure place.
- Keep your card in view whenever you can, after you give it to a clerk. Retrieve your card promptly after using it.
- Avoid signing a blank receipt whenever possible.
- Draw a line through blank spaces above the total when you sign card receipts.
- Save your card receipts to compare with your billing statements.
- Open billing statements promptly and reconcile your card accounts each month, just as you would your checking account.
- Report promptly and in writing any questionable charges to the card issuer.

In addition, here are some things you should not do:

- Never lend your cards to anyone.
- Never leave your cards or receipts lying around.
- Never put your card number on a postcard or on the outside of an envelope.
- Never give your number over the phone unless you are initiating a transaction with a company you know is reputable. If you have questions about a company, check with your local Consumer Protection Office or Better Business Bureau before ordering.

What To Do If Your Cards Are Lost or Stolen

If your credit or charge cards are lost or stolen, call the issuer(s) immediately. Most card

companies have a toll-free number for reporting missing cards. Some companies provide 24-hour service. By law, once you report the loss or theft, you have no further liability for unauthorized charges. In any event, your maximum liability under federal law is \$50.

What To Do About Suspected Fraud or Billing Problems

If you suspect that someone has illegally used your account number, send the card issuer a letter that includes your name, account number(s), and the charges that you question with your reasons. You must direct your letter to the "billing error address" provided on your statement, and it must reach the creditor within 60 days after the first bill containing the error

was mailed to you. If you send your letter by certified mail, with a return receipt requested, you will have proof that the letter was received.

If someone calls you to inform you that there has been a questionable charge to your credit card and they indicate that they are representing the Meriden Schools Federal Credit Union, it is okay to respond with a YES or NO answer. NEVER, NEVER give your social security number or any security information. **Please call Renee at the credit union if you have any questions: 203.237.6424 Ext.15**

Please send your comments about our newsletter to:
Regina@MeridenSchoolsFCU.com
 or call: 203.237.6424 Ext. 35

4.66% Take the leap!

It's a Leap Year Loan Special that can't be beat. February is a great time to purchase a car, either used or new. Take advantage of the many dealer discounts and let us make the purchase affordable. You can drive that dream car and we are here to help. For the entire month of February we are offering a 4.66% auto loan for new or used autos and for competitors refinancing. Contact Renee today at 203.237.6424 Ext.15, she wants to put you in the driver's seat.

SAVINGS RATES

PRODUCT	RATE	YIELD
Regular Savings:	.85%	.85%
Money Market:		
Balance 2,500 to 9,999.99	1.00%	1.00%
Balance 10,000 to 24,999.99	2.00%	2.02%
Balance 25,000 and over	3.75%	3.82%
IRA Money Market:	3.00%	3.04%
Certificates of Deposits / IRA Certificates of Deposit		
6 Months	4.00%	4.07%
12 Months	3.90%	3.97%
18 Months	3.65%	3.71%
24 Months	3.65%	3.71%
30 Months	3.50%	3.56%
36 Months	3.50%	3.56%
48 Months	3.50%	3.56%
60 Months	3.65%	3.71%

As of November 2007

*All rates subject to change without notice

Check
 out our
 Savings
 & Loan
 Rates!

LOAN RATES

LOAN RATES	TERM	RATE
	As Low As*	
Personal Loans:	2 Years	8.99%
	5 Years	10.99%
Car Loans:	3 Years	5.85%
<i>New or Used</i>	4-5 Years	5.99%
	72 Months	6.99%
First Mortgages:	15 Years	6.00%*
<i>*No Closing Costs or Fees</i>	30 Years	6.25%*
Second Mortgages:	5 Years	5.99%*
	10 Years	6.35%*
<i>*No Closing Costs or Fees</i>	15 Years	6.95%*

Home Equity Line of Credit:
 Prime Minus .05% 5.50%

Special until 7/1/08

Visa Classic and Gold 12.99% and 11.99%
 Balance Transfer Special 3.99% Good Through 6/2008

Recreational Vehicle (Boat, ATV etc.): Up to five years 6.99%
 Up to ten years 7.25%

*Rates may vary based upon your credit score

Just Ask Sissy

Q I think my high lifestyle is leading to some serious debt. What are some steps that I can take to get a grip on my spending.

Robin T.

A Robin, debt is not something that just happens as you go about your daily routines. There are certain spending habits that lead to debt. Recognizing these habits now could save a lot of money and stress later. Here are five of my favorite habits that lead to debt and should be avoided.

