

Upcoming Important Dates & Seminars

📅 Wednesday, August 20

Transitions to Retirement Virtual Seminar, 6pm

📅 Monday, September 1

All locations will be closed in observance of Labor Day

📅 Monday, September 8

Investment Diversification Virtual Seminar, 6pm

📅 Tuesday, September 23

Rollover Planning Virtual Seminar, 6pm

📅 Monday, October 13

All locations will be closed in observance of Columbus/
Indigenous People's Day

Register for upcoming virtual seminars on the events calendar at firstffcu.com

Summer Credit Score Check In



This is a good time of year to check in on your financial health – especially your credit. Your credit score plays a big role in determining your eligibility for loans, credit cards, rental applications, and more. While most people wait until they need credit to check on it, a mid-year review can help you stay ahead of any surprises. Not sure where to begin? Here are some things to consider that may help improve your credit score.

Pull Your Credit Report and Review it Carefully

You can access your credit report at no cost on AnnualCreditReport.com. Look for:

- Any accounts you don't recognize (this could be a sign of identity theft).
- Inquiries you didn't authorize.
- Payment history and status of accounts.

Review Credit Card Balances, Utilization, and Rates

One of the biggest factors affecting your credit score is credit utilization, or how much available credit you're using. The general rule is to keep this below 30%, but the lower the better. For example, if you have a \$5,000 credit limit, aim to carry no more than a \$1,500 balance. Make a list of all

your credit cards, their current balances, and limits. Create a payoff plan to reduce any high balances if they're creeping up toward that 30%.

Some credit card companies will change interest rates based on the market (prime rate), or your credit profile. Review your most recent statements or contact your card issuer directly if you are unsure of your current APR. If your rate has increased and your credit is still in good standing, consider transferring your balance to a lower-rate card (First Financial has some great options!).

Monitor Progress Toward Paying Off Debt

If paying off debt was one of your 2025 goals, now is the time to assess your progress. Look at:

- How much you've paid off so far this year.
- What your current payoff timeline looks like.
- Whether you can increase your monthly payments, even slightly.

Consider using debt payoff methods like the avalanche method (tackling the highest interest debt first) or snowball method (paying off the smallest balance first for motivation), to cut down on debt and increase your credit score.

First Financial is Here to Help

Whether you're looking to pay off high-interest debt, consolidate balances, or build credit from scratch, First Financial offers tools to support your journey:

- Credit cards, personal, and consolidation loans.
- Financial counseling and resources
- Secure mobile and online banking to help you track spending and payments.

Visit firstffcu.com, call 732-312-1500, or stop by your local branch to take the next step in your credit health journey.

Note from the CEO

Summer Greetings!

We hope that summer has provided you with the opportunity to feel rejuvenated and spend time in the sunshine and warmth of the season with those you love. Many of you have made memories and traveled far and wide this summer. We've enjoyed hearing about your adventures, and we're grateful you've continued to stop in and bank with us along the way.

As we transition out of summer and prepare to welcome fall, we are here to help you plan for the financial changes that the turn of the season often brings. Whether you are sending children off to school, preparing for the holiday season ahead, or embarking on a new role, we're committed to providing the financial tools and resources to support you in your journey.

We thank you for placing your trust in us and look forward to your continued membership as the year progresses.

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

Sincerely,



Issa Stephan, CCUE, President & CEO

Community Spotlight – Financial Education at Monmouth County Vocational School District



We had the wonderful opportunity to visit with the cosmetology, HVAC, and plumbing students of the Monmouth County Vocational School District at their Freehold and Neptune locations at the end of the school year, to present our LIFE Fair—a financial literacy event aimed at giving students a financial “reality check.” This hands-on event begins with a discussion about important personal finance topics, such as budgeting and loans, and then allows the students to put what they learned to the test in a simulated environment. If you would like to learn more about hosting a LIFE Fair at your school or organization, please contact our Business Development Team at business@firstffcu.com.

All through the years I've been coming—all 47 years—it's been a solid place to bank.”



