

Upcoming Important Dates & Seminars

📅 Tuesday, May 23

Transitions to Retirement Virtual Seminar, 6pm

📅 Monday, May 29

All locations will be closed in observance of Memorial Day

📅 Wednesday, June 7

401k Rollover Planning Virtual Seminar, 6pm

📅 Monday, June 19

All locations will be closed in observance of Juneteenth

📅 Tuesday, June 27

Rethinking Diversification Virtual Seminar, 6pm

📅 Tuesday, July 4

All locations will be closed in observance of Independence Day

Register for upcoming virtual seminars on the events calendar at [firstffcu.com](https://www.firstffcu.com)

Financial Literacy Month: Money Advice from First Financial Staff

To celebrate Financial Literacy Month, the First Financial team is sharing their best money advice to help you build the financial skills you need to meet your goals. Knowledge is power, and the more you know about finances, the better habits you'll build over time!



What is financial literacy?

Let's talk about what financial literacy is and what it means for your future. Financial literacy is the ability to understand and use money management skills like budgeting, properly using credit cards, investing, and more. Having a strong relationship with money is crucial in being able to navigate through life. For example, the more financially literate you are, the more likely you'll be able to avoid fraud or debt. The more you understand about credit cards, the less likely you are to rack up charge after charge and lower your credit score.

How to become more financially literate

There are so many ways to build your financial management skills! For one, you can read and subscribe to financial blogs like ours. Many credit unions like ours also offer no-cost virtual seminars and publications about various financial topics. Overall though, working with a financial professional will help you get the guidance you need based on your situation. Be patient—financial literacy is a lifelong journey and we are here to help!

Tips from First Financial employees

Some of our financial experts shared their top money tips they want everyone to know. Our staff's advice ranges from budgeting and credit card management to everyday savings.

Create a simple budget: "To start your own simple budget, create a list of your total take-home income, your total fixed expenses, your total variable expenses, and your monthly savings. Check back once a month to see if you're on track or if you need to adjust your budget." – Issa Stephan, President/CEO

Review your subscriptions: "Take the time to cancel any unused or unwanted subscriptions (like streaming services), and reallocate those expenses into your budget on something you do use – or put the extra money toward any existing debt." – Julie Brandt-Olivier, Lending Manager

Don't forget about your credit score: "Build your credit score! It's the most significant piece of financial data that will impact your day-to-day life." – Chantel Baptiste, Business Development Officer

Limit your spending: "Make a budget, set and stick to limits for discretionary spending such as entertainment, travel, and other non-essential items. Always include savings into your budget too." – Terriann Warn, Chief Financial Officer

Pay your bills on time: "On-time payments have the greatest impact on a good credit score." – Nancy Culp, Chief Lending Officer

Learn debt repayment strategies: "To eliminate revolving debt on multiple credit cards, focus on paying extra on the card with the highest interest rate. When that debt is eliminated, take that monthly payment and add it to the regular monthly payment of your next card with a balance and high rate, until that debt is eliminated. Repeat as needed." – Michael Walker, Assistant Vice President of IT

Don't live beyond your means: With regard to credit cards, don't live beyond your means. If you can't afford it, you don't need it. – Doreen Cutrona, Assistant Vice President of Member Operations

You can find more money advice on our First Scoop blog at blog.firstffcu.com. Or, if you're looking for more specific advice based on your situation, call us or stop by any of our local branches. Together, we can increase your financial literacy and help reach your goals!

Note from the CEO

Happy Spring!

The weather is warming and flowers are in bloom, which means it's the perfect time for financial spring cleaning! Just as we do a deep clean of our homes during this season, it's important to do the same with our finances. This includes reevaluating your budget, cleaning up your credit report, and making sure you're on track with your financial goals.

As we also celebrate Financial Literacy Month, I want to remind all our members of the importance of financial education. Our mission at the credit union has always been to put our member's financial needs first. That's why we offer financial literacy resources and tools to help you make informed decisions about your money. By investing in your financial education, you're not only helping yourself, but also your family and future generations.

Speaking of investing, I want to take a moment to recognize and congratulate five of our employees who recently received service awards at our annual meeting. Three of them have been with us for 15 years, and two for 5 years. Their commitment and dedication to our mission is what makes First Financial stand out in the community.

None of our success would be possible without your continued support. We appreciate your loyalty and trust in us to help you achieve your financial goals.

As always, thank you for Thinking First – God Bless



Sincerely,

Issa Stephan, CCUE, President & CEO



Janice Anderson, Member Solutions Representative (15 years)

Doreen Cutrona, Assistant Vice President of Member Operations (15 years)



Jessica Tortorice, Vice President of Marketing & Business Development (15 years)

Jessica Dellago, Member Relationship Center Supervisor (5 years)



Toni Greenfield, Member Operations Manager (5 years)

"I want to take a moment to recognize and congratulate five of our employees who recently received service awards at our annual meeting."

