



Montana Financial Education Coalition NOTES

— A National Jump\$tart Affiliate —

To Our Readers:

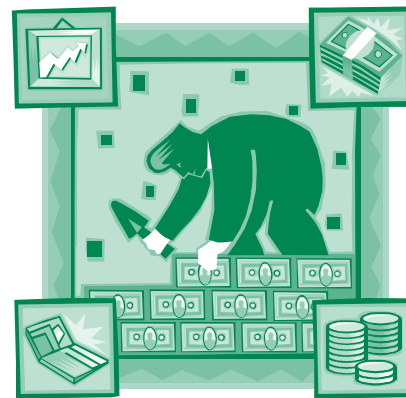
The MFEC Board of Directors is excited to announce the upcoming Second Annual Montana Financial Education Conference. Feedback from attendees at last year's conference reinforced both the need and desire for financial education providers and supporters from around the state to be able to gather to network, share resources, collaborate and hear from both national and local presenters about new and innovative financial education programs, research and initiatives.

This year, presenters from the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, the ABA Education Foundation, the American Institute of CPAs, the National Jump\$tart Coalition and many of our "home grown" experts will focus on personal financial education and economic education as a critical component of strong, healthy communities. In addition, we have added a second half-day of resource sessions that include tracks for educators, bankers, first-time homebuyer education providers, community groups and CPAs, and Native communities.

Like last year, participants will be invited to present exhibits of their materials and products. Look for the conference registration brochures in mid-September, and MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Sue Woodrow, President

Montana Financial Education Coalition 2005 Annual Conference



Financial Education... Building Montana Communities

November 7 & 8, 2005 • Great Northern Conference Center • Helena, MT

Mark your calendars and join us in Helena November 7 & 8 for the Montana Financial Education Coalition's 2005 Annual Conference.

Watch for registration materials to be sent out mid September.

For more information call Sue Woodrow at 406-447-3806.

Post-Conference Training

The FDIC will host a free train the trainer class for the Money Smart financial education curriculum. The training will be from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 8 at the Great Northern Conference Center. For more information, or to register, please contact Community Affairs Specialist Luke Reynolds at (626) 359-7152 x4115 or lureynolds@fdic.gov.

The ABCs of Credit Card Finance

Submitted by Carol A. Carolan, Ph.D.

The ABCs of Credit Card Finance is a credit card literacy program for high school juniors and seniors and for college freshmen to teach students how to wisely choose and responsibly use a credit card. Each participating student is given a copy of *The ABCs of Credit Card Finance – Essential Facts for Students*, and teachers are provided with a Trainer's Guide and a PowerPoint Presentation to facilitate teaching this important information. The program takes approximately one hour to teach.



Offered by the Center for Student Credit Card Education, Inc. and backed by a purely educational sponsorship by Citibank, this program is offered to teachers free of charge. The only requirement to receive the materials is a commitment to teach the information. This requirement is based on a strong belief that most students will not self-educate on this topic and consequently need instruction to benefit from the program.

New On-line Program

Submitted by Marsha Goetting, Prof. & Extension Family Economics Specialist

The Federal Reserve Board of Governors, in cooperation with USA Today, have launched a new on-line project that teaches middle school and high school students about personal finances by letting them construct a newspaper front page.

Students are provided with instructions and a template for the front page of a fictional publication called *The Fed Today*. Over four weeks, they are expected to consult a Web site — FederalReserveEducation.org — for information needed to complete all of the elements of the page, including headlines, photos, captions, graphs and statistics. The project helps teachers meet national and state academic content standards for high school economics and personal finance courses. You can access the program at the USA Today Web site:

http://www.usatoday.com/educate/federalreserve/index_new2.html

Montanans Get Smart About Credit

Submitted by Marsha Goetting, Prof. & Extension Family Economics Specialist

Montana families have become more informed about the costs of paying the minimum payments on their credit cards through the educational efforts of a three-way partnership that included the Montana State University Extension Service, the Montana Credit Unions for Community Development and the First Interstate BancSystem.

An educational packet titled *Credit Cards: Avoid the Minimum Payments* was provided to over 360 Montanans during educational sessions presented by MSU Extension Family and Consumer Science Agents in their communities during October 2004 – April 2005. The packet was designed to create an awareness of the “real” cost of purchases when credit card holders make only the monthly minimum payment.

An evaluation of the packet contents revealed that participants were inspired to take actions to improve their debt situation:

- \$ **40% decided to cut up one or more of their credit cards.**
- \$ **47% decided to boost their monthly minimum payments to three percent.**
- \$ **43% decided to double the amount of their monthly minimum payment.**
- \$ **57% decided to not charge any more on their credit cards until at least one is paid off.**
- \$ **9% decided to get another job so they could pay off their credit cards sooner.**
- \$ **14% contacted their local bank for further information.**
- \$ **11% contacted their local credit union for further information.**
- \$ **14% contacted their County Extension Office for further information.**

Overall, participants were enthusiastic about the packet that they rated as 4.6 out of 5 (with 5 as very useful). One participant wrote that the materials, “*Renewed desire and motivation to quit using credit cards and start ‘living within my means.’*” Others wrote, “*I don’t know where I would have gotten this information if it weren’t for this packet.*” “*I decided to use an expected windfall on credit card debt.*”

MSU Extension Agents plan to expand the program in 2006 to reach additional Montanans.

