GREAT OUTDOORS
Spruce up your outdoor space to add value to your home—and your lifestyle

MATH LESSONS LEARNED OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM
Carissa Kuchenski Manages her Money with a Numerica Checking Account

THE DIFFERENCE IS TRUST
Americans discover what separates credit unions from banks

GREAT OUTDOORS
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Dear Members,

I recently read an interesting story about a man who received two letters on the same day from his credit card company. One congratulated him on his excellent credit history, raising his credit limit to $10,000. The other – from the exact same company – informed him that the limit on his second card account was being reduced to $1,000 due to the company’s concerns over his credit history.

Of the many problems I had with this incident, perhaps the most glaring was the complete lack of concern. Every one of the card company’s actions showed how little it values customers. “Like it or lump it,” they seemed to say. They had profits to preserve.

In this issue of Numerica Notes, we delve into the principles and values that make credit unions stand apart, particularly in these chaotic times for financial services. I’ve been involved with the credit union industry for many years, and I’ve never been more proud of our non-profit, member-focused way of doing business.

We come to work every day with the intention of treating our members well – not for profit, but because serving our members with dignity and respect is our mission.

Sincerely,
Dennis Cutter
President and CEO

IMPORTANT DATES

Holiday Closures
May 31 (Memorial Day)
July 5 (Independence Day)
We will be closed all day. We will open for normal business hours on the next regular business day.

April 18-24
National Credit Union Youth Week

April 22-May 2
Washington State Apple Blossom Festival
www.appleblossom.org

April 26-30
Get Smart Idaho – Financial Literacy Week
Learn more at www.getsmartidaho.org.

April 29
Homebuyer’s Workshop
This financial workshop is held at Numerica’s Lyons Branch, 303 E. Lyons Ave, in Spokane. Call Nicole Hansen for more information and to RSVP: (509) 999-9027.

May 8-July 3
Museum of Arts & Culture Exhibition: Tradition is My Life, Education is My Future: 2009 Native American Student Art Competition. numerica CU.com

June 5
Opening Home Game for the Moses Lake Pirates
www.mpirates.com

June 19-20
Entiat Summerfest
Visit www.entiatvalleychamber.com

June 26-27
Hoopfest
www.spokanehoopfest.net

July 4
Tri-Cities Crime Stoppers Annual Cardboard Boat Race
The event takes place at Columbia Park in Kennewick and supports the Tri-Cities Crime Stoppers. Be sure to cheer on the Numerica boat! www.tricitiescrimestoppers.org or (509) 582-1351.

July 9
Wenatchee Branch Picnic
Enjoy lunch, conversation and prizes with Numerica Credit Union at the Wenatchee Branch, 615 N. Emerson.

July 21
Student Trak Night with the Spokane Indians
Visit numerica CU.com or call (800) 538-6116 for exact dates and to register. *Completion of the class is required to gain access to same first-time homebuyer programs that are available for household incomes totaling less than $65,000.

*For more events, homebuyer classes and seminars not listed here, visit numerica CU.com and click on the Education Resources button.
Forty years ago, a group of volunteers got together for the first time to talk about hunger in Spokane and what could be the first time to help.

Kay Porta, now 86, remembers calling that first meeting four decades ago. Working for the Department of Social and Health Services, where her primary focus was on child welfare, Kay was asked to lead an effort to tackle hunger in Spokane. Far too many people were working hard but struggling to feed their families. Soon after, Kay founded the Spokane Food Bank, now known as Second Harvest of the Inland Northwest.

“Actually, the time was very much like it is right now,” Kay recalls. The economic roller coaster this past year put many people in food bank lines for the first time. Take Joanna, one of Second Harvest’s first Mobile Food Bank volunteers when the program was launched in 2006. The 63-year-old woman lost a leg to cancer in 2005 and has coped partly by giving back to the community in a variety of ways. But with a fixed income that leaves her only $37 for food, Joanna has decided to turn to her local food bank for help. Joanna watches her diet because of diabetes and hypertension and appreciates receiving fresh produce, including mangos, bananas and salad.

“This is the first year I’ve ever had to use the food bank,” Joanna says. “I’m so grateful because I’m eating better.”