-Issa Stephan, President & CEO

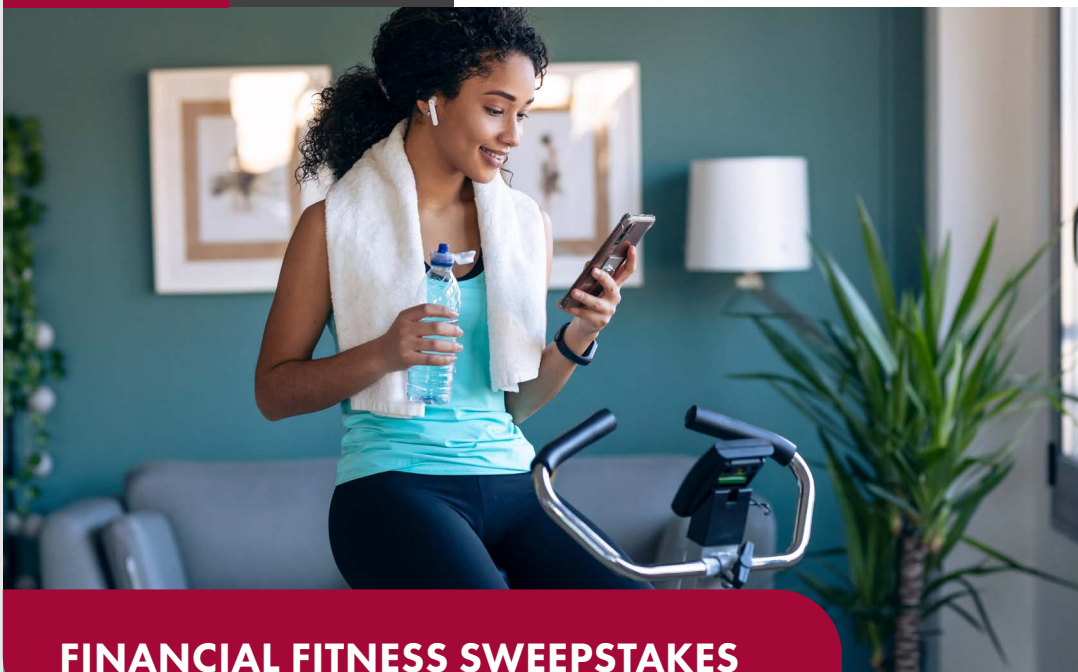


“

I have many ideas for my business and First Financial knows how to help.”
-Ameerah Jones, Business Member

Meet First Financial member Ameerah Jones, owner of Hairstylist for the Nations in Shrewsbury! Ameerah started her business in 2012, and one of the reasons she decided to bank with us was because there were no monthly fees on her business checking account.

Learn how First Financial meets Ameerah's needs as a freelance business owner in a fast-paced environment by watching the video at [youtube.com/FirstFinancialFCU](https://www.youtube.com/FirstFinancialFCU).



FINANCIAL FITNESS SWEEPSTAKES

Powerlift your finances for a chance to win \$2k this spring, when you make any qualifying digital banking transaction between 4/1 and 5/31/23. You'll automatically qualify to win \$1,000 toward your bills and \$1,000 toward your savings account!

Get started in Online Banking or our Mobile App.

*Visit our promotions page at [firstfcu.com](https://www.firstfcu.com) for full sweepstakes details.

Yours, Mine, and Ours: Financial Tips for Blended Families

Combining finances can be complicated for any couple, but the challenges become more complex the second time around, especially when children are involved. Here are some ideas to consider if you are already part of a blended family or looking forward to combining households sometime soon.

Be Clear and Comprehensive

It's important to reveal all assets, income, and debts, and discuss how these should be treated in your combined family. A prenuptial agreement may seem unromantic, but it could prevent acrimony and misunderstanding if the marriage ends through divorce or the death of a spouse. If you don't want a legal agreement, have an open and honest discussion, and lay all your cards on the table. It's not too late to clarify the situation after you've tied the knot.

One of the most fundamental issues is where you and your new spouse will live. It might be more convenient — and perhaps better financially — to move into a residence that one of you already owns. But couples in a second marriage often report that moving into a new home gives them a feeling of a fresh start, which could have value that can't be measured financially.¹

Create a blueprint for short-term and long-term finances. Do you plan to combine bank accounts or keep separate accounts, perhaps with a joint account to pay shared expenses? To what accounts will each of your salaries be deposited? Will one spouse help pay off the other spouse's debts such as student loans, auto loans, and credit cards? Research suggests that remarried couples are generally happier when they pool resources, but there are many variations in how that might be carried out.²

Consider the Kids

Discuss how you plan to handle financial responsibility for children from previous marriages versus any children you have together. Are they going to be "your kids, my kids, and our kids," or are they all "our kids"? Being a stepparent and/or a divorced parent can be complex emotionally, and there are no easy answers. But there are some not-so-complex financial questions you should address up front.

