



# Best Interests

The Ameritas Employees Credit Union Newsletter

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## INVEST IN YOURSELF WITH A VACATION LOAN!

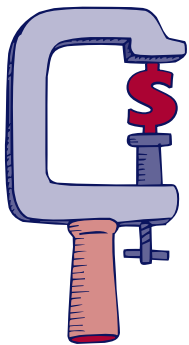


If you feel as though you are on a hamster wheel running to keep up with life, you're probably stressed out. Too much stress for too long can result in serious health problems. That's why medical experts recommend we take time off to recharge our batteries. Research suggests that taking a vacation can even lead to fewer stressful days some five weeks later. Vacations also can spark your creativity, help prevent burnout, and can improve personal relationships.

When you finance your vacation with a loan from the credit union, you'll know that the rates and terms won't cause any additional stress. A vacation loan is also a way for you to set a budget for your time off, allowing you to avoid racking up high-interest credit card bills. For details on the vacation loan that's right for you, call or stop by the credit union.

**SEE US FOR A LITTLE  
EXTRA THIS VACATION**

**UP TO \$1,500.00,  
8.99% APR  
THROUGH AUGUST 26<sup>TH</sup>**



## GET A GRIP ON YOUR FINANCES

Even if that New Year's resolution to shape up your finances has slipped away, there's still plenty of 2011 left to get a grip on your finances. The first step is to become more conscious of where your money is going. Write down every purchase you make, be it a candy bar or your mortgage payment. It doesn't matter if you

use a spreadsheet or jot it down in a pocket notebook. As you track where your money is going, pay particular attention to things like mysterious charges showing up on your cable bill or items on your phone bill that you don't remember signing up for. Watch for spending patterns that resemble a hole in your pocket, dispensing cash everywhere you go. For example, do you frequent ATMs where you pay a fee? Are you and the super-size soda constant companions?

The key is to track your spending to not only become aware of things you are buying that you don't really need or won't use anyway, but also give your spending a sense of purpose. A budget - or spending plan - with goals is much more likely to be successful than one that is full of good intentions, but not really effective.

# ONLINE SCAM ARTISTS

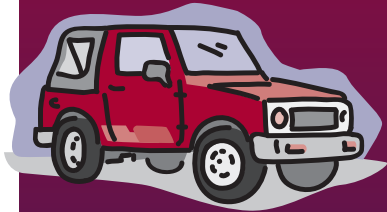


If you have e-mail, chances are you've received an "urgent" message about a PayPal account, credit card account or account at the credit union or another financial institution. Don't be fooled. Phishers, online scam artists, are becoming increasingly sophisticated and you may be tempted to respond because the inquiry appears to be legitimate. Of course, it is a trick to

get you to disclose your account information by clicking on a link that actually connects to a bogus Web site, where the data you enter is stolen.

Never respond to these messages, no matter how "urgent" or "important" they claim to be. Neither your credit union, nor any legitimate business, will ever ask for personal information or a password in an e-mail message. If you are solicited by someone pretending to be from the credit union, contact us immediately. For more information about phishing, visit [www.antiphishing.org](http://www.antiphishing.org), where you can view sample attacks in the phishing archive and report phishing e-mails you've received.

## FINANCING FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW



When you're shopping for a vehicle, the dealer ads offering very low rates or zero percent financing have no doubt caught your attention. But you'll want to keep these translations in mind:

**What the ad says:** "Not all buyers will qualify."

**What it means:** Unless you have an excellent credit score, you may not get the best rate. If your credit record has a few blemishes, your rate may be much higher.

**What the ad says:** "Offer good on selected vehicles only."

**What it means:** Slower selling models.

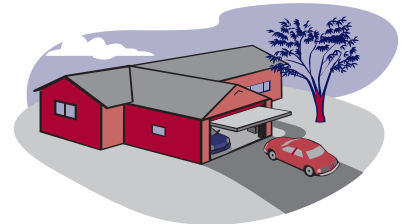
**What the ad says:** "In stock vehicles only."

**What it means:** The car with the options you want may not be eligible for the special rate. Neither will a used vehicle.

*If you're in the market for new wheels, check with the credit union first. Remember, we're in business to help you succeed financially. Car dealers are in business to sell you a vehicle. We're always on your side of the bargaining table.*

## TAP YOUR HOME'S EQUITY

For most of us, the biggest asset we have is the same place we sleep, watch television, and mow the grass. But although a house is the biggest asset, it's also the least liquid. That's where a home equity loan from the credit union comes in. If you need funds for home improvements, a vehicle, or other productive use of credit, tapping the equity in your home can be the best way to borrow. Even with a decline in real estate prices, chances are, your loan-to-value ratio will allow you to access some of the equity you have earned. For example, if your home is appraised at \$150,000 and your first mortgage is \$100,000, you may be able to borrow a percentage of the difference and take advantage of flexible repayment terms. It's a smart way to borrow because the interest you pay may be tax deductible. See your tax adviser to find out more. So if you've been thinking that this is the summer to add that deck or replace those aging appliances, or you've wondered how you were going to help your daughter with her college tuition, stop by the credit union and ask about a home equity loan.



**WOW!**  
Words of Wit

Never be afraid to do something new. Remember, amateurs built the ark; professionals built the Titanic.

