

American Saver

You Can Build Wealth

America Saves Week Participation Expands

More than 100 national and regional groups and many hundreds more local organizations are participating in America Saves Week, February 22 - March 1, putting the campaign's signature event on track to reach millions with the savings message.

The annual event, which has grown from a handful of participating partners in 2007, seeks to promote savings, encourage individuals to assess their progress, and provide new opportunities to save. During last year's Saves Week, more than 40 million people were reached through the media and tens of thousands attended events, opened savings accounts, or took other action to save.

A wide variety of groups are participating this year and endorsing the Week, including:

- Federal agencies, including the Cooperative Extension Service, Internal Revenue Service, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and others;
- Major private employers, including Prudential, MetLife, and American Express;
- Industry trade organizations, such as the American Bankers Association and the Credit Union National Association;
- Every branch of the military; and
- Non-profits, including the New America Foundation, the Corporation for Enterprise Development, and the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America.

A full list of participating groups can be found at www.AmericaSavesWeek.org.

"During tough economic times, it's more important than ever to reassess your spending and savings," said Nancy Register, director of the America Saves campaign. "A strong commitment to saving can help families weather the downturn, so we are encouraged by the expansion of Saves Week and the fact that so many Americans will have the opportunity to assess and improve their savings behavior."

UTAH SAVER

Learning to Save and Passing it On

Isabel Dominguez came across Utah Saves last fall, when she saw a flyer for free financial workshops in her hometown of Logan, two hours north of Salt Lake City.

At the time, Dominguez was living paycheck to paycheck, saving a little but not regularly. She kept the idea of saving "in the back of my mind" as something that was important to do, she said, but the flyer - which advertised classes on topics like goal-setting, credit, debt repayment, and retirement - reminded her there was a lot to learn. The principles she's learned through Utah Saves have helped her "get a whole view" of her finances, and taught her to prioritize, she said.

Dominguez made eliminating credit card debt her first financial goal. Since her teacher challenged her to stop spending on credit cards, she has gotten rid of two cards and now uses the third only in emergencies.

She also has begun to consider "wants versus needs" and apply a stricter standard to her purchases, she said. Using this logic, she postponed the purchase of a new vehicle and is continuing to drive her older but still functional car.

Dominguez has also set up an automatic monthly transfer from her checking to savings account. It's something she recommends other Savers do, because it makes you approach savings "like a bill, something you have to pay each month," she said. "I don't even have to think about it. It's already done!"

Dominguez also recommends avoiding shopping "for fun," and instead only go to the store or the mall when you absolutely need something. She

joked that though she loves new clothes, she's trying to wear what's already in her "very full closet."

The holiday season can be an especially tough time to save, as the cost of gifts and celebrations quickly add up. This year, Dominguez and her family organized a "white elephant" gift exchange to keep costs down, giving gag gifts for entertainment value and smaller gifts, like chocolates.



"I just want to be financially free."

Isabel Dominguez, Utah Saver

After Dominguez finished several classes with Utah Saves, she took her participation to a new level by helping Utah Saves organize a class for the parents of her English as a Second Language students. Twenty families took advantage of the Spanish language class.

Dominguez says she wishes "someone had taught me earlier about the importance of saving. It's one of those things that you think about but don't act on." That's why she's also working to make sure her adult daughters know about the importance of saving and how to do it best.

And if Dominguez's savings plan works, her daughters will not only learn about saving but benefit from their mother's success - after getting out of credit card debt and saving for retirement, Dominguez hopes to be able to contribute to her second daughter's wedding fund. "I just want to be financially free," said Dominguez.



Join America Saves Week and Improve Your Saving

Financial Market facts

January 2009

Money market accounts	0.54%
1-year CD	1.63%
5-year CD	2.38%

U.S. Savings Bonds

EE Bond	1.30%
I Bond	5.64%

Mortgage Rates

30-year fixed rate mortgage	5.48%
15-year fixed rate mortgage	5.10%
5-year adjustable mortgage	5.41%

Sources: *The New York Times*, "Data Bank," pg. BU 8, February 1, 2009 and www.savingsbond.gov, January 26, 2009.

Family Wealth facts

Households Headed by Single Women

Percentage of all households	26%
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Median household income

Households headed by single women	\$22,592
All households	\$43,130

Median household net worth

Households headed by single women	\$32,850
All households	\$93,001

Percentage that save regularly

Households headed by single women	33%
All households	41%

Sources: Consumer Federation of America, December 2008 analysis of the Federal Reserve Board's Survey of Consumer Finances.

With America Saves Week set for the week of February 22, now is the perfect time to take advantage of the many resources offered by the America Saves campaign and its partners.

