

On The Money

JANUARY 2008

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Post-Holiday Debt Consolidation Options

Has holiday spending put you in a tight spot?

Do you have lots of different payments to make, such as a car payment, student loan payment, and credit card bills? RCU has several options to help consolidate your debt into one easier payment.

PrimeLine Home Equity Line of Credit

A PrimeLine is a line of credit that is secured by your home or vacation home. You may be able to save money if it's tax deductible (check with your tax advisor). Take out a line of credit and use it to pay off all of your bills with just one monthly payment.

Credit Card

Pay off all your high interest in-store credit cards that you've accumulated over the holidays by consolidating them all onto an RCU Preferred Visa. The RCU Preferred Visa comes with a low rate that stays low...no teaser rates that skyrocket after a few months. Plus the RCU Visa has no annual fee and you can earn reward points.



Personal Loan

RCU offers personal loans at affordable rates. Pay off your credit cards and make payments to only one loan. We offer several options including secured and unsecured loans.

Stop in and see us to determine your options or apply at 715-833-8111, 1-800-341-9911, or www.rcu.org.



SecurityTip Protect your online accounts with strong passwords that include a combination of letters and numbers. To learn more, visit the *Security News* page under *News & Events* at www.rcu.org.

3 Ways to Find Your RCU Tax Information for 2007

Call CompuTeller

- Call 715-833-8168 or 1-800-762-6280.
- Press 1 to navigate using Touch Tones or say "Voice" to navigate using your voice.
- Press 1 to access your account.
- Enter your Member Number and PIN.
- Choose the account that you want to work with.
- Press 1 for more information.
- Press 4 for last year's Interest and YTD Interest.

Log onto eBranch

Visit www.rcu.org and log onto eBranch with your Sign-on ID and Password. On the

Accounts Summary page, click "Detail" next to the account that you want to work with.

- Look at Interest Paid Last Year

Check your Statement/eStatement

On your December statement that you will receive the first week in January, you will see YTD Interest that you paid for 2007 below the transaction detail for each account.

For any other questions please contact RCU Member Service at 715-833-8111 or 1-800-341-9911.

RCU Can Help You With A Student Loan

Have you thought about applying for Financial Aid yet?

The official deadline for submitting a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) varies from state to state. To be safe and increase your chances of receiving financial aid, be sure to submit your FAFSA as soon after January 1st as possible. Funding is limited and most are awarded on a first come, first serve basis.

There are several steps in the application process. Listed below are the ones you will need to take:

1. Get a Personal Identification Number (PIN) at www.pin.ed.gov. Before filling out your FAFSA on the Internet, it is recommended that the student and one parent apply for a PIN.

2. Complete a FAFSA worksheet at www.fafsa.ed.gov. This optional tool can be completed to help gather all the necessary documentation prior to completing the actual FAFSA.
3. Apply Online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. You can submit a paper application, but there are many advantages to applying online, such as, you get your Student Aid Report (SAR) quicker and FAFSA online checks your answers before you submit.

About four weeks after you file your FAFSA, you and all the colleges you listed on the FAFSA will receive your Student Aid Report (SAR). Carefully review the information on your SAR to make sure it is accurate. If you need to make corrections, there will be instructions enclosed.

RCU has been helping Members with Student Loans for over 25 years; we are here to help you. If you have any questions you can call us at 715-855-5455 or 1-800-341-9911 ext. 5455.



FREE Income Tax Assistance

Do you need help filing your income tax return? RCU and the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program may be able to help!

VITA was created to provide free income tax return assistance to taxpayers who cannot afford to pay for professional help. VITA provides free tax assistance to



handicapped, non-English speaking, elderly, and special needs taxpayers with an adjusted gross annual income under \$35,000. Volunteers are University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire accounting students trained by the IRS and the Wisconsin Department of Revenue.

VITA offers assistance in filling out basic tax forms (1040EZ, 1040A, and 1040). Taxpayers with complicated returns or questions will be referred to an IRS publication, to the IRS, or to seek private professional assistance. Eligibility is determined on a case-by-case basis by the VITA volunteer and is provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

Please bring with you:

- 2006 tax return
- 2007 tax booklet, if received by mail
- W-2 forms
- Interest and dividend statements
- Form 1099 SSA from the Social Security Administration
- Social Security cards for dependents
- Real estate property tax receipts
- Any other documents showing income

This unique service will be available at:

RCU Bellinger Street Office
1512 Bellinger Street, Eau Claire

Tuesdays and Thursdays
February 12 through April 15
1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

For more information please contact the VITA volunteers hotline at 715-833-7257.

Having Trouble Making Your Payments?

Be proactive with RCU!

Many people encounter a time of financial hardship at some point during their lives. With easy access to credit cards, lines of credit, and the pressure to “keep up with the Joneses” it’s easy to see how a person can dig themselves a hole. Unfortunately, it’s not so easy to get back out! At RCU our goal is to work with you to smooth out any financial bumps before they get out of hand.

