

Cornerstones

Message From the Executive Director

The price of oil is skyrocketing, the housing market continues to flounder, and the stock market is jittery. Along with these adversities we have seen a rise in the cost of living, inflation, taxes, and other present-day woes making it difficult for donors to make sizable charitable gifts.

We know that you have obligations to your family – spouse, children, grandchildren, parents, and others. Many of you can't afford to give up the income generated by your assets and many of you are concerned about providing for retirement.

Donors who believe in our institution and want to further our work can be real philanthropists – even though they have other obligations. There are a number of ways for those who would like to be philanthropists – but think they can't afford it – to make meaningful charitable gifts.

Please give us a call so that we can discuss with you and your advisors the many ways charitable gifts can help you carry out your family, investment, and philanthropic objectives.

Safeguard Your Savings... How to Protect Your Wealth

There's not much point in accumulating retirement savings if you then fail to protect them from all the bad things that can happen during a lifetime—from costly damage to your home to a lawsuit that goes against you.

You don't want to use your nest egg to fund anything other than your golden years. Review all the safeguards you have in place to help protect your assets and see where there might be gaps that need to be closed.

Build a rainy-day fund

Everyone needs an emergency fund to pay unexpected bills so you don't have to borrow from your retirement funds. The rainy-day fund should equal at least three months worth of living expenses and should be kept where you can access it immediately.

Fine-tune your insurance coverage

Go over every policy you have with your financial planner or insurance agent to make sure that even a serious fire or illness won't bury you under bills you have to pay out-of-pocket.

Don't overlook estate planning

There are crucial documents everyone needs, no matter what your age or financial situation, such as a will, which ensures that your assets are properly distributed. Note: You can't use a will to distribute money from a retirement savings plan or an individual retirement account (IRA). You need to complete beneficiary statements to accomplish that.

Planning for a secure retirement involves more than just contributing to your workplace savings plan.

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Some people make things happen.

Some people watch things happen.

Some people wonder what happened.

Author Unknown

Tax Rebate Ideas

- ◆ Start an emergency fund. Stash away three to six months of living expenses.
- ◆ Pay off some bills or attack your credit cards.
- ◆ Invest for the future. Invest for your retirement in an employer-matched 401k or 403b or start an IRA.
- ◆ Get in front of home loans. Pay down your home equity line of credit.
- ◆ Use for car or home repairs.
- ◆ Buy something worthwhile. Make a smart purchase, such as updating an old appliance.
- ◆ Donate
- ◆ Recharge your batteries. If tips 1 through 8 are a little bit too responsible, think about a not-too-expensive or stressful trip.

Visit our website at:
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Smart Spending



Did You Know... According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project:

83% of Americans say they have used the Internet to seek information about their hobbies and 29% do so on a typical day.

Refund Retail

Some stores say they'll pay the difference on a purchase if you find the item cheaper elsewhere. *PriceProtectr.com* helps you hold them to their word. You enter your e-mail address and the item's URL from the retailer's Web site, and Price Protectr does the rest, taking your purchase data and scanning for a price drop among other retailers. Price Protectr monitors 54 stores and counting and lists each store's price-protection policy. It monitors your purchases for anywhere from seven to 90 days, but the site doesn't offer an option to compare prices among retailers.

SMART SPENDING

Debit card dos and don'ts

A debit card lets you make purchases using the money in your bank account so you don't have to carry cash. Perhaps that is why debit cards have surpassed personal checks in popularity—and debit-card transactions have recently topped credit card sales for the first time. **Still, like all things plastic, there are dos and don'ts of which debit-card users should be aware:**

DO report a lost or stolen card immediately. Debit cards are not afforded the same fraud protection under federal law as credit cards. If your debit card is used fraudulently, you could be liable for up to \$500 unless you report the card's disappearance with two days. After 60 days, you could be on the hook for the entire account balance. By contrast, if your credit card falls into the wrong hands, you may have to pay a maximum of \$50 (and most credit-card companies won't charge even that).

DO get a card with a MasterCard® or Visa® logo. Both companies have extended their credit-card policy to debit cards with their logos—not as strong as having federal protection, but a solid second-best.

DON'T aim for overdraft protection. Making a debit-card purchase that exceeds the funds available in your account will likely trigger a penalty of at least \$25. Overdraft protection will save you the \$25, but you still get penalized at a lower amount. Plus, banks often include the amount of your overdraft protection in your "available balance," potentially encouraging you to tap into it, incurring both overdraft fees and interest payments.

DON'T forget the hidden fees. When using debit cards abroad, expect to be hit with service fees on each purchase. Be aware, too, that service fees can be assessed at home as well.

The jury is still out on whether it's best to punch in your personal identification number (PIN) or provide a signature when given a choice at the cash register. Dove Consulting, a Boston-based firm, found that transactions using a PIN are 15 times more secure than those requiring a signature. But your bank may charge for PIN transactions or grand rewards points for signature transactions alone.

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