Be clear about alimony payments, child support, and other financial responsibilities. For example, what is each spouse's intention and/or legal obligation to pay college tuition costs for children from a previous marriage? Are there assets that one spouse wants to reserve for the benefit of his or her children? Is the other spouse willing to waive rights to those assets?

Communicating and planning with an ex-spouse is essential if you share custody of children. Along with responsibilities for everyday expenses, be sure you understand and agree on other financial issues, such as who will claim the child as a beneficiary on tax returns, and who is the "custodial parent" for purposes of financial aid applications. A beneficiary deduction may be more valuable for a parent with higher earnings, but a custodial parent with lower earnings may enable a student to qualify for more financial aid.

Update Wills and Beneficiary Forms

Be sure that your will and all beneficiary forms reflect your new situation and current wishes. A will can designate heirs and facilitate distribution of assets when an estate goes through the probate process. However, the assets in most pension plans, qualified retirement accounts, and life insurance policies convey directly to the people named on the beneficiary forms — even if they are different from those named in your will — and are not subject to probate. By law, your current spouse is the beneficiary of an ERISA-governed retirement account such as a 401(k) plan. If you want to designate an ex-spouse or children from a previous marriage as account beneficiaries, you must obtain a notarized waiver from your current spouse.

Blending families can be challenging on many levels. Financial matters may be easier to deal with than personal aspects as long as you take appropriate steps to identify the issues and agree on your shared financial goals.

Questions? Contact First Financial's Investment & Retirement Center by calling (732) 312-1534.

You can also email Mary.LaFerriere@lpl.com or Maureen.McGreevy@lpl.com



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1–2) American Psychological Association, August 23, 2019

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How to Spot a Ticket Scam

Avoiding Event Ticket Scams

Now that the weather is warming up, you might be thinking about summer concerts or outdoor sporting events you'd like to buy tickets for. It's important to identify scams before handing over your money.

A packed show or competitive playoff game can make for a memorable time, but if you're scrounging for tickets, be careful. Sold out and high-demand events like concerts, festivals, and professional sports can be prime targets for ticketing scams.

In some cases, a scammer may create counterfeit tickets, complete with forged barcodes and real company logos. At other times, a scammer might make copies of a legitimate ticket and sell it to multiple people. In either scenario, the ticket holder won't know it's a scam until their ticket is scanned at the gate and they are denied entry. Sometimes a seller will insist on upfront payment with a promise of putting tickets in the mail, but the tickets never arrive – and the seller disappears.

If tickets are being offered at a price that seems too good to be true, or if the seller is pressuring you to send money right away to seal the deal – those are warning signs of a potential scam.

How to Avoid Becoming a Victim of a Ticketing Scam

Buy only from trusted ticket vendors. When possible, purchase tickets directly from the venue. When buying online, purchase tickets from vendors you know and trust. Look for the lock symbol in the web address to indicate a secure purchasing system. You can verify their authenticity by looking them up on the Better Business Bureau or checking to see if they are a member of the National Association of Ticket Brokers.

Check the fine print. You should only purchase tickets from a seller that provides clear details about the terms of the transaction, including the location of the seats, how the tickets will be received, and what the refund policy is.

Use payment methods that come with protection. Be suspicious of sellers insisting on being paid through digital payment apps and keep in mind that certain payment types can't be refunded (such as person-to-person payments). A credit card is usually the best payment method for event tickets because many credit card companies offer built-in buyer protection for cardholders. Always check the terms and conditions of your credit card to see what protections you have before purchasing.

Be wary of promotions. When you search the web for online tickets, advertisements for inexpensive tickets will often appear. Some of these ads will be ticket scams, especially if the prices are inexplicably low.

If you're unsure, verify your tickets. Pay a visit to the venue where the event will be held. Present your ticket at Will Call or customer service, and have them verify if your ticket is legitimate.

When it comes to ticketing scams, remember to slow down and ask questions. If you detect suspicious activity, report the seller to your online marketplace or ticketing platform.

At First Financial, our goal is to help protect our members from scams and identity theft. If you have any concerns or questions about any of your First Financial accounts, please call member services or visit one of our branches.

To learn more about scams and ways to protect yourself, visit zellepay.com/pay-it-safe.

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
[firstffcu.com](https://www.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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Issa E. Stephan CCUE,
President/CEO

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



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