

QUESTIONS or COMMENTS:

Call Editor, Nancy
at 888-296-8728



"Where Members Mean More"

Members - BEWARE

We all try to be optimists ... we think (or at least hope) that everyone out here is a good person. That no one is out to take advantage of us.

Sadly to say, it's just not that way in the real world ... there are people that will try to take advantage of you in many ways and the ones that try to do it in regards to money ... well, that's a scam and a fraud. It's a crime and it's a growing occurrence.

How do you protect yourself from becoming a victim of scams and fraud? First, use common sense. If you are offered some type of "deal" or "prize" or "on-line job opportunity" that sounds too good to be true ... **it probably is just that.** No one is out there to just give away money. Be smart, investigate, ask questions, do your homework, even call your Credit Union for advise. Don't get "suckered in". And NEVER, NEVER, NEVER (hope we stressed this enough) NEVER ... send money to them (even if you are told it is refundable or you will get more in return).

SCAM/FRAUD CHECK-LIST:

IF THEY . . .

- Make an offer that sounds unbelievable.
- Promise that you can win money, make money, or borrow money easily.
- Ask for money to enter a contest, win a sweepstakes or lottery, or claim a prize.
- Refuse to send you written information before you agree to buy or donate.
- Refuse to give you a physical address.
- Refuse to give you the details of the offer before you make any payment.
- Request your bank account or credit card number when you are not making a purchase with that account.
- Use scare tactics or pressure you to act immediately.
- Insist that you wire money or have a courier pick up your payment.
- Refuse to stop calling after you've asked not to be called again.
- Contact you to ask for personal information the company already has.
- Give you a check or money order and asks you to send some of the money somewhere.

. . . DON'T GET INVOLVED WITH THEM

NOTE: There's no such thing as a "free lottery". Lotteries are not free - in order to win, you must buy a ticket. Also, beware of purchasing lottery tickets in foreign countries - laws/rules vary.

Is the economy getting better or worse?



Before starting to write this article, we did some research on the Internet to find out how the experts are answering this question. Unfortunately, there wasn't a clear answer. Many of these experts felt the economy was starting to improve, yet many others felt just the opposite. So . . . I guess that leaves us still wondering what to do with our finances, are we going to be okay, will we be able to afford to retire, will we still have our jobs and so on.

The best advice **HEALTHCARE FIRST CREDIT UNION** can give is this. **Be smart.** Don't be afraid to ask questions or seek financial help, and be a "financial shopper" and compare.

Here's an example, you have a credit card with a particular financial institution and you've been with this credit card company for quite a while. You have been a good customer and pay your bills on time, and so on. So, why would you want to make a change? It's simple, all card companies are in business for one reason . . . to make money. The current economic situation has not been good for them either so they're doing what they feel they need to do to stay in business . . . they are raising their rates and fees and this will cost you more each month. Look over your statement, check your rate, your grace period, late fee charges and then compare them to other card companies. If you can lower your rate and fees by switching to another card company, it's wise to do so. Be aware of "reward programs". Make sure the rewards justify the rates.



Looking for a newer car? Again, shop around to get the best car loan interest rate available. Don't be fooled by some auto dealer "0% interest rates". Usually they won't deal on the car price when they're offering no interest.

And, let's not forget to shop around for "service" too. It can be a real "point of difference" when dealing with any financial institution. Are you being treated nicely, do you feel comfortable when you go in to do your "banking", is the staff friendly and knowledgeable, are you well satisfied with the service you get. You should be, each and every time or you're at the wrong financial institution. After all, you are the customer/member and deserve to be treated right!

At **HEALTHCARE FIRST CREDIT UNION**, we pledge to do our best for our members and hopefully you feel we live up to this pledge. We will always have competitive (if not better) loan rates and CD rates. Our Visa Card rate is 9.9% and has no annual fees, a 25 day grace period, a lower late fee penalty and our very own staff handles any issues you may have. Our office Staff is well trained to handle all your financial needs and provide you with the friendly, quality service you deserve.

Hopefully, and sooner than later, the economy will rebound and we can all rest a little easier. Until then, be financially wise, shop around and hopefully you'll feel **HEALTHCARE FIRST CREDIT UNION** is "a great deal" for you and for your money!

30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION BASH

That's right, in case you haven't heard yet, **HEALTHCARE FIRST CREDIT UNION** is throwing a party ... and it's a special one, a **30th Anniversary Bash**. Mark you calendar for **Friday, October 9, 2009** starting at 6:30 pm at Ace's Lounge, Chestnut St. Johnstown. Appetizers, dinner, (cash bar), DJ and prizes. You won't want to miss it! Cost per member is just \$10 in advance (\$15 at the door) and \$15 for guests (\$20 at the door). Tickets now available at any Credit Union Office or call and order them to be mailed. Get your gang together and let's party!

CAR FEVER ???

