

ARC CONNECTION

FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

A quarterly publication for members of ARC Federal Credit Union

WINTER 2024

Live Local, Think Global

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORTING YOUR LOCAL ECONOMY

During tough economic times, there are plenty of things everyone can do to help boost the economy. Since most of the conversation about recessions tends to focus on what governments or big businesses can do to help the economy, it can be easy to feel like you have no way to help your community. While there will be things out of your control, that doesn't mean there's nothing you can do.

What You Can Do

Support Local Businesses. Local businesses are often the hardest hit in recessions. With generally smaller profit margins than bigger businesses, they're often closer to closing their doors. When small businesses close, it creates a ripple effect. The people that they employed no longer have jobs and are less likely to spend money, which can make more small businesses close. It's vital to do what you can to support business owners in your community to boost your local economy. If you can afford to, consider buying from the mom-and-pop shop on the corner or getting takeout from a local restaurant.

Follow Advice From Local and National Leaders.

Every recession is different. Local and national leaders are advised by experts and can pass along guidelines or rules to help bolster the economy.

What to Avoid

"Runs" on Banks or Credit Unions. While the phrasing may bring to mind overcoat-clad masses angrily clamoring outside the windows, runs on banks and credit unions can still happen today. Essentially, "running" on a bank or credit union means multiple people withdrawing all their

money in cash. Banks and credit unions need physical money to continue operations, and if everyone demands their money in cash at once, banks and credit unions simply can't support it. Most importantly, your money is safe in a financial institution. Most credit unions are insured by the NCUA (National Credit Union Administration). ARC Federal Credit Union members' funds are insured by the NCUA, which will cover your savings, checking, and many other accounts for up to \$250,000 per account ownership type and bank. This means that your money is safe. Even if the worst happens and your bank or credit union is forced to close, the government has insured your money, and you will not lose it.

Contributing to Shortages. You may need to stock up on necessities when the economy begins to fall, but you should do so wisely. Money can be tight in a recession, and you want to be sure you're spending your money in the most helpful areas. If you spend a significant chunk of your budget on soap, for example, you won't have nearly as much left over for other essentials like food or medicine.

Similarly, it's important to think of others. When 100 people buy a loaf of bread, that's not a big deal. When a few people buy 100 loaves of bread each, suddenly there's no bread left. If this happens with multiple essential items throughout an entire store, it can lead to panic and shortages of necessary supplies.

Recessions are hard on everyone, but there are actions that we can all take to help make them better. Being conscious of the effects of your actions amid an economic downturn can help you be an active part of improving the situation.

Nothing New

ARE NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS A THING OF THE PAST?

Short answer - yes, absolutely! But not in the way you might think. New Year's resolutions have been around for millennia. There are records of the ancient Mesopotamians making resolutions 4,000 years ago when they celebrated the spring barley harvest. This 12-day festival was a big deal for the Assyrians and Babylonians; it marked the sowing of their harvest, the rebirth of nature, and a religious celebration of their gods. Imagine rolling our whole holiday season into nearly two weeks of festivals, religious services, and sporting events - an excellent way to start the year. This was also when Babylonians would make resolutions to their gods. These were a long stretch from today's dieting, exercising, and "dry January" resolutions. They usually involved loyalty to the king, paying their debts, or returning borrowed items to their rightful owners.

Similarly, the Romans sacrificed to their god Janus at the start of the new year, promising good behavior. Into the Middle Ages, Knights would make a "Peacock Vow" at the end of each year, placing their hand on a peacock while renewing their resolution to maintain the values of knighthood. There are similar records of New Year's resolutions from various cultures throughout history.

But why? And why should it matter to you? Less than 40% of adults set resolutions yearly; only about 9% of those successfully keep them. I'd say, "May the odds be ever in your favor" with your resolutions, but they aren't. So, what can we do to help fight this uphill battle? Choose SMART resolutions. Not that there are any dumb resolutions; that's probably a topic for a different article. Just make sure the resolutions you choose meet the following five criteria:

Specific: "Lose weight" or "Eat healthy" are not specific goals, yet they consistently rank high on New Year's resolutions lists. Try something more specific like "lose 10 lbs" instead so you know exactly what you are working toward. Even "eat a salad for lunch twice a week" is more defined than just a vague idea to 'eat healthy'.

Measurable: Use the examples above to make your goals measurable. You need to see if you are progressing toward that goal or perhaps slipping

back in the other direction. Setting a number of pounds to lose is both specific and measurable, as is dropping pants sizes or decreasing the inches around your waist.

Achievable: Be realistic with your goals; this is a big reason many resolutions fail (over 40% after just one month). If you want to lose weight, fine. If you want to lose 50 lbs in time for that cruise in April, that is unrealistic - and potentially unhealthy. You'll likely get discouraged and give up when you don't start seeing immediate, drastic results. However, setting your goal at 1-2 lbs of weight loss per week for the first month is realistic, achievable, and - above all - healthy (assuming you have weight to lose).

Relevant: Choose resolutions that have significance for you and will improve your quality of life by implementing them. Do not make weight loss a goal if losing weight would cause health issues. The most popular resolutions each year deal with health and finances, but your needs may differ; you may want to travel, pick up a hobby, or learn a language.

Time-based: Whatever resolution(s) you decide on, you must have a deadline to complete it. You can also set checkpoints along the way; this helps you measure your progress and keep your goals realistic. Exercise goals are infamous for seeming overwhelming and being quickly abandoned. Use those checkpoints to see if it's time to adjust what's attainable for you as you go.