Today, Second Harvest provides food to 275 food banks and meal centers serving 26 counties in Eastern Washington and North Idaho. This network feeds more than 37,000 people each week, including people in poverty; the working poor; elderly and disabled people on very low, fixed incomes; homeless people, and children and families in temporary crisis. Programs like the Mobile Food Bank and Kids Cafe help Second Harvest reach people at their point of need.

A broad base of community support from individual donors, volunteers, community food drives, farmers and grocery stores make it possible for Second Harvest to transform every donated dollar into six pounds of donated food. That’s about four meals for people in need. One such event is the KREM2 Tom’s Turkey Drive supported by Numerica Credit Union. In 2009, the food drive raised enough food and money donations to provide over 10,000 turkey dinners.

Every item of food Second Harvest distributes – from a fresh apple to a can of green beans – happens because of people who choose to make a difference. Visit 2-harvest.org to learn how to get involved in the fight against hunger and to read more stories about people who have been helped.
Relatives, roommates, bosses, neighbors, love interests, lunch buddies — as long as everyone avoids the topic of m-o-n-e-y, we'll all get along just fine.

Eventually, though, it’s bound to come up. The waiter forgets to split the tab, or the cousin has a surefire investment opportunity (or unwieldy gambling debt) — and then, well, things can get pretty awkward. Or, worse, relationships and finances can be jeopardized.

For advice on how to handle delicate financial interactions graciously, I went to the foremost source on all things etiquette, The Emily Post Institute, which (politely, of course) referred me to the manners maven’s great-great-granddaughter, Lizzie Post. “One thing to remember with etiquette is that you almost never have to bite your lip and feel forced into doing something you’re uncomfortable with — financially or otherwise,” she says.

Here are her top tips for preparing for a host of uncomfortable money-related interactions:

Handling handout requests
*Four to-dos that will help you avoid feeling like a human ATM.*

**Post:** First, if you’re being asked for a loan, think of it as a gift. Can you afford to give this person money and never see the cash again? Second, can you afford to risk the friendship? Third is whether or not you are comfortable — financially and emotionally - with giving the person money. If you are not, say no. Finally, create a written agreement. It might not help you legally, but it helps avoid any misunderstandings.
Dealing with the rich friend-poor friend disparity
Stop salary disparity from putting your relationships on uneven footing.

Post: Often, I find that the person who doesn’t make as much money feels guilty about not pitching in. But after a while, when one person is always picking up the tab, both may get too accustomed to the arrangement. If it is getting under your skin, no matter which side you are on, have a conversation. Focus on the fact that your enjoyment comes from your time together, not the amount of money spent. Explain that you would feel more comfortable if the relationship were a bit more even.

Giving and receiving – the unexpected gift
Are you now expected to exchange gifts with this person for eternity?

Post: A gift is a gift. It is a nice gesture. It is not something that has a forced reciprocation with it. The first and most important thing to do is enthusiastically thank the person for the gift. To just turn around and pull the, “Oh, oh, oh, I will get you something” or “I have something for you; I will bring it in tomorrow” actually takes the other person’s gesture down a notch. We get so worried about making it up to someone else or leveling out the playing field that we forget that gifts are gifts for a reason. Then, you’ve got a choice to make — you can get the person a gift or not. It’s fine to thank the person and leave it at that. If you decide to give a gift, you’ll likely establish a gift-giving tradition with this person, and you may not want to go that route. If you want to get them something in return, simply get a gift and give it at a different time.
Bruce Albertine used his bank, but there were issues. Albertine owns the Roma Bakery and Cafe in Albuquerque, New Mexico, a popular downtown lunch spot known for its spectacular sandwiches and tomato soup. Though business is generally brisk, Roma Bakery and Cafe runs on tight margins.

“Frankly, I had become more and more frustrated by the large increases we were seeing in fees from our bank,” Albertine says. “They were all going up: merchant service fees, monthly fees, overdraft fees. The overdraft fees were especially bad, and when I looked into it, (it appeared) that the bank was actually changing dates and times of transactions in order to force overdraft fees on us.”

