

FIRST EDITION



Upcoming Important Dates & Seminars

Wednesday, February 24

The Return of Conservative Investing Virtual Seminar, 6pm

Tuesday, March 2

Women & Investing Virtual Seminar, 6:30pm

Monday, March 15

New Online Banking and Mobile App Upgrade

Wednesday, March 17

Transitions to Retirement Virtual Seminar, 6pm

Monday, March 22

Credit Card Conversion, All Credit Cardholders Must Activate Their New Cards

Wednesday, March 24

Social Security & Your Retirement Virtual Seminar, 6pm

Wednesday, March 31

Income for Life Virtual Seminar, 6pm

Wednesday, April 7

Redefining a Diversified Portfolio Virtual Seminar, 6pm

Wednesday, April 14

Transitions to Retirement Virtual Seminar, 6pm

Register for the virtual seminar sessions on the events calendar at firstffcu.com, or text FFSEminar to 866.956.9302!

5 WAYS TO FINANCIALLY THRIVE IN THE NEW YEAR

The time for “New year, new me” resolutions is here, and we’ve got five (actually attainable) resolutions that you’ll want to keep up with all year long. Read on to find out five ways to make 2021 a financially great year.

Learn a new (financial) language. Does listening to financial talk sometimes feel like hearing a foreign language? Instead of simply nodding along, make a resolution to improve your financial literacy this year. Finally learn the ins-and-outs of money management. There are plenty of resources online that can help you decode the definitions behind personal finance terms. You can even make a Quizlet to help you commit the terminology to memory! If you’re worried about finding the time to teach yourself this new language, try incorporating some financial podcasts into your weekly routine. By listening to financial podcasts, you can improve your finance skills while still going about your daily tasks. It’s a great way to get stuff done and get a better idea of what is going on in your wallet and bank account.

Clear out the clutter. Recurring payments can be a great time saver, but they can also get out of hand very easily. Sit down and comb through your recurring payments so you can know exactly where your money is going and when it’s being taken. Take an especially close look at your monthly subscriptions. How many television streaming services are you subscribed to? Music streaming services? There are countless entertainment streaming platforms out there, but you don’t need to subscribe to all of them. Make a list of your entertainment subscriptions and figure out which ones you actually use and which ones are just cluttering up your monthly or annual payments. This applies to paid store memberships, too—if you don’t shop at that discount warehouse much anymore, don’t forget to cancel the membership card before you get charged for the new year’s renewal!

Get creative. Don’t let yourself feel trapped by the status-quo of savings, there are many ways to get creative with your finances. Need some extra money for tighter areas in your budget but don’t know how where to get it? Look into refinancing your existing Auto Loan from another lender with us! With our low rates, your monthly payment will be more manageable, which means you’ll have more money in your pocket, ready to put to good use.*

Making the switch from a high-interest rate credit card to one of our lower-rate cards could also decrease the amount of money you’re spending per term, freeing up funds to put elsewhere.* There are so many avenues you can take to save money.

Get in touch with our Loan Department, and we’ll help you get creative in finding them!

Take up a new (money-saving) hobby. Trying a new hobby can help improve one’s mood and daily motivation, but don’t forget that it could also help your wallet! Want to try improving your culinary skills? Great! Ditch the costly take-out meals and door deliveries, and resolve to cook meals at home. Halting the high delivery costs, taxes, and tips (or gas money for drive-thru and pick-up options) will drastically cut down your monthly expenses, giving you more money to spare. You could also pick up a new hobby that could help increase your income. The internet has given us a wealth of resources when it comes to finding freelance work. Skilled at editing? Explore the world of freelance editing for supplemental income. Got an artistic side? Look into starting up an online shop to sell your handmade goods on sites like Etsy or Facebook Marketplace. The options are exciting and endless (and will provide you with some supplemental income)!

Plan it out! Most people shudder at the word “budget.” It’s never fun to sit down and decide what you can’t spend money on. Instead, why not give yourself the freedom to choose what you can spend money on? This tactic for approaching money management is called a “spending plan,” and it’s a lot less intimidating than a budget. A spending plan gives you a lot more flexibility in your finances while still keeping you focused on covering your monthly essentials.