Meet Lorna Cooper-Piver, Toms River Member

Meet Lorna Cooper-Piver, one of our valued Toms River members. Although many trends have come and gone in 50 years, banking with First Financial has never gone out of style for Lorna.

Watch her video interview at youtube.com/FirstFinancialFCU to learn why she first chose us to be part of her financial journey and why she continues to choose us today. We are honored that Lorna has placed her unwavering trust and loyalty in us for five decades!



Go Cashless with Confidence at First Financial

Being a First Financial member means you have access to the tools you need to support a cashless lifestyle safely and confidently. From our user-friendly mobile banking app with card controls, transaction alerts, and real-time monitoring to compatibility with digital wallets like Apple Pay®, Google Pay™, and Samsung Wallet™, your banking can get smarter, faster, and more secure.* Learn more at firstffcu.com, where you'll have convenient banking first and worry less.

*You must have an account at First Financial Federal Credit Union (serving Monmouth and Ocean Counties in NJ), and be enrolled in online banking, to use our mobile application. Standard data rates and charges may apply.



Navigating Financial Conversations with Aging Parents

Having a conversation with your parents about their finances can seem like a daunting task. However, it is an essential step in helping to ensure their financial well-being as they get older. Here are some practical tips to help you navigate these discussions.

Start The Conversation

Talking about money can be difficult. However, it's important to initiate a financial conversation with your parents before they become too ill or incapacitated. Your parents may be unwilling to talk to you at first because they are reluctant to give up control over their financial affairs, or they are embarrassed to admit that they need your help. It's important to approach the topic sensitively and make it clear that you fully respect their needs and concerns.

If they are still hesitant to talk to you and are capable of managing their affairs for now, you may want to revisit the discussion later. Or you could suggest that they talk to another family member, trusted friend, attorney, or financial professional.

Organize Financial And Legal Documents

Once the lines of communication are open, you can help your parents organize their financial and legal documents. Start by creating a personal data record that lists the following types of information:

Financial: Include all of your parents' bank/investment account information, including account/routing numbers and online usernames and passwords. You should also list any real estate holdings, along with any outstanding mortgages. Do your parents receive income from Social Security, a pension, and/or a retirement plan? You will want to include that information as well.

Legal: Find out if your parents have had any legal documents drawn up, such as wills, trusts, durable powers of attorney, and/or health-care directives. Locate other important documents too, such as birth certificates, property deeds, and certificates of title.

Medical: Determine what type of health insurance your parents have—Medicare, private insurance, or both. You should also have the names and contact information for their health-care providers, their medical history, and any current medications.

Insurance: List what other types of insurance coverage your parents have—life, home/property, auto, or long-term care, for example—along with the names of their insurance companies and policy numbers.

Store the data record and any other pertinent documents either electronically or in a secure, fireproof box or file cabinet.

Help With Managing Finances

You can help your parents manage their finances by examining their budget and finding out their monthly income and expenses. Track your parents' spending to make sure that they are living within their means. You should also discuss ways to address any outstanding debts they may have.

Find out how your parents pay their bills and expenses. If they still use traditional methods, encourage them to set up safer and more convenient ways to bank, such as direct deposit and making payments online, instead of mailing paper checks. If your parents are uncomfortable with electronic payments, remind them to mail all bills inside the physical post office and not to use outdoor mailboxes, which may be targets for mail theft.

Do your parents need additional support in managing their finances? There are ways for you to obtain the necessary authorization to assist them. One way is to become a joint account holder on certain bank accounts. This can give you direct access to manage transactions, monitor account activity, and ensure bills are paid. However, being a joint account holder may have certain legal and tax ramifications. Another option is for them to obtain a durable power of attorney, which is a legal document that grants you authorization to make financial decisions on their behalf, even if they become incapacitated. It may also be helpful for them to add you or someone else as a trusted contact for their accounts.

Discuss Estate Planning Issues

If they haven't already done so, make sure your parents have certain legal documents in place—such as wills and/or trusts—to ensure that their estate planning wishes are followed. In addition, they may need to have a durable power of attorney, health-care proxy, and living will in place so they have someone to manage their money and health-care issues if they become ill/impaired. Issues surrounding the care of an aging parent can be complex. Consider consulting a financial professional and/or elder law attorney who specializes in financial and legal issues that affect older adults.



