

ACHIEVEments

For Members of the Louisiana Association for Personal Financial Achievement

August 2009

ACHIEVE Members,

Research has shown that the average American household has \$12,000 in credit card debt at an average interest rate of 18%. This adds up to \$2,000 per year in interest payments alone. According to findings in an article on the MSN Money website, most of this credit card debt is acquired, not by big-ticket items, but by monthly expenses, such as groceries. Economists are predicting that this credit card debt will increase with unemployment as Americans try to supplement lost wages with credit.

ACHIEVE is dedicated to financial literacy and wants to help you gain a financial peace of mind. As a member of ACHIEVE, you will have access to workshops and resources that can help you improve your progress toward your financial goals.

Personal Financial Achievement Program

ACHIEVE has a personal financial achievement program that starts with an introductory seminar that covers the following topics:

- Setting financial goals
- Developing a spending plan
- Managing a checking account
- Managing credit and debt
- Saving money
- Understanding your credit score

Thank you for your interest in becoming an ACHIEVE member. We look forward to helping you achieve financial success. ACHIEVE conducts personal financial literacy workshops for community groups, churches, and employers throughout the Baton Rouge and Hammond areas free of charge. If you are interested in having ACHIEVE conduct

personal financial literacy workshops for your organization, contact us at (225) 342-5365, or email us at achieve@lapfa.org.

Ike DeLee III
Executive Director

Mission Statement

Positively impact the lives of individuals through financial education and by working with other non-profit organizations with similar goals to promote personal financial achievement.

Vision Statement

To be a strong and growing non-profit financial education association, serving the financial achievement needs of a wide diversity of members throughout our state, region and nation.

Ways to Boost Your Credit Score

Every time you apply for a credit card, mortgage, car loan, or insurance, your application is judged in part by your credit score. Lenders use your credit score to determine whether to grant credit, and at what cost. The higher the score, the more likely you are perceived to repay the credit. Consumers with scores less than 600 usually are seen as higher risk and may pay a higher interest rate or are denied credit.

Fortunately, you can take steps to boost your credit score. These tips can maximize your score and influence your credit-worthiness.

1 Be punctual. Late or missed payments, foreclosures, and bankruptcies have the greatest negative effect on your credit score.

2 Check your credit report regularly. Don't let inaccurate information ruin your credit score. Consumers are entitled to one free credit report per year from each of the three major credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, TransUnion), which you can get online at annualcreditreport.com. Even though the credit report is free, getting your credit score will cost extra. You can obtain your credit score at myFICO.com, or from the individual bureau's websites, experian.com, equifax.com and transunion.com.

3 Keep debt in check. Try to keep your account balances below 50% of your credit limit. For instance, if your credit card has a limit of \$2,000, keep the balance less than \$1,000.

Association Annual Meeting

All ACHIEVE Members are invited to the Association Annual Meeting on Friday, November 13, 2009 at 11:00 am. ACHIEVE's first annual meeting will be held at the La Capitol FCU Building at 700 Main Street Baton Rouge, LA 70802.

4 When shopping for a loan, submit your applications within a limited time. If done in a short period of time, multiple inquiries on a credit report will count as one inquiry to a potential lender looking at your report. Excess inquiries strung out over a longer period, however, could negatively affect your credit.

5 Keep accounts open. Time is one of the most significant factors that can improve your credit score. Closing old accounts—especially ones with a good payment history—shortens your credit history and lowers your score. Lenders take into account the average age of your accounts, so an older account can help balance newer credit.

6 Keep a healthy mix of credit. This includes things like a mortgage, a credit card or two, a car loan, and perhaps a retail card. Your credit union can help you acquire the mix you need.

Progress Report

The Board of Directors of La Capitol Federal Credit Union recognized a need for personal financial education in the Baton Rouge Community. The Louisiana Association for Personal Financial Achievement was incorporated in November of 2008 to fulfill that need. The Louisiana Association for Personal Financial Achievement, or ACHIEVE, was insured in April of 2009 and started providing personal financial workshops.

Financial Education Activity

Month	No. of Workshops	Attendance
April	9	56
May	8	75
June	6	43
July	5	43

Workshop Topics

Setting Financial Goals
The Spending Plan
The Savings Plan
Managing Personal Accounts
Managing Credit and Debt
Understanding Your Credit Score
Financial Survival for Students
Identity Theft
First Time Home Buying

Groups Hosting Workshops

- Louisiana Teachers Retirement System
- Shiloh Baptist Church
- Louisiana Technical College, Slidell Campus
- Delgado Community College
- Southern University Full-Time Fathers Group
- La Capitol Federal Credit Union
- Louisiana Department of Public Safety
- Louisiana Department of Internal Revenue
- St. John the Baptist Catholic Church
- United Way
- Faith, Love, and Hope Ministries

Financial Steps to Take After a Disaster

When disaster strikes--at home or across the world--it's easy to start panicking. But that's the worst thing to do to yourself and your finances.

Even in times of uncertainty, your money is safe with your financial institution. So don't run to an ATM (automated teller machine) and withdraw large amounts of cash. If you planned to close on a house or to refinance, do it. If you need a car, buy it. Don't let fear cause you to make poor financial decisions.

Some things you can do with your money after a disaster:

- Keep cash in your accounts. You'll place yourself at more risk--from theft, fire, or anything else that can go wrong--by withdrawing and holding large sums of cash.
- Pay your bills promptly. If mail service is disrupted or slowed down, this will allow extra time for payments to get to their destination;
- Keep detailed records of your payments and contact the payee if your bill will be a little late this month;
- Consider contacting your credit card issuer, mortgage company, and other business to make sure they received your payments;
- Consider paying your bills online [Editor's note: If your credit union offers this service, explain your services here]; and
- Watch out for scams. Stay away from "disaster deals"--they don't exist. Be more careful about safeguarding your personal financial information.

Website Resources for ACHIEVE Members

<http://www.lapfa.org/members>

login: achievevip

password: Money09

Warning Signs You Have Too Much Debt

- Only make minimum payments
- At or near credit limit on cards
- Don't know how much you owe
- Use cash advances to pay other bills
- Denied credit, or denied credit purchase
- Get calls from collection agencies
- Lie to spouse or family about spending
- More of total income going toward debts

Contact Information

Ike DeLee, Executive Director
700 Main Street, Suite 117
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Phone
225.342.5365
8am-5pm, CST, M-F

Email
achieve@lapfa.org

Website
www.lapfa.org

2009 - 10 Officials

Dr. Nick Bruno, *President*
Jeanne Johnston, *Vice President*
Mike Hooper, *Secretary/Treasurer*
Dr. Jim Gardner, *Treasurer*
Charles Simmons, *Secretary*