Call that a new low. Albertine needed a different approach, but he couldn’t afford to go without state-of-the-art banking services. On the recommendation of several customers, he looked into local credit unions. “Because I have both personal and business accounts, not all credit unions were equipped to handle us,” he says. “But I saw some great deals out there, including one local credit union that’s paying more on checking accounts than the bank is paying on savings.” In the end, Albertine found a credit union to provide the services he needed with no “confusing” transactions, and with lower fees and a personal touch. “Now I go into the branch and they greet me by name,” he says. “I wasn’t used to that treatment at my bank.”

Albertine saved money, but he also solved his central problem: As the bank grew more determined to make money on Albertine’s accounts, he realized, painfully, that the relationship was not about him. “They were openly looking for ways to take my money. They weren’t even pretending to be on my side,” he says. “I don’t expect the bank to do me any special favors, but we were supposed to have a working relationship and it wasn’t working for me.”
People Helping People

Just days following the devastating January earthquake in Haiti, Jill Stevenson, spokesperson for the National Credit Union Foundation (NCUF), announced that the organization had already raised over a quarter million dollars to help. NCUF’s CU Aid program focuses its relief efforts on supporting credit union staff and credit unions in disaster areas in order to re-establish access when members need money the most. “We provided charitable relief following the California wildfires, Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Ike — whenever there’s been a need,” says Stevenson. “The credit union community is very generous.”

NOT FOR PROFITS

For years, people have scratched their heads over the difference between banks and credit unions. There are several differences, but the most important one might be this: Banks are for profit and credit unions are not. Though credit unions have existed in America for over 100 years — and nearly 100 million Americans already belong to a credit union — many still don’t think of credit unions as being free from profit motives. Credit unions function like banks, in that they take deposits and make loans and provide a wealth of financial services, but exist solely to serve their members, never for profit.

What’s the difference? Maybe more than meets the eye. Here are a few ways that credit unions are unique:

• Every credit union member owns a share of the credit union, and each member has an equal say in how the credit union is run.
• Credit unions don’t look to make profits for shareholders. Instead of turning profits, credit unions return the money they make to their member shareholders in the form of higher rates on savings, lower rates on loans, reduced fees and improved services.
• Credit union operations are overseen by a volunteer board of directors, whose role is to represent member interests. They are motivated by service, not bonuses.
• Credit unions are cooperatives, meaning they work with — not in competition with — each other. What’s the benefit? One example is CO-OP Network, which offers credit union members access to more than 28,000 surcharge-free ATMs nationwide.
• Concern for community is a credit union value, whether through services to people of modest means or loans made for local projects.
• Credit unions invest in their members by providing educational opportunities for volunteer directors, and financial education for members and youth.

Do It for the Money

According to CUNA, the average credit union member saves $104 per year by banking at a credit union. The average family saves more than $200. Use more services and you’ll save even more money.
THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING TRUSTED

A few years ago, these differences might have been considered nice. Today, however, they point out what is fast becoming the key benefit to credit union membership: trust.

Not since the Great Depression have Americans addressed the issue of trust in financial institutions with such intensity. Case in point: The Huffington Post launched its “Move Your Money” campaign last December to get people to take their money out of big-name banks and put it into community banks and credit unions. What would have been a decidedly un-sexy proposition in 2007 proved to be a bombshell in 2010. Thousands of readers vowed to switch their accounts and thousands more wrote in to condemn big bank practices ranging from risky investments in the post-bailout era to Scroogian credit tactics and unapologetic political lobbying — all of which readers assumed was with taxpayer money.

What’s perhaps even more interesting than what readers presumed banks were doing wrong was just how right credit unions seemed to get things. “When the Huffington Post first put the word out that people should move their money to community banks, the Post got literally thousands of comments from people saying that credit unions are actually the best places to put your money,” says Mark Wolff, spokesperson for the Credit Union National Association in Washington, D.C.

“People are tired of being treated like numbers,” says Wolff. “Credit unions score very high on treating their members as individuals. And, because we’re member-owned, we (represent) Main Street and not Wall Street. In fact, we’re your street, because the credit union is owned by you.”

Wolff cites a flurry of statistics to back up his claim. Year after year, credit unions outscored banks in consumer satisfaction surveys. “In Gallup polls conducted for American Banker magazine, credit unions ranked first 21 years in a row,” Wolff says. They also beat the banks soundly on the issue of looking out for member interests, according to Forrester Research.