Ok, the bug bit you . . . and you're getting excited because you're ready to go car shopping. But, are you really ready? Some of the worse things you can do before purchasing a vehicle is: not having a plan, not being prepared, not asking the right questions and most importantly, falling in love with a car before you did your homework . . . you will get burned every time.

Since there is so much involved in purchasing a car **before** you actually go looking at the different models, your Credit Union will devote this page to help you "plan your car purchase" and hopefully save your money and pick the vehicle that "truly fits your needs".

Got Money?

Before you get in the "car shopping mode", the very first thing you should be doing is figuring out if you can really afford a new (or newer) vehicle. Are you going to pay cash, use money that you have in savings or will you need to take out a car loan? If it's the latter, you should first shop around for a low loan rate, then **apply for the loan in advance** so that by the time you go shopping, you already know how much money you have to spend and can work out the best deal with the seller.

HEALTHCARE FIRST CREDIT UNION can help you through this process quite easily. First, our auto loan promotion is a great one. A low 4.5% APR loan rate is very competitive. We also make applying for a loan quite simple. You can stop in at any of our five offices or apply on-line at www.healthcarefirstcu.com and click on the link "apply for a loan". Once approved, you're now ready to go car shopping and the fun begins. Find that car of your dreams (or your needs) and tell the dealer, **"I'm already pre-approved for my loan at HEALTHCARE FIRST CREDIT UNION . . . make me the best car deal you have to offer"**. You'll find out quickly how much easier the whole process goes when you're pre-approved. And, the pre-approved loan is good for 90 days . . . you don't have to jump into any fast decisions. It's a big purchase, don't rush it!



Call or stop in for more information

Ask yourself these questions before you go car shopping . . .

1. Do you prefer a domestic or import car? Does it matter?
2. Do you want/or need a small car - medium sized - or large car?
3. Do you really need 4-wheel drive or would all wheel or front wheel work for your needs?
4. Are you looking for a "soft" ride or is the "sport" look more important?
5. Is power/performance important to you?
6. Do you need a large cargo area?
7. What kind of gas mileage is acceptable to you VS the car type?
8. What about car safety? Are crash test scores important to you?
9. What level of warranty coverage meets your needs?
10. Is the resale/trade-in value a consideration?
11. How much do you want to spend?
12. How much can you really afford?

DO'S & DON'TS When Buying a USED CAR

- Do - check a used car history report.
- Do - ask a mechanic (or knowledgeable person) to inspect the car for you.
- Do - test drive it and at different speeds, different road types, etc.
- Do - check all the accessories like air conditioning, power windows, etc.
- Don't - buy a car that had been in a serious accident (especially a front end collision).
- Don't - buy a flood car. They can develop corrosion, electrical bearing problems later on.
- Don't - buy a car needing "minor" repairs. They can end up being more costly than you think.
- Don't - base your decision on what you have been told. . . check it out.
- Don't - be rude to the salesperson, they are usually there to assist you.

Consult the Web

There are many sources to help you with a car purchase. Your Credit Union is here to help answer any of your questions. Another great source for information is the World Wide Web. Here are some great web sites that you might want to visit as you enter the "car shopping" stage.

fuelconomy.gov - here you can check fuel economy and green house emissions for most vehicles, including hybrids. It is maintained by the US Dept. of Energy.

carfax4cu.com - vehicle history reports (for a fee -discounted for credit union members) You need to have the vehicle VIN number. You can find out here if the car has been salvaged, flooded or rebuilt.

consumerreports.org - is the web site for the magazine. It offers a used-car price service (for a fee).

nhtsa.gov - is the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and shows the safety rating of each model.

kbb.com - is Kelley Blue Book and is the most popular site for giving you the value of a vehicle.

edmunds.com - Also is very popular for giving you the "true market value" price of a vehicle in your region .



**DON'T DRINK & DRIVE
BUCKLE UP - IT'S THE LAW
DON'T TEXT WHILE DRIVING
FOLLOW ALL CHILD SAFETY RULES
AVOID TALKING ON CELL PHONE WHILE DRIVING**



BE CAREFUL

BE SAFE

BE ALERT

Our members are loving our "FREE SEMINAR SERIES". Our second seminar, "You and Your Credit Score" got so much interest, we had to put on a second class (28 members in each class). We also want to thank Angela, Marketing Executive from the Johnstown Credit Bureau for being a co-presenter with Paula, our President. The members received a free copy of their credit report along with great information on how their score is derived and what they can do to improve it. Members in attendance also had an opportunity to talk "one on one" with one of our Members Service Reps if they wished. Since this subject was so popular, we will probably repeat this class again early next year if we have interest from our membership.

Our next free seminar, "Young Adult Banking" will be held on Thursday, August 13th at 6:00 pm at the Franklin St. Office. This is a great starting class for teenagers and young adults to learn about checking accounts, debit cards, credit cards and managing their money. Whether they're in high school, college or starting in the working world, they need to start off on the right foot. . . financially. Parents definitely welcome too! Pre-register at any of our offices or call Nancy at 888-296-8728.