The process of determining your “non-negotiable” expenses is mainly the same as a budget: you have rent, electric, water, internet, groceries, emergency funds, etc. The difference begins when you determine your flexible categories. For example, entertainment, personal shopping, dining out, date nights, and more. A spending plan gives you the freedom to set ballpark amounts for these categories without restricting you too harshly. As long as you have your monthly non-negotiables covered, how you distribute money from month to month in your other categories doesn’t matter as much. A budget is far more restrictive, which can put you in a panicked mindset of “money is always tight, I have no wiggle room,” whereas, a spending plan gives you the control to say “I have the room to spend a little extra here this month.” Start 2021 establishing a spending plan and giving yourself the freedom to choose where your money should go and how you want to spend it!

*For details, visit <https://blog.firstffcu.com/2021/01/11/5-ways-to-financially-thrive-in-the-new-year/>



Note from the CEO

Happy 2021 to all of you, our valued members. As delighted as we are to start a brand new year, we're also happy to announce the official 85th Anniversary of our credit union this February! That's 85 wonderful years of serving our local Monmouth and Ocean County community members. We're grateful for your continued membership, and overjoyed to continue Putting People First—as we've proudly done since 1936.

In addition to celebrating 85 years in business this first quarter—we also have some important new upgrades coming to a screen near you this March 2021. Starting on March 15th, we'll be rolling out an Online Banking and Mobile & Tablet App upgrade with great new security features and

enhanced services, plus a whole new look and feel. Stay tuned to your inbox for important login instructions as we get closer to launch, as well as our Online Services webpage at firstffcu.com—which will feature user guides and video tutorials. We can't wait for you to see all the exciting new changes!

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, our branch lobbies remain closed to walk-in visitors at this time. Branch Drive-Thru and ATM services, as well as our Member Relationship Phone Center—are available with modified hours of operation. You can schedule an in-branch appointment for loan closings and account openings, by contacting our Member Relationship Phone Center. For the most up-to-date information on individual branch locations and hours, please check our website homepage, our website COVID-19 resources page, or on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

We thank you for your continued support, loyalty, and membership with us over the past 85 years. Our commitment to serving you remains foremost in our minds as we continue to navigate through the current environment. First Financial wishes you and your family health and wellness, and a Happy New Year 2021. As always, thank you for Thinking First—God Bless!

Sincerely,

Issa Stephan, CCUE, President & CEO

CREDIT CARD CONVERSION

Important Date: March 22, 2021

First Financial is excited to announce improvements to our credit card program, including enhanced security features, online access to view your account, a new credit card design, a new rewards program with additional cash back options, electronic statement availability, and First Financial Wallet.

This will mean a few changes to your account. Please be advised of the following key dates:

3/8/21 - All new First Financial Credit Cards will be mailed to cardholders

3/22/21 - Previous Credit Cards will become inactive at 6:45am EST (You will not be able to use your former Credit Card, even if it has not expired).

New credit cards can be activated beginning at 6:45am EST on 3/22.

Questions or need to reach cardholder service?

Starting on March 22nd, Visa® Signature Cardholders can call **888.999.3302** and all other cardholders can call **888.999.3353** for balance inquiries, payment information, transaction history, statement requests, or to dispute a charge.

If you have automatic payments made with your current Credit Card, be sure to contact each vendor with your new updated Credit Card number to help avoid any interruption in service as of 3/22/21.

Upgraded Online Banking and Mobile App Launch

Save the Date! March 15, 2021

It's a new year and we're updating Online Banking and our Mobile App this March 2021.

Stay tuned for more details and first-time login information as we get closer to launch day! How-to guides and video tutorials will be added to our website and emailed out prior to March 15th.

Here are a few of the features you can expect to see on March 15th:

- Live chat services
- Added security features
- Responsive design tailored to the device you are using, plus new and improved look & feel
- Mobile app updates including First Financial Wallet (View your First Financial Credit and Debit Cards in one place—get alerts on transactions, lock your cards, control transactions, and manage your spending).
- Plus, the same great features you already know and love, now upgraded: Member to Member Transfers, Online Bill Pay, Check Ordering, Instant Balance, and 1-Click Remote Deposit Capture
- Zelle® (Person-to-person payments, arriving by late Spring 2021. Pop Money will continue to be available at launch.)

WATCH OUT FOR THESE FINANCIAL PITFALLS IN THE NEW YEAR



As people move through different stages of life, there are new financial opportunities and potential pitfalls around every corner. Here are common money mistakes to watch out for at every age.

Your 20s & 30s

Being financially illiterate. By learning as much as you can about saving, budgeting, and investing now, you could benefit from it for the rest of your life.

Not saving regularly. Save a portion of every paycheck and then spend what's left over—not the other way around. You can earmark savings for short-, medium-, and long-term goals. A variety of mobile apps can help you track your savings progress.