Although trustworthiness wasn’t always the first thing we all wanted in a financial institution, it’s certainly headline news now. Without trust — trust in the soundness of your institution, trust in its intentions and ethics, trust in its ability to treat you with integrity and respect — no bell or whistle means a thing.

EVERYTHING YOU WANT

That said, credit union members aren’t sacrificing convenience. Though individual credit unions may lack the sheer mass of big-name banks, many offer the same leading-edge products and services plus more.

In addition to cooperatives like CO-OP Network’s huge surcharge-free ATM system, many credit unions offer shared branching. If available through your credit union, this means you can walk into a designated shared branch in any city nationwide and do many of the same transactions you’d do in your local branch.

Bill Maher Tells You to Call It Quits

Stuck in an unproductive relationship with a bank? Know someone who just can’t cut the cord? Watch Bill Maher’s hilarious advice on ending the abuse: moveyourmoney.info/archives/466
For Seattle credit union member Jeff Markwardt, shared branching added “eco-friendliness” to his list of credit union attributes – no need to drive out of his way to make simple transactions when he can “bank” nearly anywhere. Since he made the switch to a credit union nearly five years ago, Markwardt reports making “no compromises” in terms of products and services. “I actually have more ATM access and a bigger network of branches,” he says. “It’s more convenient than a bank.”

Credit unions also offer a raft of services that regular banks do not. Need help puzzling out a budget or getting a handle on debt? Call your credit union for information on workshops or counseling. Because credit unions are community-oriented, you may find volunteer opportunities through them. Find out more about serving on the board of directors; look for events like paper shredding days or chili cook-offs. Ask about classes for kids. Your credit union is there to serve you.

HEN AGAIN, THIS KIND OF RHETORIC HAS MARKWARDT MILDLY DISPLEASED. HE AGREES THAT CREDIT UNIONS WORK FOR THE COMMON GOOD BUT THINKS THIS MESSAGE ALONE TELLS THE WRONG STORY – NAMELY, THAT CREDIT UNIONS ARE “GOOD FOR YOU,” LIKE SOME KIND OF BITTER MEDICINE. ACTUALLY, HE SAYS, THEY’RE GOOD FOR YOU, PERIOD.

“Right after college, I worked on a community campaign against predatory lending practices in low-income areas,” Markwardt says. “I was well aware of the problems associated with some traditional banks. But that wasn’t enough to convince me to switch to a credit union.” It wasn’t until years later, when his ethical impulses met his realization that he could save money and get all the services he needed, that Markwardt parked his cash at a credit union.

“I think that’s an important point to make,” he says. “The switch itself took a little effort, but once that’s done you get great service and more money in your pocket.” Far from being the martyr, Markwardt has come out smelling like a rose.

And if feeling unconflicted isn’t common in today’s world of financial services (or, let’s face it, most places in life), here’s one place it can be. Building a solid relationship with a financial institution, saving money, accessing loans, understanding your finances – these goals are not only possible; they’re what we’re here to help you achieve.
It Might Hurt Your Finances

by Jean Chatzky

any of us are simply afraid of math. We’re afraid we can’t handle important things, like balancing a checkbook, paying the bills or doing taxes. In fact, it’s estimated that math anxiety affects about half of Americans to some degree.

Research has shown that one bad experience can create a lifetime of math anxiety. Maybe an insensitive teacher forced you to the board to calculate a problem you didn’t understand. Maybe you screwed up your checkbook so badly that you ended up paying out a ton in overdraft fees. Whatever sparked it, this is a fear you have to get over, because people who don’t do math also tend not to do money, and that can be completely devastating.

It’s not going to be as hard as you think. You need a basic knowledge of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. You need a willingness to face something that scares you. And you need a calculator.

Take a refresher course

It’s never too late to brush up on your skills. One way to do it is a beginner-level class with an adult education program that will take you from basic adding to fractions, percentages and long division. Finding the right teacher is important. Danica McKellar (that’s right, Winnie Cooper from “The Wonder Years”) recently released a book for middle-school girls called “Math Doesn’t Suck.” She says that no matter what your age, the teacher means everything: “If you have math translated in a way that makes you feel more comfortable, your mind is going to be open to understanding it.”