Questions about this topic? 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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Protect Yourself from Social Security Scams

With millions of Americans receiving Social Security benefits – whether it's retirement, disability, or others – fraudsters have found impersonating the Social Security Administration (SSA) to be a lucrative scam. With the countless methods of communication in today's day and age, it can be challenging to distinguish between legitimate messages and those from scammers. Whether you or someone you know currently receives Social Security benefits, or will one day soon, understanding the different Social Security scams and how to spot them is a powerful tool in protecting yourself and those you love.

What are Social Security Scams?

Social Security scams involve a fraudster impersonating Social Security employees to obtain personal or financial information. They will say there is a problem with your benefits and pressure you to take immediate action to resolve it, whether that is handing over your Social Security Number or providing payment in a specific form – such as gift cards or cryptocurrency.

It's important to note that anyone who contacts you first and asks for a form of payment to resolve a personal or financial issue, especially when they are requesting gift cards or crypto (methods of payment that are nearly impossible to trace), is always a scam.

What Does a Social Security Scam Look Like?

Scammers frequently change their tactics and messages to make themselves harder to spot, and easier to obtain the information they need to defraud you. Scammers impersonating Social Security personnel may attempt to contact you via phone, email, text message, or social media direct messages. The SSA is known to contact the public only by telephone call or direct postal mail, and will never text you or send you a message on social media. Below are common Social Security scams, based on the mode of delivery.

- 1. Phone Calls:** Scam phone calls will involve a robotic voice, pretending to be from the SSA, and will demand personal or financial information. The nature of these phone calls is often threatening, with pressure to take immediate action to resolve the issue or provide personal information. The SSA would never take a threatening tone with recipients of phone calls. If you receive this type of call, it's a telltale sign that the call is fraudulent. Additionally, the scammer will often demand secrecy and ask that you don't share the details of the call with those you trust. Lastly, if your caller ID shows the Social Security hotline number, that does not necessarily mean you are on the phone with an SSA employee. Scammers can spoof their phone number to make it look like the Social Security Administration on your caller ID.

- 2. Emails:** Scammers have been known to send emails with attachments that resemble official letters from the SSA or contain links to fake websites that look like the Social Security Administration website. Within such an email, you will be prompted to enter your sensitive information into an online form that does not belong to the SSA, or click on a link that will download malware or a virus onto your device, which the scammer will use to steal your sensitive information.
- 3. Text Messages:** Social Security scam texts will often say there is a problem with your Social Security Number and will provide a call-back number to resolve the issue. When you return the call, you will be on the phone with a scammer who will try to take your personal or financial information. There are very few instances in which you would receive a text from the SSA, which can be found here. In those cases, the SSA will never ask that you return a call to an unknown number – especially one that is not associated with the Social Security Administration.
- 4. Social Media Direct Messages:** Fraudsters have been known to create fake social media accounts pretending to be the SSA. They will then use those accounts to send direct messages asking for your personal or financial information. Once again, the SSA will never contact you through social media. These fake accounts will often have few followers, incorrect punctuation or spelling, and link to pages, forms, or documents that are not associated with the SSA. Visit ssa.gov/socialmedia for a directory of the social media channels the SSA uses for public information.

Stay Vigilant to Social Security Scams

The SSA will never demand that you share your personal information, such as your Social Security Number or bank account details, by contacting you out of the blue or in ways that are not secure. Additionally, Social Security employees will never demand payment, threaten arrest or legal action, or freeze your bank account or other assets if you refuse to divulge your personal information.

If you have received a suspicious communication or are worried you have fallen victim to a Social Security scam, you can report it to the Office of the Inspector General at oig.ssa.gov/report. It can also be reported to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at reportfraud.ftc.gov.

First Financial wants to help you safeguard your personal and financial information from fraudsters. If you are ever concerned that your First Financial accounts have been compromised, don't hesitate to call us at 732.312.1500 or visit your local branch.

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

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firstffcu.com

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Corner of Routes 9 & 571

**Freehold/Howell
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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
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