Financial *focus*

FINANCIAL SECURITY FOR YOUR GOLDEN YEARS

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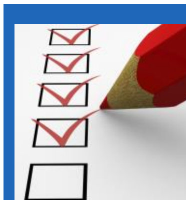

The Allure of Autumn

These days, the sun is rising just a little bit later, and setting just a little bit earlier. There's a bit of a chill in the air and football on the airwaves. Fall is here!
This is the only season that actually has two names: Fall and Autumn. However you refer to it, this is one season to enjoy for many reasons.

A beautiful autumn is tough to beat. And it comes without fail every year. The big summer party is winding down; barbeques and picnic baskets are stored away, making way for log fires and walks on paths that are now soft tapestries of fallen leaves. The rumble of lawn mowers is replaced with the crackle of bonfires. The compost heap gets bigger. Geese and ducks fly overhead, and hunters anxiously await another season. The garden settles down for its winter hibernation, storing food for the winter ahead.

Forget what comes after the fall season; enjoy these five reasons to love fall now:

***FOLIAGE* –** Green is nice, but fall proves that variety is the spice of life. Walking along any tree-lined street or trail, we're treated to yellows, oranges, and reds as the trees begin to shut down for their winter naps. Aging can indeed be a beautiful process!

***FOOD* –** Fall is for feasting! Research has shown that we consume approximately 200 more calories each day in autumn. There's Halloween candy, Thanksgiving turkey, and plenty of apple pie, pumpkin pie, and apple cider to wash it all down.

***FOOTBALL* –** While the NFL has suffered some bad PR lately, football fans across the country still have plenty to cheer about on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays as their favorite teams, no matter what level of competition, take to the gridiron.

***FASHION* –** Fall gives us a reason to wear all different sorts of fabrics, such as cashmere, corduroy, and wool. And with the chillier weather, we can layer up with hats, sweaters, scarves, and jackets to look cool while we stay warm!

***FESTIVITIES* –** Halloween and Thanksgiving are two great reasons to get together with friends and family this fall. It's a time to share, to give thanks, and be surrounded by those you love.

Embrace this season and enjoy its many attractions!

Top Five Biggest Credit Myths for Millennials

Despite the wealth of data available, there are still a lot of credit myths in circulation. Here are five you should learn to recognize as you start your work career:

#1 – Student Loans Don't Affect Credit

It's true the amount of government-issued student loans in good standing isn't factored in to your credit score. In fact, paying student loan payments on time every month can be one of the easiest ways for young people to establish a payment history. Those who don't pay their loans for a significant period of time or worse, end up defaulting, can definitely expect to see their credit trend downward. While the amount of your loans may not be factored into your credit score, it will be factored into your debt-to-income ratio (DTI). If your DTI is too high, many banks simply won't lend to you.

#2 – You Can Always Take a Loan Out On a 457

Starting to save in your County 457 Plan or some other tax deferred account is critical. There will be an overwhelming temptation to use the nest egg you've saved up when it's much too early. The IRS has many rules that govern private retirement accounts like 457 plans. That's for good reason. Money in a retirement account should be for retirement. Just because you're allowed to take money out doesn't mean you should. In fact, a loan on your 457 might end up being a double whammy if you can't pay it back—negatively affecting both your present credit and your future retirement.

#3 – Credit is Free Money

It's prudent to be discerning when it comes to which lines of credit you open in your name. Your credit score is made up of these components:

Payment history (30%)
Amounts owed (30%)
Length of credit history (15%)
Mix of credit (10%)
New credit (10%)

If you open too many lines of credit in a short period of time, and then proceed to do a poor job of paying those bills on time, your credit score will plummet. The best policy for using credit is to only use it when you need it, make sure you can afford it, and make payments on time.

#4 – Usually Better If Parents Co-Sign

If your parents are pretty responsible with money, have secure jobs, and expect to make the payments, it can be a great way to help you establish credit. However, if something unforeseen causes them to miss payments, it's going to affect their credit scores and yours. If you can avoid having parents co-sign, great. If you absolutely need them to do it, then make sure you and your parents are all well aware of the risks.

#5 – It's Impossible to Fix Bad Credit

Finally, some upside to a myth. Fixing bad credit is far from impossible. Sit down with your bills, a calculator, and maybe a financially savvy significant other, friend, or family member, and figure out what you need to do.

FICO—the company that creates and determines credit scores—has some ways those with poor or fair credit can get back on track. The first and most important step is to check your credit report and make sure the information is accurate. By law, consumers are entitled to request a free copy of their credit report annually, so if you haven't done that yet, do it now.

Next, get back on track with timely payments and start reducing your debt. It's incredibly difficult to become more disciplined with spending, and oftentimes it requires making painful sacrifices. However, if you make a plan and stick to it, eventually you'll start seeing results.

