Great Things Are Happening at EducationFirst

In February 2012, EducationFirst Federal Credit Union passed a significant milestone. Your credit union is managing member assets of more than $300 million!

We were able to achieve these results because of you. You are the reason we continue to grow, and we appreciate your participation with the credit union. We are not trying to be a larger organization, but we want the resources to continue to develop products and services to help you improve your financial well-being. The growth we continue to experience means we are providing the financial products and services that you expect and demand. It means lower fees and lower interest rates on loans.

We continue to maintain a strong and stable financial institution. Thank you to all of our members for making EducationFirst successful. You are the reason we exist and your trust in our credit union is the reason we continue to grow.

Jimmy Lackey
President and CEO
Savings Strategies for College Grads

Putting away a little bit of cash now can really add up.

If you’re like most college grads, saving for the future has probably landed lower on your priority list than getting a job, paying off college loans and having enough money to survive on every month. Money can be tight at this stage in your life, but saving is possible. And putting away a little bit of cash now can really add up down the road. Following are four typical saving goals to consider.

No. 1: Rainy day fund.
Have you considered how you would cover a large unforeseen expense (car repairs or dental work)? Commit to building an emergency fund. Make a goal to save $500 just for emergencies so you don’t need to resort to credit cards. Set aside $10 a week, and after one year you will have met your goal.

No. 2: New Wheels.
Are you going to need a new (or new to you) vehicle in the near future? If your goal is to save a $1,000 down payment in the next 10 months, set up direct deposit of $50 from your bi-weekly paycheck into your savings account and you’ll reach your goal.

No. 3: A home of your own.
If buying a home is in your plans, you’ll need to save for a down payment. If you can come up with $335 a month over five years, you’ll have $20,000 to work with. Find a way to reduce your current living expenses – get another roommate, move in with mom and dad for awhile or rent a less expensive apartment. It’s worth it to live lean now so you can enjoy homeownership later.

No. 4: Retiring in style.
Start early and take full advantage of employer-sponsored retirement plans and employer matches. The earlier you start saving, the more time your money has to grow and accumulate earnings. If you can only afford to save a small percentage of your paycheck now, that’s OK. Just commit to upping that percentage every year.

We Can Help You Save More
Talk with a representative at EducationFirst. We have a variety of saving tools to help you stay on track. Stop by, give us a call at 409.898.3770 or 800.456.4684, or visit us online at www.educationfirstfcu.org to learn more.

5 SMART SAVING TIPS
If you make a plan to set aside money in advance, you’ll have a better chance at saving success. Try these simple tips to accelerate your saving today:

1. **Take advantage of direct deposit.** Designate a percentage of your paycheck to go directly into savings instead of checking. You’ll be less likely to spend it.

2. **Identify waste.** Write down your spending habits for one week, and commit to cutting back on unnecessary expenses.

3. **Avoid eating out.** Pack your lunch and take a thermos of coffee to work.

4. **Save your coins.** Spend only paper money and toss your change into a money jar, then deposit it into your savings account once a month.

5. **Ride share.** Identify co-workers who live close to you and take turns driving to work to save on gas.
Time to Switch! Move Your Accounts to EducationFirst

Rest assured that we have your best interests at heart in everything we do.

Credit unions across the country offer a better deal to consumers than most banks do. The benefits of credit union membership take many forms, including lower rates on loans, higher rates on deposits, fewer and lower fees, and innovative and convenient ways to access your accounts.* Better yet, when you belong to EducationFirst, you can enjoy peace of mind. You can rest assured that we have your best interests at heart in everything we do. We are dedicated to the credit union motto: Not for profit, not for charity, but for service.

That's quite a contrast to banks, which often look for ways to pick money out of your pocket so they can use it to line the pockets of their shareholders. Common complaints from bank customers include:

- Fees that pop up unexpectedly.
- Getting a runaround when they need help.
- Rules that favor the bank's profits rather than the customer's financial well-being.
- High minimum balances and other onerous requirements to avoid fees.

You Deserve Better

If you're fed up, it's time to switch! Consolidating all your accounts at EducationFirst can make managing your finances more convenient and less costly. You're a member here, and an owner, too. That means we're always looking for ways to help you succeed as you work toward your financial goals.

We'll even take the hassle out of switching financial institutions with a handy switch kit! It has everything you need to make a smooth transition to EducationFirst. You'll find forms to help you switch direct deposits, automatic payments and withdrawals, and balances — seamlessly. It even includes forms to close your old accounts. Pick up a switch kit at a nearby branch location, call 409.898.3770 or 800.456.4684 to have one mailed to you, or find a switch kit online at www.educationfirstfcu.org.


Don’t GetCaught in the Cycle of Payday Loans

You won’t end up paying more interest and fees with an EducationFirst loan.

You can trust our reputation as a financially sound lender in the community.

The lure of payday loans from storefront or Internet lenders can be tempting if you're in a cash crunch. These modern-day loan sharks may promise fast access to easy money.

Payday loans in one hour or less!

Apply now and get cash in 10 minutes!

$500 cash wired to your account instantly!

No credit check needed!