Assess Your Savings

The most successful savers take time periodically to look at their savings plan and evaluate its effectiveness, identify new opportunities to save, and fix shortcomings. Doing regular assessments of your savings can also help you ensure that you're on track to meet your savings goals, whether those include paying down high-cost debt, saving for a down payment on a home or other asset, or putting money away for a comfortable, secure retirement. The America Saves campaign offers some of the following tools for savers looking to assess their progress.

- A twelve-point checklist that allows you to evaluate all aspects of your savings habits, including debt and credit management, retirement savings, net worth, and budgeting and spending plans. Visit www.AmericaSavesWeek.org and click on "Complete My Savings Checklist."
- A savings quiz to assess your knowledge of basic savings information, such as "How much do I need to retire?" or "What are the most common types of emergency expenditures?" Visit www.AmericaSavesWeek.org and click on "Test Your Savings Knowledge."
- The savings tips posted at www.AmericaSaves.org will help you find money to save by cutting down on expenses for food, clothing, medicine and other items.

Take Action to Save More

After assessing the state of their savings, many people want or need to ramp up their savings practices.

- Open a savings account. For many, this is one of the first steps to better savings habits. Look for no- or low-fee savings accounts at local banks or credit unions. Many local Saves campaigns have partnered with area financial institutions who offer such accounts; to find a Saves campaign in your area visit www.AmericaSaves.org/local.

- Make savings automatic. Set up an automatic funds transfer from your checking to savings account. Check out the savings success stories on www.AmericaSavesWeek.org; most savers recommend this automatic method as the best way to build your savings account.
- Don't delay on joining your workplace retirement program. Contact your human resources representative about enrolling, and be especially careful to take advantage of employer-matched contributions. For more about retirement savings, visit the American Savings Education Council at www.ChoosetoSave.org.
- Save your tax refund. Use the IRS's Form 8888 to directly deposit part or all of your refund into your savings account. Visit www.Form8888.org for more information.
- Increase your savings rate. Are you making more money because of a recent raise? Do you have savings accounts but would like to see them grow more quickly? Consider upping your regular contributions to your savings account or retirement savings programs.

Help Promote Saving

You may be saving to the best of your ability, but you probably have friends and family who haven't learned the importance of putting money away. The America Saves campaign encourages you to help spread the savings message among your family, colleagues and community. Use these ideas and resources:

- Invite the coordinator from a local Saves campaign to give a lunchtime presentation at your workplace or a talk to your church group, or work with them to find the best type of activity for your community. A list of local campaigns and contact information is available at www.AmericaSaves.org/local.
- Encourage friends and family to enroll as Savers at www.AmericaSaves.org/enroll so they can take advantage of free savings advice and receive newsletters and e-Wealth Coach emails.
- Post the America Saves Week poster and flier at your office, business or organization. Free savings promotion materials are available at www.AmericaSavesWeek.org.

A Quarter **Saved** is a Quarter **Earned**

No one knows better than Savers how to find the extra dollar here and quarter there that, over time, add up to substantial savings. Here are a few of their favorite savings tips.

I normally spend my tax refund, but last year I saved it. It was easy to do. When filing your taxes, ask for the refund to be deposited directly into your savings account instead of your checking account. You won't see the money in your checking account balance and won't have a check to cash, so you will bank the money and won't be as tempted to spend it.

BENJAMIN FAUST
ST. PAUL, MN

I was getting offers for pre-approved credit cards with interest rates that were lower than the card I was using. So, I called my credit card company and asked for a lower rate, and explained that I had offers that would be a much better deal. They lowered my rate by three percent, which saved me a lot on interest when I carried a balance on the card.

DANIELLE DELANEY
CEDAR RAPIDS, IA

Many fellow students I know in college buy throw-away Styrofoam® plates. Instead, I buy plastic plates, bowls, and cups, which I wash, rinse and reuse. This saves me about \$50 a month, and helps the environment.

SHAYLA PRICE
THIBODAUX, LA

When I get a raise, I go ahead and add the extra money to my 401(k) and federal retirement account. There are many things my wife and I could spend the money on, but we are doing fine on our current income. And, I've come to the conclusion that, when it comes to spending, you will never be satisfied no matter your income, so it's better to learn to live on what you earn.

JEFFERY VIA
SOMERVILLE, TN

As a financial counselor for a local non-profit, I teach families a method to help cut down on unnecessary spending. Take the amount that the item costs and divide it into your hourly wage. If it's a \$50 pair of shoes and you make \$10 an hour, ask yourself, are those shoes really worth five long hours of work? It helps keep things in perspective.