Source: The Dime, September 19, 2016

Life Doesn't Stop When You Retire

Call EPCRP at (719) 520-7490 and let us know if you have any changes to your beneficiaries or marital status. This helps ensure that any benefits payable when you pass away are processed efficiently and according to your wishes.

Plus, keep EPCRP contact information with your important papers. This makes it easier for your loved ones to contact us.

Retirement Board

Board meetings are held on the fourth Monday of every month, except for June and December.

Contact the retirement office (719) 520-7490 for the location.

www.epcretirement.org

The EPCRP Board: What Do They Do?

Ever wonder what the El Paso County Retirement Plan (EPCRP) Board does? The Board's primary purpose is to provide benefits and programs as specified by both Federal and State statute, and to oversee the administration of them. The Board also oversees the Plan Trust accounts as fiduciaries (Trustees) to the Retirement Plan and its members. While the Trustees oversee the Plan Trust accounts and its investments, they also hire an Executive Director to aid the Board in the day to day administration of the Plan. The Board further maintains governance policies that outline what it expects its Executive Director and staff to achieve, and how they expect that to be accomplished. The Executive Director has responsibilities as provided by the Retirement Board, but those primarily consist of:

- Implementing Board Policy;
- Recommending appropriate Policy changes;
- Facilitating Board's oversight through reporting and communication
- Facilitating Board's overall mission and vision to the County and its employees

Fiduciary Responsibility

Board Members, whether elected or appointed, act as fiduciaries under both Colorado and Federal statute in its deliberations. The Colorado statute that must be adhered to by the Trustees is that of a "prudent investor". This means, Board Members MUST carry out their functions solely as a prudent investor would, exercising care and prudence under the facts and circumstances prevailing at the time of action. In doing so, they consider long and short term needs of the Plan in carrying out its purposes, its present and anticipated financial requirements, expected total return on its investments, price level trends, and general economic conditions.

There are three basic principles for Board Trustees as fiduciaries of the Plan:

Duty of Loyalty

Plan fiduciaries have a responsibility to act solely in the best interests of EPCRP members and retirees.

Duty of Care

Plan fiduciaries have an obligation to follow clear processes in order to make decisions and act responsibly on behalf of Plan members and retirees.

Duty of Prudence

Plan fiduciaries make a commitment to arm themselves with the best information and knowledge available in order to make responsible decisions.

Board Oversight

Investments

The ultimate responsibility for investment selection and performance lies with the Retirement Board, which sets and monitors asset allocation, approves the Investment Policy Statement annually, selects investment consultants and advisors, and oversees all delegation made to the Executive Director and his staff. The Plan's Investment Consultant through Ellwood Associates reports regularly to the Board on investment related matters, as well as aids the Board in tracking performance and appropriateness of the investments selected.

Staying Educated

Trustees also have a responsibility to educate themselves to stay current with topics affecting the Plan by attending seminars, classes, and other training opportunities as they relate to the Plan and the overall public pension industry. It is a standing policy of the EPCRP Board that Trustees should have a comprehensive understanding of such topics, so that the Board is better able to draft policies to help guide the administration of the Retirement Plan.

El Paso County Retirement Plan

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Step-by-Step Checklist to Retire With EPCRP

More than starting a benefit, retirement is a transition into a new phase in your life. By following the steps below, you can make it a smooth one.

Step 1. Know Your Numbers

Namely, your retirement income and your expenses. Well before you set a retirement date, request an estimate of your El Paso County Retirement Plan benefit, and get an estimate of your Social Security benefits from www.ssa.gov. Take into account any personal savings you have earmarked for retirement, as well. Balance that income against your estimated expenses to make sure you are financially ready to retire.

Step 2. Give EPCRP a Call

Let us know when you would like to start your benefit two to three months ahead of time. Call (719) 520-7490 and we'll be happy to discuss the retirement process with you, as well as provide you with the latest estimate of your EPCRP benefit.

Step 3. Visit your EBMS representative

El Paso County offers retiree health insurance through EBMS. Talk to an EBMS representative about your health insurance options, as well as any sick time or accrued annual leave you haven't taken yet.

Step 4. Turn in Your Paperwork

You'll find a PDF of the EPCRP retirement packet at www.epcretirement.org, under the heading "Useful Forms." By filling it out, you will:

- Let us know when you'd like to start your benefit
- Tell us what payment option you want
- Designate a beneficiary for your survivor benefit
- Indicate your federal and state income tax withholding
- Make your retiree health insurance elections

Please call us if you need any assistance with your retirement paperwork. We're here to help!

Step 5. Enjoy Your Retirement!
Congratulations! Wherever your retirement takes you, your EPCRP benefit will be there to help support you.

www.epcretirement.org

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