1) Spending money you don't have.

You spend money you don't have by using credit cards and taking loans. When you use these instruments to pay bills and make purchases, you are creating debt.

2) Spending more money than you make.

If you are dipping into savings, borrowing from others and using credit as the primary ways of spending more money than you bring home, you are in deep trouble. Before you know it, your savings are depleted, your credit cards are maxed out, and you can't borrow any more money.

3) Using credit cards for ordinary purchases.

The appeal to use credit cards is the ability to pay later for items that you buy now. Grow up! Learn to postpone immediate gratification for greater delayed rewards. Using credit instead of cash is a bad habit, especially when you don't pay your credit card bills in full each month and the interest rate is as high as 19%.

4) Using debt to pay off debt.

When you use credit cards to pay off other cards or loans to pay off other loans you're not paying off anything. So when you use debt to pay off debt, you end up worse off than when you began.

5) Friends and family that cost too much.

Are you the one that does all the spending? Do you always use your car for travel, buy the drinks and always pickup the check at trendy restaurants? If this is the case, perhaps you should evaluate the price of these friendships. Giving more than you can afford is not good for your financial and personal well being. Ask your friends to share the costs...maybe they have been waiting for the chance to treat you.

Count On Us...

Green Tip for Today

For a meaningful environmental impact, I am recommending replacing at least five high-use bulbs in your home. Ecofriendly bulbs have come a long way from the days when they were, at best, oversized flickering coils with a *Twilight Zone glow*. Two "best buys" that I think make a difference in reducing our carbon footprint are:

Long Life Soft White Energy Smart Electric 3Way by General Electric

This bulb is new to the CFL scene. It is bigger and brighter so it can stand in for higher-watt incandescents. It costs \$10 at Target.

Life: 10,000 hrs (9+ years) **Use:** Three-way lamps. **Potential savings:** \$83.00, 1,182 lbs. of carbon dioxide.

Ecobulb by Feit Electric

This is the best coil incandescent equivalent in the 60W range. The low profile on this compact bulb makes it an easy fit for most fixtures. Its bare swirl design creates a diffuse wash of warm light and minimizes hard shadows. It costs \$6 at Walgreens. **Life:** 8,000 hours (7+ years) **Use:** ceiling fixtures, lamps and wall scones. **Potential savings:** \$52.00, 591 lbs of carbon dioxide.

CARBON FOOTPRINT is defined as a measure of the impact human activities have on the environment in terms of green house gases produced in units of carbon dioxide. It is meant to be a tool that will help us humans conceptualize our personal impact in contributing to global warming.

There's no magic...Just 2 Bucks a Day

It doesn't take too much in the line of personal sacrifice or smarts to save two dollars a day, however it is a fool proof way to save \$135,630.00!!!!

No multilevel marketing and no salesperson will call you at the office. In fact, it's the simplest and most proven way to get richer, and if you extend this concept to other parts of your life, you could end up with an enviable retirement egg.

To get started, just drop your pocket change into a jar at the end of the day. If you can do that, and you put away about \$2 a day, that's just \$14 a week. At the end of the month you will have about \$60.00. This may sound like no great shakes but stay with me.

Since this is money in your pocket, you've already paid taxes on it in the form of withholding from your paycheck. Every month deposit your savings in a Meriden Schools FUC Roth IRA, where it can grow at a great tax free rate and more importantly--- be withdrawn in the future.

What's a paltry \$60 a month going to do for you? Growing tax-free for 30 years, with a 10% annual return, your investment account will be worth \$135,639.00.

That's not bad for just pocket change. I know you spend more than that amount on coffee per day, but that's just the beginning. I have included a few ideas for saving just a few bucks here and there that can add up to big dollars over time.

Start today by trimming your expenses to save more.

Activity	Monthly Savings	Annual Savings
Manicure less often	\$20	\$240.00
Take-out vs. dining out once a month	\$45	\$540.00
Fewer trips to the car wash	\$12	\$144.00
Video rental vs. movie monthly	\$11	\$132.00
Regular coffee instead of cappuccino on wk days	\$40	\$480.00
Total	\$123	\$1,476.00

If you can knock this \$123 out of your monthly budget, at 10% it will grow to \$ 278,040 in 30 years. You have practically financed your retirement with just a few small sacrifices.