Start a money group

“A really neat thing adults can do to overcome a math phobia is form a club, especially if they can get a member who is savvy about math and finances,” says Dr. Ron Lipsman, author of “You Can Do the Math: Overcome Your Math Phobia and Make Better Financial Decisions.”

A couple of years ago, I started touting this idea of a money group, where a bunch
of friends who get together talk about financial matters. At one meeting you might cover investing, at another, sending your kids to college. This support system can be a huge confidence booster, and you’ll be able to feed off of each other’s strengths.

Use shortcuts

Use a calculator once you get the basics down. Also, go ahead and round a tip up to the nearest dollar, or estimate the cost of three pairs of jeans to make sure your checking account will cover it. The key, though, is to overestimate. When it comes to overdrawing your account or going over your credit limit, it doesn’t matter if you do it by a few cents or a few hundred dollars—fees roll in either way.

Set kids on the right track

Talk to them about math and its role in their future. “Math is a part of your life. It creates financial independence and financial power so you can be more in control of your life,” says McKellar. Ask the right questions at your next parent-teacher conference to ensure that your child isn’t falling into the same trap you did. Then be a positive role model by pointing out the ways you use the subject every day.

Jean Chatzky is the personal finance editor for NBC’s “Today Show” and the author of six books.
Hang around a group of high school students these days and you’re sure to hear a few talk about their lame part-time jobs, their latest crush or their annoying parents. You probably wouldn’t hear many talk about direct deposit, the value of a credit union and the art of budgeting – unless you bumped into Numerica member Carissa Kuchenski while she was attending high school.

Kuchenski opened her checking account with Numerica in 2007. While a lot of her classmates were spending their money on frivolous items at the mall, Kuchenski was learning the basics of budgeting.
“I always had to be really responsible (with my money) because I had to pay for all of my sports,” said Kuchenski. “I had to budget and make sure I had enough money in my account to pay for them and my car.”

Those lessons have remained with Kuchenski as she enrolled at North Idaho College where she is now a sophomore sports science and physical therapy major. Sports continue to be one of her passions, as she is a cheerleader for the school’s basketball team, a figure skater and an amateur snowboarder. She is used to juggling car payments, coaches’ fees and college bills.

“I think starting early was really good for me. It’s helpful to know what I’m doing now with my budget,” said Kuchenski.

She also has some financial advice for her generation: prioritize. “You need to be paying your bills first and then handle your other priorities.”

For example, “I’d rather (buy) a coaching session than a piece of clothing.”

Those instincts also help Kuchenski stay away from the credit card companies and banks that set up booths on campus to attract students. “I just take the candy they hand out,” says Kuchenski. “I try to stick with one account. I know people with eight credit cards, and now they’re really struggling to pay them off.”

Luckily, the value of working with a credit union has paid off for Kuchenski, who hasn’t had positive experiences with banks.

“Banks seem really frustrating. I didn’t like the way I was treated. I have had a better experience with Numerica. They’re a lot easier to talk to, and they’re understanding. If I have to make my car payment a few days after it’s supposed to be automatically withdrawn, they understand that I am a college student.”

GROWING UP WITH NUMERICA

As Tammy Androes grew, so did her relationship with Numerica

Tammy Androes has been a Numerica member since she was 5 years old. Her grandparents set up a savings account for her. Today she’s not only a member but also a valued employee.

A teller for nearly two years, Androes assists members with everyday transactions such as withdrawals, deposits and payments. The member interaction, she says, is the best part of the job.

“They can tell we care,” said Androes. “We have relationships with our members and consider them friends. If they have a problem, everyone will go out of their way to help.”

That level of service is why Androes believes more people are joining credit unions. “I think people want to go somewhere where people really care about them. We’re not using their money for our benefit...like the banks. Plus they can get lower interest rates on loans and higher rates on deposit accounts.”

And although the Numerica branch Androes works at is located in Hayden, Idaho, just north of Coeur d’Alene and only 30 minutes from Spokane, Wash., Androes says the community has more of a small town feel.

