

## Upcoming Important Dates & Seminars

### 📅 Monday, May 27

All locations will be closed in observance of Memorial Day

### 📅 Wednesday, May 29

Transitions to Retirement Virtual Seminar, 6pm

### 📅 Tuesday, June 11

401k Rollover Planning Virtual Seminar, 6pm

### 📅 Wednesday, June 19

All locations will be closed in observance of Juneteenth

### 📅 Tuesday, June 25

Rethinking Diversification Virtual Seminar, 6pm

### 📅 Thursday, 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)

## Essential Tips for Navigating the Spring Housing Market

The spring housing market, peaking from April to June – is renowned for its heightened activity. The allure of spring lies not just in its weather, but also in the potential for finding great deals on homes that didn't sell or were not listed in winter. The spring market – fueled by both new listings and the eagerness of buyers who are shaking off the winter chill, creates a landscape filled with opportunity. First Financial is here with 5 essential tips for a successful springtime homebuying journey.



**1. Gauge Market Conditions:** The spring market's vibrancy varies, influenced by whether it leans in favor of buyers or sellers, prevailing mortgage rates, and local real estate trends. Keeping a pulse on these conditions can significantly impact your buying strategy. Evaluate each condition closely before making any commitments.

**2. Isolate Your 'Must-Haves' From Your 'Wants':** In the bustling spring market, knowing what you're looking for is crucial. This includes the type of home, desired neighborhood, and essential amenities. However, with heightened demand and high competition, it's important to isolate what you truly need from the things you want. A well-defined list of must-haves will streamline your search and help you act decisively.

**3. Mortgage Preapproval is Key:** Securing mortgage preapproval before diving into the housing market not only sets realistic expectations – but also positions you as a serious buyer, enhancing your bargaining power. Preapproval will allow you to know how much home you can realistically afford, as well as lock you in at the best interest rate.

**4. Leverage Expertise:** Collaborating with a real estate agent who understands the nuances of the spring market can be invaluable. They can provide insights into fair pricing, negotiate on your behalf, and even unearth hidden gems in your desired locations. Having a real estate agent on your side will position you ahead of buyers heading the journey alone and take many stressors off your shoulders.

**5. Have Your Documents Ready:** If you've made an offer and are hoping to fast-track the process, make sure you have your paperwork ready to go. The process of compiling all the necessary documents can be longwinded, so be sure to get a jump on things and have all your ducks in a row. Some of the documents you'll need include:

- Identification
- W2s
- Pay stubs
- Bank statements

Before making an offer, build a mortgage document checklist to keep track of what you'll need to close the deal. Our homebuying guide on our website at [firstffcu.com](https://www.firstffcu.com), is a great resource!

### Embrace the Spring Market with Confidence

The spring housing market offers a unique blend of challenges and opportunities. With strategic preparation, you can navigate this bustling season effectively. Whether you're gauging market conditions, calculating what you can afford, or securing mortgage preapproval – we're here to help you achieve your homebuying goals.

Contact us today or stop into your local branch and embark on your journey to homeownership with confidence. Don't miss out on more financial tips and advice, be sure to subscribe to our First Scoop blog at [blog.firstffcu.com](https://www.firstffcu.com/blog)

## Note from the CEO

### Happy Spring!

Dear Members,

As spring blooms around us, it brings with it a sense of renewal and opportunity. At First Financial, we're embracing this season of growth with enthusiasm and a commitment to serving you - our valued members, with excellence.

It was recently Financial Literacy Month, a time dedicated to enhancing our understanding of finances and empowering ourselves to make informed decisions about our money. Just as you tend to a garden with care and attention, nurturing the seeds of financial knowledge can lead to a bountiful harvest of financial success.

In the spirit of spring and Financial Literacy Month, I encourage you to take a moment to reflect on your financial goals and aspirations and take advantage of our tools and services to the fullest extent.

As we embark on this journey together, I want to express my gratitude for your continued support and membership with us. Your trust and loyalty are the driving forces behind everything we do, and we're honored to be your financial partner. We wish you and your family a wonderful spring season.

As always, thank you for Thinking First – God Bless!



Sincerely,

Issa Stephan, CCUE, President & CEO



## Community Spotlight - Employee Service Awards from our 88th Annual Meeting



From left to right:

### 5 Years of Service

Chantel Baptiste, Business Development Officer  
Angie Seepersaud, Accounting EFT Specialist

### 10 Years of Service

Julie Brandt-Olivier, Lending Manager  
Karen Fiore, Board Member

### 35 Years of Service

Terriann Warn, Chief Financial Officer



### Member Spotlight

Meet Anthony Schifilliti, owner of Nino's Coal Fired Pizza in Brick and Nino's Bistro Express in Neptune. Anthony has been a business member with us for 13 years! See why our member service keeps him coming back year after year, by watching the video at [youtube.com/FirstFinancialFCU](https://youtube.com/FirstFinancialFCU)

### Spring into that new home!

Get more home than you hoped for, plus a \$500 Home Depot gift card upon closing, your appraisal is on us (\$580 value), and take advantage of our 60-day rate lock option with one free float down on any mortgage term! Get pre-qualified before you start to shop at [firstfcu.com](https://firstfcu.com). We're here to help you every step of the way on your home-buying journey!

\*Visit our website Mortgages page at [firstfcu.com](https://firstfcu.com) for full details and disclosures.