KATRINA GREEN
INDIANAPOLIS, IN

I aim for short-term savings goals, such as setting aside \$20 each week or month, rather than long term savings goals, such as saving \$200 over a year. I save more successfully when I keep the short-term goal in sight.

NEELA SWANSON
LAUREL, MD

Eat what you buy! When food goes rotten or expires, that's money wasted. Keep track of expiration dates, and try to eat what's in your fridge and cabinets before buying more.

BRIAN MCKELL
VERNAL, UT

Send your savings tips to:

American Saver, c/o Consumer Federation of America, 1620 Eye St., NW, Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20006.

If we select your tip for publication, we will send you a check for \$25 (the initial purchase price of a \$50 EE Savings Bond) and an application for a \$50 EE Savings Bond. We recommend purchasing a savings bond at a local bank or credit union. Please include your name, address, and phone number so we can contact you.

I have found that the websites for prescription medications often offer special promotions or coupons for \$10 or \$20 off, or more. If you don't have access to a computer, some companies are willing to mail you a coupon.

MARY FURGASON
BRITTON, MI

American Saver

American Saver is the quarterly newsletter of the America Saves campaign, a national program to encourage and assist Americans to save and build wealth more effectively.

The campaign is coordinated by the non-profit Consumer Federation of America (CFA), supported by national foundations, and advised by dozens of non-profit, government, and business groups. A generous grant from Wachovia Bank supports the publication and distribution of the *American Saver*.

Questions about how to start a local savings campaign in your area should be directed to: Nancy Register, America Saves, c/o CFA, 1620 Eye St., NW, Suite 200 Washington, D.C. 20006; 202-387-6121 (phone); 202-265-7989 (fax); nregister@consumerfed.org.

American Saver Editor: Barbara Roper

Note: This is not an exhaustive list of the activities of all America Saves sites, but rather a sampling of activities from several of the local campaigns. For a more complete list of America Saves campaigns, be certain to visit our website at www.americasaves.org.

Charlotte Saves will kick off Saves Week with its 5th Annual Community Partnership Luncheon. The campaign will honour its 2008 Saver of the Year and give the Community Partnership Award to a local group.

Ten TCF-Bank branches are competing to open new savings accounts and enroll Savers in Colorado; the winning branch will be announced during **Colorado Saves Week**.

Among many other activities, **DC Saves** is hosting a Super Saturday event during Saves Week which will offer tax preparation, mini financial seminars, financial counseling, and other services.

Every organization on the **Miami Saves** steering committee has pledged to host an event a day during Saves Week. Participating groups include TransAtlantic Bank, Eastern Financial Florida Credit Union, the City of Miami-ACCESS Miami and the Human Services Coalition.

North Carolina Saves has lined up an impressive set of partners to participate in Saves Week, including United Way of North Carolina, the NC IDA Collaborative, and the office

of the State Treasurer among many others. Bank partners are advertising the Week in branches throughout the state, and residents who enroll as Savers will be entered to win one of many \$50 or \$100 savings bonds.

In Wisconsin, **Northwoods Saves** has invited more than 30 local financial institutions to participate in Saves Week by posting savings material, sending out statement stuffers, and providing a \$50 savings bond prize to one lucky new savings account holder. The statewide **Wisconsin Saves** campaign is also recruiting partners and elected officials and savers to attend Saves Week events.

In West Virginia, **Ohio Valley Saves** is planning a large marketing effort for Saves Week that includes billboards, news releases, and radio appearances. The campaign is also organizing contests between participating banks and providing savings advisors at free tax prep sites.

Okaloosa Saves (Florida) is sponsoring an Eco-Nomic Living Expo to kick off Saves Week. The event will feature Danny Lipford, an expert on do-it-yourself home remodeling, and Deborah Owens, a financial lifestyle expert, as the main speakers. The event will also include

exhibits, seminars, and special youth activities.

Two educational television programs will air in the Newport News, Virginia area in early 2009 to promote **Peninsula Saves** and Peninsula Saves Week.

Pierce County Saves (Washington) has planned a day-long event, "Connect With Your Money," which promises practical and immediate help toward getting out of debt, improving credit scores, and building savings. Keynote speaker Karen Ramsey, a financial advice author, will address the emotional baggage about money that creates personal financial barriers.

In an effort to acknowledge the changing economy, **Tennessee Saves'** marketing will focus on "fun frugality" and the importance of emergency savings during tough times.

For **Utah Saves Week**, the campaign is organizing financial workshops in every corner of the state and has placed nightly stories on local TV news. Utah Saves is also offering counseling and financial education to keep people on the path to financial freedom.

www.AmericaSaves.org

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