Unfortunately, these short-term loans can trap borrowers in an expensive cycle of debt that drags out for many weeks or months. Payday loans are intended to be paid off in two weeks, but the average borrower ends up being in debt for 212 days and paying more interest and fees than the original loan amount.*

How it works: When you apply for a payday loan, you write a check to the lender for the amount of the loan plus a fee. The lender holds this check and gives you cash or wires funds to your account. At the end of the loan term (typically two weeks, to coincide with payday) the lender will cash your check or withdraw the funds electronically. If you can’t repay, you’ll pay another fee to renew the loan.

High costs: Many borrowers get stuck paying fees on top of fees for the original amount borrowed, and that’s where payday loans can get outrageously expensive. The rates and fees lenders can legally charge varies by state, but the average annual percentage rate (APR) for a two-week payday loan is 391% to 521%.*

Know Your Options

Payday loans aren’t the only option for borrowing money in a pinch. EducationFirst offers quick service and fast approvals for personal loans and low-rate credit cards. We also offer overdraft protection for your checking account, and can help you make a sound financial decision rather than getting stuck in a cycle of endless debt. You can trust our reputation as a financially sound lender in the community and know that we’re watching out for your best interests.

Call 409.898.3770 or 800.456.4684 to learn more about borrowing money or consolidating debt.

38 Scholarships.
1 Strong Commitment to Education.

We’re proud to award each of these 38 outstanding Southeast Texas students a $750 scholarship. Congratulations to all on taking the next step to achieve your dreams.

OTHER SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS INCLUDE (photos not available):
Alexandra Bernabe, Newton HS; Taylor Busch, Vidor Christian Academy; Christina Guerra, Port Neches-Groves HS; Celeste Mitchell, West Orange Stark HS; Charles “Taylor” Reddell, East Chambers HS; Timothy Vincent, Deweyville HS and Justin Yoes, Buna HS.
How to Navigate the Uncertainty of Retirement Planning

Many people underestimate how long they will need their retirement assets to support them.

Save as much money as possible and sock it into your retirement portfolio.

*Life is a journey, not a destination.* – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Many drivers have made this mental calculation at least once: "My vehicle’s fuel gauge says I have X gallons of gas left in the tank. The next gas station is Y miles away. Based on my car’s usual fuel economy of Z miles per gallon, I [will/won’t] make it."

If retirement planning were as simple, investors could easily review their assets, calculate the years and expenses remaining in life – and discover whether their current investment strategy [would/wouldn’t] sustain them to the end. But there are two great unknowns when it comes to retirement planning: how long and expensive your retirement will be, and how your investments will perform during that time. Fortunately, by making educated guesses and taking steps to manage the factors that are under your control, you can build a clear retirement roadmap.

**Plan for a Long Journey**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the average life expectancy in 2010 was 78.7 years.* But this calculation is just an average, and many people underestimate how long they will need their retirement assets to support them. For a more individualized estimate, consider using online longevity calculators that take into account your family medical history and lifestyle habits. Next, take advantage of online calculators, such as the BallPark E$timate® at www.choosetosave.org, to estimate your retirement expenses, another figure people commonly underestimate.

Many people use historical investment returns, averaged over several decades, to estimate how their retirement nest eggs will grow over time. But again, these are only averages, and past performance is not a guarantee of future results. You may be wise to assume modest returns, just to build in an extra margin of safety.

**Be Prepared**

Whether you’re hitting the road or planning for retirement, you can help overcome unknown obstacles with the following tips.

**Fuel up.** Save as much money as possible and sock it into your retirement portfolio. Adopting a strong saving habit may provide you with an additional benefit when you retire; if you have already trained yourself to live frugally, you might enjoy lower expenses throughout retirement.

**Watch for changing conditions and detours.** Market volatility can make the retirement-planning journey feel bumpy some days, smooth on others. Experts generally recommend riding out market volatility. But what is right for a 38-year-old may not be appropriate for a 58-year-old. It is important to review your portfolio regularly and make sure your investment strategy is still aligned with your goals, timeline and risk tolerance.

**Ask for directions.** A financial advisor at EducationFirst can help you evaluate your situation, and discuss vehicles that may be appropriate for your portfolio. Schedule a consultation today. To learn more, call 409.898.3770 or 800.456.4684, or visit www.educationfirstfcu.org.

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.org.* Website not belonging to this organization is provided for information only. No endorsement is implied.

Investment products:
• Not federally insured.
• Not a deposit of this institution.
• May lose value.

By making educated guesses and taking steps to manage the factors that are under your control, you can build a clear retirement roadmap.
Save Money with Your Smartphone

While it may cost you a George Washington or two (or more) to purchase a smartphone, these handy devices can save you time and money. Use your phone’s built-in features and download free apps available at the App Store and Google Play to save.

**Pay less for gas.** Compare gas prices in your area with an app from Gasbuddy.com.

**Get cheap talk.** Tap into Wi-Fi to video call those you love for free. The iPhone® comes with a feature called FaceTime and apps such as Skype or Tango are available for download.

**Comparison shop.** Apps such as Red Laser and ShopSavvy compare prices for you. Scan the barcode of an item you’d like to buy to find out what stores in your area offer the lowest price.

**Find deals.** Digital coupon pioneer Groupon® offers an app that pulls up deals in your area for food, spas, entertainment and more. Once you sign up you can snap up great deals on the spot.

**Don’t be tardy.** Use your built-in GPS or Google Maps so you don’t get lost.

Websites not belonging to this organization are provided for information only.

No endorsement is implied.