The best piece of advice: anticipate problems and take the first step. If you have been laid off of work and you know a loan payment is coming due that you won’t be able to make, don’t ignore it! We will do everything possible to find a solution to your financial problems. The sooner you contact us, the more options you will have. Here are some ways to get a handle on your bills:

1. Use easy money, such as money owed to you from others or money from a garage sale, to pay down your debts.
2. Ask creditors to reduce your monthly payments.
3. When you can, send in more than minimum monthly payments.
4. Consider a debt-consolidation loan.
5. Ask a family member or friend for a loan.
6. Talk to a certified credit counselor.

Please contact us if you are unable to make your payment for any reason or if you are anticipating a problem with making a payment at 715-855-8855 or 1-800-341-9911 ext. 8855. RCU is here to answer your questions and help you find financial solutions.

An Investment in Your Future

Happy New Year! This year, instead of making another typical New Year's resolution that you will abandon within 2 months, why not resolve to do something that will benefit you and your family for years to come? Start investing!

It doesn't matter if you are in college or close to retirement. Saving just \$50.00 a month can make a tremendous difference to the quality of life you hopefully can enjoy in retirement.

First, set your goals. What are you saving this money for? Then, organize your monthly bills. Use an expense worksheet to categorize your monthly outflow and find where you can save \$50.00 (or more). You can find an easy to use expense form at www.rcu.org under Services – Credit Counseling. Don't forget to record meals out, movies, morning coffee, and manicures, that if reduced, could be a good source of extra money in the budget.

Secondly, talk with a financial professional who will help you determine your risk tolerance and time horizon. Both

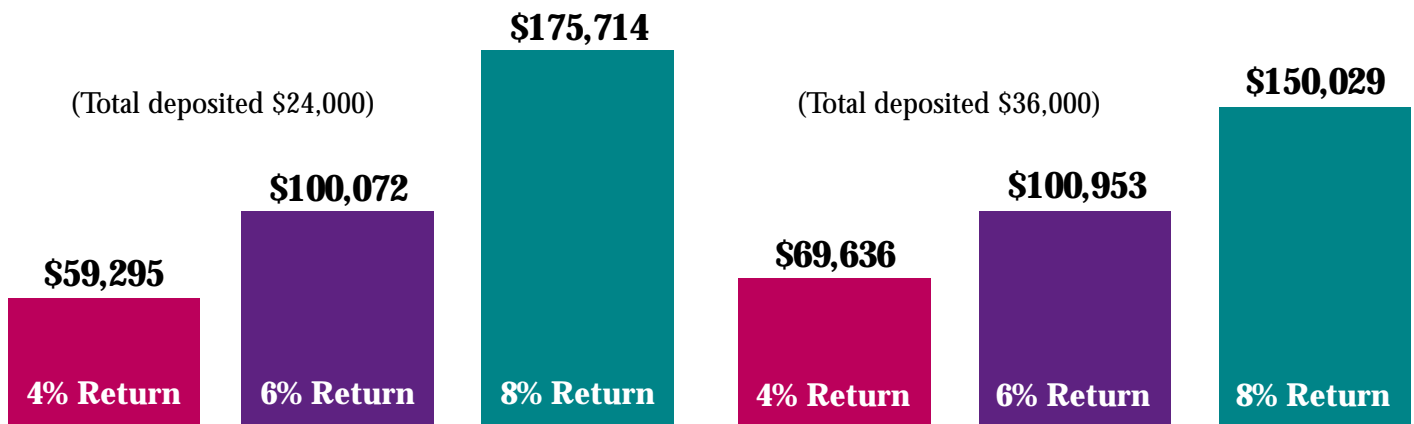
are very important in helping decide what kind of investment vehicle is proper for you. All investments involving the stock market do carry some risk and it is important to realize that there is the possibility of losing principal.

Third, with your financial professional choose the appropriate investment. Diversification is key in making your portfolio work the way you designed it to, for the risk you are willing to take on, and for the amount of time you plan on investing. Beginning with one mutual fund and then adding others to your portfolio is an excellent way to diversify and keep you active in the "health" of your portfolio.

Oppenheimer Mutual Funds show the benefits of starting early & sticking with your goals:

After investing \$50 per month beginning at age 25, your total savings at age 65 could be:

After investing \$100 per month beginning at age 35, your total savings at age 65 could be:



Although saving \$50.00 a month for a mutual fund may seem difficult to achieve at age 25, the end result will be well worth the struggle. From the example you can see that although at age 35 you will deposit more, you end up with the same, or a smaller return.

For more information, or to schedule an appointment with RCU's Investment and Insurance Team call 715-833-8111 or 1-800-341-9911.