# Budgeting for a Family



If you're expecting your first child, congratulations! You're about to embark on the most rewarding and fulfilling experience of your life.

As you already know, there's a long list of responsibilities associated with your new title — parent. And financial responsibility takes a backseat to none of those. Raising a child is expensive, after all. The USDA estimates the total expenses for a child's first 18 years at more than \$200,000. So, as you begin planning for your first child, consider these key areas and their associated expenses.

First, there's healthcare. If you're covered by an employer's plan, check to make sure of the options for adding a child. Additionally, if you do have an employer-sponsored plan, consider a medical reimbursement account (MRA) or health savings account (HSA), if either is available. These can pay for items such as deductibles, co-payments, and orthodontics.

If you're paying for healthcare directly, you can choose a managed care plan, such as an HMO, which offers lower upfront costs than a traditional plan, which may require you to pay at least 20 percent of care costs. However, a PPO plan may provide you with more options as to which providers you can see and whether you need a referral to see a specialist. Whatever route you go — deductibles, co-insurance amounts, co-payments and monthly premiums vary greatly; review the options available to you carefully before making your selection.

Next, there's childcare. Depending on your adjusted gross income, or AGI, you may be eligible to receive tax benefits as a parent. The Child Tax Credit provides a credit of up to \$2,000 for children ages five and under — or \$3,000 for children ages six through 17 years old. To qualify, your child must have a Social Security Number before you file your tax return.

Then, insurance. Purchasing disability and life insurance can provide income for your child if your earning capacity is compromised. A financial professional may be able to provide guidance as to the recommended amounts of coverage for each. Check to see if your employer offers these policies, they are often less expensive than those that you purchase independently.

Finally, consider drawing up a will that designates a legal guardian for your child, in the event that you and your spouse die together, or if you're a single parent and you should die. If you and your spouse die intestate — that is, without a will — and you die together, a court will decide whom to appoint as your child's guardian. Make sure that the will is written so that it applies to your new baby as well as your future children. By carefully budgeting for your baby, you can help secure the financial futures of both you and your child.

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

You can also email [Mary.LaFerriere@lpl.com](mailto:Mary.LaFerriere@lpl.com) or [Maureen.McGreevy@lpl.com](mailto:Maureen.McGreevy@lpl.com)

**1 First Financial**  
Investment & Retirement Center

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Not Insured by NCUA or Any Other Government Agency	Not Credit Union Guaranteed	Not Credit Union Deposits or Obligations	May Lose Value
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## Beware of Double Zero Scams

In today's digital age, financial scams come in many forms and staying vigilant is crucial to safeguarding your hard-earned money. One such scam gaining traction is the Double Zero Scam, a cunning scheme that preys on unsuspecting individuals' goodwill and trust. Let's delve into exactly what this scam entails and how to protect yourself.



### What is a Double Zero Scam?

Imagine receiving a call from someone claiming to represent a reputable company that you may have an account with or have purchased a product or service from in the past. The caller informs you that a \$150 refund was issued to your bank account for unused services. However, due to a bank error – an additional two zeros were added to your account, making the refund amount \$15,000. The caller is in distress and pleads for you to wire back the excess amount or to go to the bank and withdraw it in cash, to rectify the error so that they don't lose their job.

### How Does it Work?

The scammer relies on psychological manipulation, leveraging urgency and fear to coerce victims into compliance. By creating a sense of urgency and portraying themselves as reputable entities facing dire consequences, they aim to bypass your logical reasoning and exploit your desire to help.

### Protect Yourself from Double Zero Scams

**Verify the Caller:** Always verify the identity of the caller, especially if they claim to represent a company or organization. Hang up and contact the company directly using a trusted phone number to confirm the legitimacy of the call.

**Be Skeptical of Unsolicited Requests:** Exercise caution when presented with unexpected refund offers or requests for financial transactions. Legitimate companies typically do not request immediate action or ask for sensitive information over the phone – much less a payment via a wire transfer, gift card, person-to-person payment (i.e. Venmo or Zelle), in cash, or with cryptocurrency.

**Trust Your Instincts:** If something feels off or too good to be true, trust your instincts. Scammers often rely on creating a sense of urgency to pressure victims into making hasty decisions. Take a moment and call your financial institution for a second opinion before making any financial transactions. A trusted company representative will not have an issue with further verification.

**Educate Yourself:** Stay informed about common scams and fraudulent tactics gaining traction in today's digital landscape.

At First Financial, your financial well-being is our top priority. By staying informed and vigilant, you can safeguard your finances and enjoy peace of mind in an ever-evolving digital world. For more personalized financial assistance with your First Financial accounts, call us at 732.312.1500 or visit a branch today. Don't miss out on more financial tips and advice, be sure to subscribe to our First Scoop blog at [blog.firstffcu.com](http://blog.firstffcu.com)

#### 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](mailto:info@firstffcu.com)  
[firstffcu.com](http://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

#### Board of Directors

Gordon Holder, Chairperson

Earl Sutton, Jr., Vice-Chairperson

David Graf, Secretary & Treasurer

Elizabeth M. White

Laurita Carr

Catherine McLaughlin

Karen Fiore

#### Supervisory Committee

Karen Fiore,  
Committee Chairperson

Ronald Minsky

Elna Montgomery

Caryl Singer

Mitch Thaler

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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