“We see the same members coming into the branch, so it seems like we live in a small town,” she said.

Likewise, members see Androes around the community, as she’s also the assistant cheerleading coach for North Idaho College. The position works well for Androes who cheered for the school in 2009 and began helping the 20-member team in October. Incidentally, Numerica member Carissa Kuchenski is on the team and cheered with Androes last year.

“I actually didn’t know she was a member until one day she came through the drive thru,” laughed Androes.

Numerica is also a sponsor of the team’s calendar that was created this year to raise funds for expenses related to cheer competitions.

“They work really hard,” said Androes.

And so does she.
When CNBC financial host Suze Orman urged “Larry King Live” viewers to switch from high-interest credit cards to credit union cards, Michele Dawkins’ was just the viewer Orman had in mind. Dawkins learned last fall that one of her credit card issuers was raising her annual percentage rate to nearly 30 percent.

“I couldn’t believe it. I’ve had this card for more than a decade and my payment record is spotless,” Dawkins says. She was not alone. The Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility, and Disclosure Act of 2009 was intended to stop arbitrary rate hikes and excessive fees. But before the legislation went into effect in February, some card companies hiked interest rates and imposed new annual fees on accountholders, regardless of their payment histories.

“Closing my account will lower my credit score, but I’m definitely going to look for a lower-interest card I can actually use, and I’ll move this one from my wallet to my drawer,” Dawkins says.

100% of credit cards from the largest 12 banks used practices deemed “unfair or deceptive” under Federal Reserve guidelines. None of these bank-issued cards would meet the requirements of the Credit CARD Act of 2009.

–The Pew Health Group, October 2009 Study

Where can you find a new, improved card? Credit unions consistently offer credit cards with lower rates and fewer fees than the larger banks, according to a new study released by the Pew Health Group. In fact, a comparison of median advertised rates between the nation’s largest banks and credit unions showed that the APRs for cards issued by credit unions were 20 percent lower than the bank rates.

“I’m not surprised,” says Gene Fitzpatrick, Numerica’s VP of Lending. “Banks rely on high interest rates and fees to generate profits for their shareholders. At Numerica, we don’t boost our bottom line at the expense of our members’ financial well-being. The new Credit CARD Act isn’t going to affect our lending practices at all — these are standards that we have adhered to all along.”

*Nname changed to protect privacy

Numerica offers credit cards with no annual fee and low interest rates. To apply, go online to numericacu.com, or visit any branch for an application.
Spring is the perfect time to upgrade your outdoor environment. Gardening can lift your spirits, beautify your surroundings, provide diverse and delicious produce and add significantly to the value of your home.

Ready to dig in? Vanessa Gardner Nagel, owner of Seasons Garden Design in Vancouver, Wash., suggests starting with a plan. If you’re contemplating a new project or major overhaul — or if you’d simply like some professional direction — consulting a landscape designer is an excellent place to start. A designer can evaluate your ideas, recommend trees and plants, find solutions that meet your needs, and design a beautiful, practical space. You can even begin on a consulting basis. “I require a two-hour minimum,” Nagel says. “But for about $200, you get a lot of advice on where to start and what to plant.”

Think about what you’d like to accomplish:

**Improve your lifestyle.** Add a swimming pool or deck for outdoor entertaining. Reclaim your patio, make room for a hot tub or stake out an herb garden.

**Insulate your home.** Plant trees on the south and west sides of your home to protect it from the summer heat. Trees planted on the north side of your house act as a windbreak in the winter. Bonus: Surrounding your house with trees can increase its value by as much as 15 percent.

**Save water.** “Using native or like-native plants that are drought-tolerant and not invasive reduces water usage, provides native habitat, and may even allow you to grow something delicious — like huckleberries,” Nagel says.

**Eat better.** You don’t need acres of land to grow your own food. Urban gardeners can check out the Earthbox, www.earthbox.com, a self-watering, self-contained planter that fits almost anywhere.

**Use color.** Plant a flowering shrub or position a container of annuals on your front porch. The smallest splash of color can make a major difference.

**Planning a major outdoor renovation?**
Numerica has home equity options. Call (800) 433-1837 or visit numericacu.com
