



Union Plus Retirement eNews - Summer 2009

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Saving for retirement in difficult economic times

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1) MANAGING TO SAVE FOR RETIREMENT

Concerns about the future are prompting Americans to save more of their paychecks now than they have in over 14 years, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. In April 2009, people managed to save an average 5.7% of their after-tax income. How about you?

Today, saving for the long term is more important than ever. Our advice:

- If you've stopped making contributions to an employer retirement plan or IRA, get rolling again – even if you can't save much right away. (Would a plan to manage your spending help? See next story.)
- If you never quit saving, try to increase your automatic deductions.

Don't let uncertainty about the stock market stop you. Employer retirement plans typically offer a minimal-risk option, such as a stable-value fund. IRA owners might consider an FDIC-insured online savings account.

[See Where to Stash Your Cash for more ideas.](#)

2) TIME FOR A SERIOUS SPENDING PLAN?

In these difficult times, most families are struggling to get by on less than they used to. But ad-libbing a more frugal lifestyle isn't easy. How much should you be spending on groceries? Can you afford to keep the cable TV?

Fortunately, union members have two easy ways to develop a spending plan:

- Call for a free budget consultation with the [Union Plus Credit Counseling Service](#) through Money Management International (MMI). MMI advisors specialize in credit management, but they'll help you forge a sensible spending plan even if you're not in debt trouble. Call 1-877-833-1745 anytime, 24 hours a day.
- Rather do it yourself? Check out [It Pays to Do the Math in the Budget Game](#), which gives MMI's guidelines on how much of your income should be spent on debt, housing, food, and so on.

Either way, you'll want to start by gathering the past six months' worth of bills, plus income data. Working with real numbers – not guesstimates – is the key to creating a plan you and your family can live with.

3) PINCHING PENNIES

Once you find areas where you could spend less, you don't necessarily have to sacrifice. Just think smart. For example, you might buy gently used clothing at a consignment shop, where the quality can be as good as new. For more suggestions that can help you save money:

- Review [Everyday Saving Strategies](#).
 - Take advantage of [Union Plus discounts](#) – on everything from health clubs to heating oil.
 - Sign up at [Debt-Proof Living](#) (a non-Union Plus site) to have cost-cutting ideas e-mailed to you free.
 - Compare the costs of a planned purchase on the Internet. If you add "discount" or "coupon" to your search description, you may turn up major savings.
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4) ACT NOW TO EARN FREE CASH FOR COLLEGE

How does this sound: You open a tax-free account for a child's or grandchild's education, put in \$1,000 within the first few months, and earn \$500 right away.

This great deal is available exclusively to union members. Simply open a tax-favored 529 college savings account or prepaid tuition account for your child or grandchild and build the balance to at least \$1,000 by November 30, 2009. Send in your application and you'll receive a \$500 Union Plus grant before year-end.

You can choose from 529 plans sponsored by any state in the U.S. Most offer a low-risk investment choice, as well as stock and bond funds. For details and links to help you find the best plan choices, visit [College Savings Grant](#).

5) SUMMER FUN FOR THE THRIFTY

Want to enjoy summer vacation without busting the family budget? Try these suggestions:

- **Visit family or see the sights without wearing out your car.** Through June 30, you can save up to 50% on car rentals from Avis, Budget, or Hertz. [Check car rental rates and book online here](#).
- **Save on theme parks, major league ballgames, and more.** With [Union Plus discounts](#), you can save on great family destinations – everything from Broadway shows to Sea World, and from condos to cruises. To qualify, use Company Member ID 744387769.
- **Sample free activities in your hometown.** Volunteer to usher at concerts, attend book readings, go on art walks. For more ideas, see "[10 Free Entertainment Activities for Seniors](#)" (which aren't just for seniors).

6) FINANCIAL HELP IN TIME OF HARDSHIP

Security. Assistance. Financial Education. Together, the initials spell SAFE – the name of a unique Union Plus program for families at risk. If you've been laid off, are on strike, have become disabled and are out of work, or have significant out-of-pocket hospital costs, you could be eligible for financial assistance that doesn't need to be repaid.

[Find out more about qualifying for a Union SAFE grant here.](#) We understand how hard it can be for some families to meet the challenges of today's economy -- and we're working to ensure you have the support you need.