# GOT SUPPLIES? IT'S BACK TO SCHOOL TIME

Just as holiday spending can wreak havoc on a family budget, so can the annual pilgrimage to the mall to outfit your young scholars. According to statistics from the National Retail Federation, the average family spent more than \$600 on clothes, shoes, supplies, and electronics in 2010. Here are tips to help you get the most for your money during the 2011 back-to-school season:



- Avoid using a high-interest rate credit card for your purchases. Get a low-interest loan from your credit union instead. That way, you'll not only pay less interest, but you can use cash and spend less. Research studies consistently show that consumers who use cash instead of a credit card are more careful about their purchases and don't spend as much.
- Shop at home first. Check drawers, basements and closets for markers, crayons, pencils, partially used notebooks and other supplies before you buy replacements.
- Make your list and shop early. In an effort to get you into the store and into shopping mode, many retailers offer deep discounts on school supplies and clothing as early as July. Take advantage of these loss leaders.
- Shop outside the box, too. Visit thrift stores and garage or yard sales to look for gently used items.

## KEEPING YOUR KIDS SAFE ONLINE

*Technology has made many jobs easier. But it's made the*



*most important job of all - being a parent - tougher. Now, we need to do our best to keep our kids out of trouble, both in the physical and the virtual worlds.*

### Here are some tips to keep your kids safe online:

1. Teach your kids to protect passwords and to be sure that the "remember me" box is not checked on computers they use at school or the library.
2. Keep your anti-virus software updated and caution your kids about downloading attachments from people they don't know.
3. Talk to your kids about their online activities. Communicate the type of Web sites that your family doesn't consider appropriate. Just as you set limits about where your children can go in the physical world, specify Web sites that are not allowed. You can confirm compliance by looking at the browser history. Using filtering tools is another option.
4. Caution your kids about sharing personal information. Discuss the importance of privacy settings on social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace. Warn them to be as wary of strangers online as they are of them in person and to never have an in-person meeting with anyone they have "met" online. Teach them how to recognize an e-mail that is "phishing" for personal information.
5. Help them develop a critical eye toward content. While the Web is a fantastic source of reliable information, it also holds a lot of misinformation.

## WHAT IS...A SHARE SAVINGS ACCOUNT



When you become a credit union member, you do so by opening a share savings account. Your credit union is a financial cooperative, and when you join, you become a member/owner. Your share account is your "share" in the credit union. It's the basic unit of savings and the foundation for all of the other financial products and services available. You may hear other financial institutions referring to you as a member, but when you open an account at one, the fact is, you are just a customer. Other financial institutions are either privately held - owned by a small group of investors, such as a family, or publicly traded - owned by stockholders who buy and sell shares on the stock market. But a credit union is fundamentally different. Here, members are the shareholders. Use your share savings account to accumulate funds for short-term goals, like the down payment on your first car. Once you open a share account, you may have access to other products like a checking account with a debit card or opening a share certificate. Contact the credit union to find out more.

# ALTERNATIVES FOR A VACATION



Vacations are a wonderful way to create great family memories, but if you think you can't afford one this year, your credit union has some tips on how to take a vacation with your family away from home. And,

these tips won't cost you a bundle of money. All you need is one day, a little bit of enthusiasm, and a sense of adventure.

## 1. CREATE A LIST OF THE THINGS YOU WANT TO DO TOGETHER.

Movie and popcorn, hiking, fishing, museums, etc.

## 2. VISIT STATE AND LOCAL PARKS.

Gather some brochures to get an idea of what there is to do. Then, set out each day looking for new adventures.

## 3. CONSIDER CAMPING OUT EVEN IF IT'S IN THE BACKYARD.

If you don't have the equipment, ask around and try to borrow from a friend. The kids will have a blast.

## 4. PLAN AN ALL DAY TRIP TO THE AMUSEMENT PARK.

## 5. IF PLANNING ALL DAY TRIPS, TRY TO EAT YOUR MEALS OUT.

This way there's no cleaning up the dirty dishes.

## 6. PLAN A FAMILY PICNIC.

At the same time, plan on fishing and/or having fun playing in the creek.

*Even if you're strapped for cash this year, plan some fun time with your family - make it a family day/weekend.*

# INFO LETS YOU KNOW THE SCORE

As a student, you probably worried about your test scores. Now there's another score that can have an even bigger impact on your life than the grade on your exams: Your credit score. Your credit score is a measure of your creditworthiness. It's based on your credit report, data collected by the three credit reporting agencies. The higher your score, the better the rate you'll get on loans. But all too often, consumers have been kept in the dark about their credit scores. That's now changed.

A new law provides that in some cases, after you apply for credit, you will get a "credit score notice" stating your credit score and information about how it compares to other consumers' scores. If you are offered credit at terms less favorable than other consumers (you'd be paying more interest), you will receive a "risk-based pricing notice." If the rate on an existing credit account is increased based on a review of your credit report, you may receive an "account review notice."

If you receive any of these notices, read it carefully to understand how your credit report or credit score may affect what you pay for credit. If you get a "risk-based pricing notice" or an "account review notice," follow the instructions in it to receive a free credit report. Review the information promptly.

If you get a "credit score notice," and are surprised about how your credit score compares to others, get your free annual credit report and review for accuracy. Go to [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) or call 877-322-8228. If you find errors in your credit report, dispute the information and



request that the information be deleted or corrected. To do so, you should contact the credit bureau that provided the report.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT THIS LINK:**  
[www.federalreserve.gov/consumerinfo/wyntk\\_notices.htm](http://www.federalreserve.gov/consumerinfo/wyntk_notices.htm)

## PUT YOUR SAVINGS ON AUTO PILOT

It can happen to anyone. Despite the best intentions to save money from every paycheck, something comes up and we spend it instead. That's why you want to have automation on your side. Sign up for payroll deduction at the credit union and put your savings on autopilot. By having funds automatically deposited into your credit union

share savings account, you'll be on your way to reaching your savings goals before you know it. You won't even miss the money because you don't see it on payday. What you will see is your savings balance growing every month, giving you more options in the future. It's easy to sign up for payroll deduction. Just call or stop by the credit union to find out how.