Living beyond your means. This is the corollary of not saving. If you can't manage to stash away some savings each month and pay for most of your expenses out-of-pocket, then you need to rein in your lifestyle. Start by cutting your discretionary expenses, and then look at ways to reduce your fixed costs.

Spending too much on housing. Think twice about buying a house or condo that will stretch your budget to the max, even if a lender says you can afford it. Consider building in space for a possible dip in household income that could result from a job change or a leave from the workforce to care for children.

Overlooking the cost of subscriptions and memberships. Keep on top of services you are paying for (e.g., online streaming, cable, the gym, your smartphone bill, food delivery) and assess whether they still make sense on an annual basis.

Not saving for retirement. Perhaps saving for retirement wasn't on your radar in your 20s, but you shouldn't put it off in your 30s. Start now and you still have 30 years or more to save. Wait much longer and it can be hard to catch up. Start with whatever amount you can afford and add to it as you're able.

Not protecting yourself with insurance. Consider what would happen if you were unable to work and earn a paycheck. Life insurance and disability income insurance can help protect you and your family.

Your 40s

Not keeping your job skills fresh. Your job is your lifeline to income, employee benefits, and financial security. Look for opportunities to keep your skills up-to-date and stay abreast of new workplace developments and job search technologies.

Spending to keep up with others. Avoid spending money you don't have to try to keep up with your friends, family, neighbors, or colleagues. The only financial life you need to think about is your own.



Funding college over retirement. Don't prioritize saving for college over saving for retirement. If you have limited funds, consider setting aside a portion for college while earmarking the majority for retirement. Closer to college time, have a frank discussion with your child about college options and look for creative ways to help reduce college costs.

Using your home equity like a bank. The goal is to pay off your mortgage by the time you retire or close to it—a milestone that will be much harder to achieve if you keep moving the goalposts.

Ignoring your health. By taking steps now to improve your fitness level, diet, and overall health, not only will you feel better today but you may reduce your health-care costs in the future.

Your 50s & 60s

Co-signing loans for adult children. Co-signing means you're 100% on the hook, if your child can't pay—a less-than-ideal situation as you approach retirement.

Raiding your retirement funds before retirement. It goes without saying that dipping into your retirement funds will reduce your nest egg, a significant tradeoff for purchases that aren't true emergencies.

Not knowing your sources of retirement income. As you near retirement, you should know how much money you (and your partner, if applicable) can expect from three sources: your personal retirement accounts (e.g., 401(k) plans and IRAs); pension income from an employer; and Social Security at age 62, full retirement age, and age 70.

Not having a will or advance medical directive. No one likes to think about death or catastrophic injury, but these documents can help your loved ones immensely if something unexpected should happen to you.

Questions? Contact First Financial's Investment & Retirement Center by calling 732.312.1534. You can also email Mary.LaFerriere@cunamutual.com or Maureen.McGreevy@cunamutual.com

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Job Change? ASK ABOUT 401(K) ROLLOVER ASSISTANCE

When changing employers, you'll want to understand all your 401(k) rollover options to avoid costly mistakes. Receive helpful resources and advice about your options, rules, tax implications, and any deadlines you may need to consider.

Contact the First Financial Investment & Retirement Center by calling **732.312.1534** or visit firstffcu.com/investments-insurance.

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DELICIOUS HOME-COOKED MEALS FOR WINTER, IT'S EASIER AND CHEAPER THAN YOU THINK!

As the old slogan says, "Set it and forget it!" Whether you're running around with your kids, running around with your pets, or running because that is your chosen form of exercise—it feels like there are truly never enough hours in the day. Sure, your favorite local restaurant delivers—but there's no beating a comforting home-cooked meal. The average commercially prepared meal costs \$13, while on the other hand—the average home-cooked meal costs \$4.

Now, it's true that not everyone enjoys cooking or considers themselves skilled at it. However, you can make delicious, cheap, and easy meals with an Instant Pot or Slow Cooker! We're all about making your life easier here at First Financial. We wanted to share some of our favorite easy, low-cost recipes to help you out. With each recipe, we'll give you a way to dress it up, as well as how to cut some costs.

For the second recipe, we'll be using an Instant Pot. This handy kitchen device can do it all—from sautéing, pressure cooking, and everything in between. If you don't have one, they are regularly on sale and come in various sizes.

*Note: If this is your first time using an Instant Pot, be sure to read the device set-up instructions carefully and complete the water test first.