Remember that the examples above are just that - examples: consult a personal trainer, dietitian, or your doctor for any advice on weight loss or exercise. Our expertise lies in financial wellness, and we would love to help you with any savings, spending, or budgeting goals you may have. We have a certified financial counselor on staff, as well as many online resources and tools if your goals involve:

- Sorting your finances
- Learning to build a budget
- Putting together a plan to get out of debt

Call or text our MSRs at 814-946-0857 or email memberhelp@arcfcu.org today.

The Reason for the Season

ARC MEMBERS SUPPORT 3 LOCAL CHARITIES

Thank you to everyone who helped us support the community and our partner organizations with donations during the holiday season last year! Because of your generosity, we were able to support “Be a Santa To a Senior” through Home Instead, Duncansville, “Stockings For The Troops” through Military Families Ministry USA, Inc., and the “Toys for Tots Drive” through the Marine Corps Reserve.

Be a Santa To a Senior provides care items for seniors in local nursing homes. ARC had special Christmas trees from Home Instead in our lobbies throughout November decorated with bulbs listing items like puzzles, craft supplies, etc., that the nursing home residents had on their Christmas lists that year. Members could take a bulb, purchase the items listed on it, and then return them to either ARC branch or Home Instead in Duncansville. Be a Santa To a Senior was able to collect and distribute 400 gifts to area nursing home residents for Christmas because of the generous support of our members and community members at other tree locations.

Stockings for the Troops put together holiday care packages for deployed service men and women, packed individually into Christmas stockings, and shipped overseas in time for the holidays. These include snacks, candy, cookies, drink mixes, toothbrushes and toothpaste,

like cards or dice; handwritten notes and Christmas cards were also included for the troops. This year,

Military Family Ministries, Inc. shipped over 850 care package Christmas stockings to service men and women in 6 locations, totaling almost \$4,500 in shipping costs! All your donations, whether care items or monetary, made this extraordinary holiday act possible. Military Families Ministry also partners with a local agency to provide backpacks filled with water bottles, snacks, microwaveable meals, and personal care items for homeless veterans. They give out these backpacks while the local agency provides hotel rooms for the vets and connects them to resources to get them back on their feet. Visit MilitaryFamiliesMinistry.com to learn more about the organization and their amazing work supporting active-duty service members, veterans, and their families in our area and at their other chapters across the country.

We also had a very generous donation of new, unwrapped toys for our Toys For Tots drive. Though we don't receive final local numbers on this collection since it is a nationwide, federally organized drive, Toys for Tots has helped over 272 million children in over 800 communities in the US since its inception in 1947.

We always require the local coordinating officers to stop several times for pickups throughout the donation period, as our members give generously to our area children. It is touching to see the care and compassion our staff and credit union members extend to the community at every stage of life - the elderly and infirm, our active duty soldiers, and our young children in need. ARC is truly blessed to be part of a community that understands and celebrates the true meaning of the holidays through giving.



Just For You

EXCLUSIVE MEMBER DISCOUNTS

This tax season, you can now get the biggest savings on tax prep services and expert tax help. Plus, as a credit union member you can enter for a chance to win \$10,000 in the Love My Credit Union® Rewards Tax Time Sweepstakes.

TurboTax - Get a bigger discount this tax season with **savings of up to 20% on TurboTax** federal products. Hand off your taxes, get help from experts or file on your own - with TurboTax, America's #1 tax preparer.



H&R Block - Get expert tax help and the best-in-market **savings up to \$25 on H&R Block** professional tax prep, Get your taxes done by a tax pro in an office, via video, or by phone - with H&R Block, experience counts.

Scan the QR Code to get your discounts and enter to win, or visit taxservices.lovemycreditunion.org today!

2023 IRA Contributions

MINIMUMS, MAXIMUMS AND DEADLINES, OH MY!

ARC members who currently have a Traditional IRA with us, please be aware of the following update for tax year 2024:

Traditional IRA contribution limits for 2024 is \$7,000 for those under age 50, and \$8,000 for those 50 or older (catch up contribution). Please refer to your tax advisor with any questions on how much you can contribute.

Want to learn more about IRAs and saving for your future? Visit our financial wellness page to learn about your different options and how to lay out a budget so you can set aside money and save on a regular basis.

1. Open your smartphone camera and hover over the blue QR code to the right.
2. Tap the link that pops up on your screen.
3. Explore our [article on IRAs](#) and lots of other money topics.

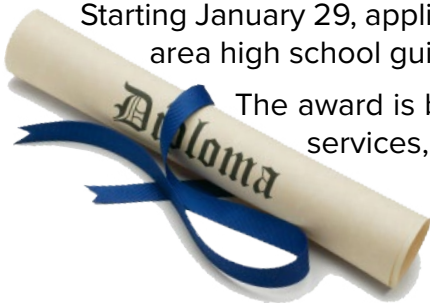


\$3,000 College Scholarship

ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP AVAILABLE TO GRADUATING 2024 SENIOR

ARC will offer one \$3,000 scholarship to a 2024 high school graduate pursuing higher education. Starting January 29, applications will be available in both ARC lobbies, online at www.arcfcu.org, and in area high school guidance offices.

The award is based on financial need, academics, essay questions, leadership, community services, and a personal interview. Deadline to submit an application is March 2, 2024.



Holiday Closings

JAN 1 - New Year's Day
JAN 15 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
FEB 19 - Presidents' Day
MAR 29 - Good Friday (Close at 12pm)



Your savings federally insured to at least \$250,000 and backed by the full faith and credit of the United States government. Insured by NCUA.