360 Degrees of Financial Literacy

Submitted by Margaret Herriges, Montana Society of CPAs

The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) has received a 2005 Summit Award from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) for its national *360 Degrees of Financial Literacy* program.

The AICPA was selected from more than 200 contestants and is one of six organizations to win a Summit Award this year. The Summit Award is the ASAE's highest honor for associations that implement innovative community-based programs. The winners, chosen by the Society's Associations Advance America committee, are recognized for their efforts involving public education and information, business and social innovation, citizenship and democracy enhancement, and civic and community volunteerism.

John H. Graham IV, President and CEO of the ASAE, said *360 Degrees of Financial Literacy* "truly embodies the spirit of the Associations Advance America campaign."

In response to the Summit Award, Barry Melancon, AICPA President and CEO,

said, "We share this great honor with the thousands of CPAs who, either on their own or through the outstanding programs of the state CPA societies, have generously volunteered their time and talents to help Americans understand their personal finances."

"Through the combined efforts of the AICPA, the state societies and many individual CPAs, *360 Degrees of Financial Literacy* has reached 145 million Americans to date," added Carl George, Chairman of the National CPA Financial Literacy Commission. The AICPA will receive its award at the sixth annual Summit Awards Dinner on September 27 in Washington, D.C.

The AICPA launched *360 Degrees of Financial Literacy* in May 2004 to help Americans understand how various financial issues affect them at different life stages. The centerpiece of the campaign is a dedicated consumer website, www.360financialliteracy.org, which contains hundreds of articles, tools and FAQs on a myriad of financial topics. In addition, under the AICPA's leadership,

most of the state CPA societies have created a variety of financial literacy programs for their communities, including workshops, seminars and media-relations campaigns.

360 Degrees of Financial Literacy has earned public commendation from such government officials as Rep. Reuben Hinojosa (D-Texas); John Snow, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury; and David Walker, U.S. Comptroller General.

The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (www.aicpa.org) is the national, professional association of CPAs, with nearly 350,000 members, including CPAs in business and industry, public practice, government, and education; student affiliates; and international associates. It sets ethical standards for the profession and U.S. auditing standards for audits of private companies; federal, state and local governments; and non-profit organizations. It also develops and grades the Uniform CPA Examination.

For more information contact the Montana Society of CPAs at 442-7301.

FINANCIAL EDUCATION RESOURCES

www.federalreserveeducation.org

www.fl2010.org

www.360financialliteracy.org

www.MSGen.com

Thank you to the following organization
for sponsoring this issue of *Notes*:

Montana Independent Bankers

Montana Independent Bankers was created thirty five years ago by a small group of community bankers. Since that time the organization has grown and the members have been among the leaders in shaping Montana's present and future economy. By using innovative business strategies they have helped bring growth and prosperity to our communities while strengthening the financial health of our states community banks.

Beware of “Phishing”

Submitted by Jessica Baker, AmeriCorps*VISTA – Montana Credit Unions for Community Development

Phishing is one of the newest forms of identity theft. Con artists will act the part of certified establishments such as financial institutions, and con victims into divulging important personal information. This is termed “phishing” because the scammers “hook” innocent victims by using false e-mail addresses as bait to “phish” for targets. Consumers often willingly provide their Social Security numbers, credit card information, passwords, and PIN numbers. “Phishers” use this information to open fraudulent accounts or charge against existing accounts which can financially ruin the victims. The thieves send bogus e-mails that look like organizations that the consumers have done business with and trust. One tactic often used is for confirmations of account numbers due to system failures or software updates. To persuade people to act urgently, these e-mail messages often threaten to cancel accounts.

Here are some steps you can take to prevent being a victim of phishing:

- \$ Do not give away personal information in response to an e-mail. (Remember that most legitimate organizations will not demand account numbers or passwords unless the customer first requests an online purchase.)
- \$ Do not send personal and financial information through an e-mail.
- \$ Always ensure that you're using a secure website when submitting credit card or other sensitive information via your Web browser.
- \$ Regularly sign onto your online accounts
- \$ Report any phishing by contacting the Federal Trade Commission or the Internet Fraud Complaint Center of the FBI.



NOTES readers are partners in our efforts to share the latest news from the financial education field. The newsletter is published quarterly by the Montana Financial Education Coalition (MFEC). It is designed to keep the MFEC partners informed about what is happening as well as communicating financial education efforts to other interested parties throughout the state.

We welcome your questions and comments. If you are interested in receiving this publication regularly or would like more information on the MFEC, please contact Karen Dunn (*editor*) at karen@mfecun.org or Sue Woodrow at Susan.Woodrow@mplsrb.org.

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