Slow Cooker Chicken and Stuffing

Even when it's not Thanksgiving, something is comforting about a home-cooked meal that includes stuffing. The good thing is, it pairs just as well with chicken as it does with turkey. And with a recipe this easy, you can have it any time of the year! This recipe takes minimal effort and will make your home smell amazing besides.

*Note: For this recipe, you can use an Instant Pot or a traditional Crock-Pot.

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|---|--|
| 14 oz bag dried seasoned stuffing mix | 1 tsp ground sage |
| 1 sweet onion, diced | 2 garlic cloves, diced |
| 2 stalks of celery, diced | 1 ½ lbs. boneless skinless chicken breasts |
| 2 (10 oz) cans cream of chicken and herb soup | Salt and pepper to taste |

1. Spray your Instant Pot or slow cooker with non-stick cooking spray.
2. Add the chicken broth and stuffing mix to the slow cooker and stir to combine.
3. Sprinkle the sage over the top.
4. Lay your chicken on top of your stuffing mix and season with salt, pepper, and garlic.
5. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours and 30 minutes if you're using a CrockPot, or pressure cook manually on high for 25 minutes in your Instant Pot.
6. Remove the chicken and shred, cube, or serve whole.

TIP Sage is what will give this meal a holiday flavor, but if you aren't a fan, you can substitute for rosemary instead. Just as tasty! If you are using an Instant Pot, you may need to add more broth—more than likely 1 cup instead of a ½ cup. You'll want to make sure all the ingredients are submerged before pressure cooking, if not—add more chicken broth.

MONEY SAVING TIP Buy a large carton of chicken broth instead of smaller cans. It will go a long way and will keep for quite some time, plus you'll be able to use it in multiple Instant Pot or Slow Cooker recipes.

Instant Pot White Chicken Chili

Creamy, hearty, and comforting—this recipe is a new take on the classic chili. If you aren't a huge bean fan, feel free to cut back on the specified amount or omit them completely. Serve this chili with tortilla chips for a delicious and easy Southwestern meal.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 large chicken breasts
- 15 oz can black beans (drained and rinsed)
- 15 oz can white kidney beans (drained, not rinsed)
- 1 medium red onion, diced
- 15 oz can of corn (do not drain)
- 10 oz can of Rotel diced tomatoes with green chilis (keep the juice)
- ½ cup chicken broth
- 1 ½ tsp chili powder (use less if you want to cut down on spice)
- 2 tsp cumin
- Ranch dressing packet
- 8 oz package of cream cheese cut into six pieces

1. Place all of your ingredients into your Instant Pot bowl in the following order: 2 chicken breasts (uncooked), your drained black and white beans, chopped onion, undrained corn, undrained Rotel tomatoes/green chilis, and ½ cup chicken broth.
2. Add the Chili Powder and 1 tsp of cumin, as well as the ranch packet. Stir everything to combine. Be sure to lift the chicken breasts slightly so that some of the juices will get underneath the chicken.
3. Place your cut cream cheese dotted across the top of your chili. Then place the lid onto the Instant Pot and seal.
4. Cook the chili for 20 minutes on manual high pressure. Once the cooking is done, allow the Instant Pot to de-pressurize naturally for 10 more minutes. Then, completely release the pressure on your Instant Pot.
5. Remove the chicken breasts from the mixture and shred them. **PRO TIP:** You can easily shred cooked chicken by placing it in a bowl and using a hand mixer. Before putting the chicken back into the chili, stir the chili. Once everything is combined, return the chicken to the chili. You're now ready to serve.

TIP If you want even more spice, add a diced jalapeno to your chili mixture. For more spice, use more seeds.

MONEY SAVING TIP If you don't use much cumin, buy a packet of taco seasoning instead. You'll be ready for tacos and won't have to spend money on a spice you rarely use.

Loan Connection

732.312.1500, Option 4

To Fax Loan Applications

732.312.1530 (24-hour)

Contact Us

Local Callers 732.312.1500
Out of Area 866.750.0100
info@firstffcu.com

Neptune Branch

783 Wayside Road

Toms River Branch

1360 Route 9 South
Corner of Routes 9 & 571

Freehold/Howell Service Center

389 Route 9 North
Next to Howell Park & Ride

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First Financial's Supervisory Committee has the responsibility to investigate member complaints that cannot be resolved through normal channels. If you have a complaint or suggestion to improve our service to you or if you have an unresolved problem, please write to:

Supervisory Committee
P.O. Box 751
Neptune, NJ 07754