Investment and Insurance Products can be purchased or sold through a Registered Representative of Financial Network Investment Corporation. Brokerage services are provided by Financial Network, a registered broker/dealer and member of SIPC. Financial Network and RCU Investment & Insurance Services are different companies. Financial Network is not an affiliate of RCU.

RCU Creates Hotline to Help Troubled Home Loan Borrowers

RCU is taking a proactive approach to the sub-prime and adjustable rate mortgage loan issues that may arise in the Chippewa Valley.

We have created a Home Loan Hotline at 715-833-8220 or 1-800-341-9911 ext. 8220. "We are encouraging RCU Members and non-Members to contact us if they have any questions about their home loan," says Linda Marincel, RCU Home Loan Manager. "We want to create a place for them to turn to before they get into trouble. We will help to create a solution that will work for them."

"Although RCU has never participated in sub-prime lending, we realize that there are people in the Chippewa Valley who may find themselves in trouble with predatory, or sub-prime loans," stated Mark Willer, RCU's Chief Operating Officer.

Sub-prime lending, also called, "B-Paper", "near-prime", or "second chance" lending is a general term that refers to the practice of making loans to borrowers who do not qualify for market interest rates because of problems with their credit history. Sub-prime lenders also attract those who have a great credit history by enticing them with very low interest rates and other "to-good-to-be-true" offers.

If you are experiencing or anticipating problems with your home loan please call our hotline at 715-833-8220 or 1-800-341-9911 ext. 8220 to find out about your options.

Home Loan Hotline
715-833-8220

New Teller Concept at Shopko South Office

As a way to improve the service we provide, we are introducing a new and innovative way to serve you through a new teller concept at the RCU Shopko South Office.

Our new lobby teller windows will be similar to our drive-up teller units. There will be a screen where you will see the teller who is assisting you, a tube to pass your transaction to the teller, and a telephone to use for privacy. The drive-up and lobby Tellers will be located in one central area in the office where they can assist both the drive-up and lobby Members more efficiently. We'll also have an area for Special Services and Business Accounts. And as always, service is important to us so we will have an employee in the lobby to provide you with assistance and to

help you use our new teller windows. To learn more about this new innovative Teller concept, stop by the RCU Shopko South Office to view a short demonstration of the new concept.



Thank you for your patience during our remodeling which should be complete in early 2008.

RCU has joined the Co-op Network to bring you even more ATM locations!

RCU Members are now able to use Co-op network ATM's surcharge free and will not be assessed a non-Pulse ATM fee from RCU.

There are over 25,000 surcharge-free Co-op ATM's located in all 50 states and in 10 countries, including over 5,500 at 7-Eleven stores. This is a great benefit to our Members that

travel or plan on taking a vacation. To find a Co-op Network ATM near you visit www.rcu.org and click on Services - Check and ATM Cards.

Message From the President

We had a new Member join RCU recently. She was talking with our Teller about just moving to the area and that she had been driving around looking for a place to move her accounts. She stopped into a different financial institution and had a nice conversation with the Teller there. She asked about how many locations they had in the area and other important questions you would ask when you're making a financial institution change.

As she was leaving the teller said to her, "Be sure not to go to RCU, they are always busy." Well, that got this young lady thinking. She had been at this bank for at least 15 minutes and they hadn't had a single customer. In her mind it made sense that if your financial institution is busy, there must be a reason. The busy financial – in this case RCU – must be doing something right. As it turns out, we are, and we got a great new Member out of the deal.

This story really got me thinking about how busy our offices are. It's not often a Member stops in and the office is empty. You're much more likely to see our employees chatting away with our Members about a new grandchild or how the holiday party went. There's constant motion in our offices with Tellers cashing checks and making deposits, Financial Sales Representatives are opening new accounts and helping Members with their lending needs, and Receptionists are greeting everyone who walks in the door. In other words, we're serving our Members' financial needs in a friendly but efficient way. All of a sudden, busy doesn't seem so bad.

Of course, for those Members who don't want to visit our offices very often, we also offer a variety of eServices including eBranch, eStatement, and ePay. These services paired with over 25 free RCU ATM's offer the convenience our on-the-go Members are looking for. Whatever your style, RCU has the fit for you.

As an organization, we are committed to making the lives of our Members and the people in our communities even better. We are always looking to create a better experience for you, our Member. If you have any suggestions, please call me at 715-833-8105 or 1-800-341-9911 ext. 8105.

Sincerely,



Charles M. Grossklaus, CEO



44th Annual Business Meeting

**Tuesday, April 29, 2008 • 4:30 pm • RCU Corporate Center
200 Riverfront Terrace • Eau Claire**

RSVP to 715-858-5252 or 1-800-341-9911 ext. 5252.



Eau Claire • Chippewa Falls • Whitehall
Rice Lake • Colby • New Richmond
715-833-8111 • 1-800-341-9911 • www.rcu.org

