

InTouch

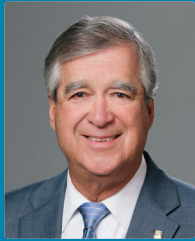
A quarterly publication of Keesler Federal Credit Union | Spring 2024



**Annual
Meeting
Recap**

**2024
Scholarship
Topic**





James Hollingsworth
Chairman,
Board of Directors

Greetings and happy spring! Keesler Federal's annual membership meeting has been a perennial highlight of the season, and this year's event on March 26 at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum and Convention Center was certainly no exception. Thank you to all who joined us to elect your board of directors, learn about the credit union's performance in 2023, and get a sneak peak of the exciting plans in store for the year ahead. Members in attendance were entered in a drawing for a chance to win 75 \$200 prizes and 5 vouchers for big-screen TVs. Members unable to attend were included in a separate drawing for 25 \$200 prizes and a big-screen TV. We were pleased to report that 2023 proved to be yet another financially strong year for Keesler Federal and our membership. You can find a snapshot of the year's results in this issue of InTouch and may also view the complete Annual Report and Annual Meeting Chairman's video online at kfcu.org/about/who-we-are.

The evening concluded in spectacular fashion with the announcement of Keesler Federal's designation as Official Credit Union of the New Orleans Saints and Pelicans! The announcement was accompanied with cold-spark fireworks, Saints and Pelicans cheerleaders, Saints mascot Gumbo and special guest, NFL safety Johnathan Abram. The excitement continued as one lucky member received the evening's grand prize – a pair of tickets to the 2025 Super Bowl at Caesars Superdome in New Orleans! The Saints and Pelicans partnership, and naming rights to the former MGM Park minor league baseball field in Biloxi, are examples of our enduring commitment to the future of the communities we serve. The membership expansion resulting from wider brand exposure will enable us to serve you even better by offering more competitive rates, innovative, value-driven financial solutions, unparalleled givebacks, and an expanded branch network.

We appreciate your loyalty and thank you for continuing to choose Keesler Federal as your trusted financial partner. Every member of our team is proud to have the opportunity to help you achieve your goals and dreams and we are here to assist you in any way possible.

Yours in service,

James Hollingsworth



New Branch Opens in Mandeville, Louisiana

Say hello to the latest addition in Keesler Federal's ever-expanding list of locations to better serve our members. Opened to meet growing demand on the Northshore, the new Mandeville branch is conveniently situated on West Causeway and offers four drive-thru lanes (one of which is an ATM), as well as full teller and financial services. This is the credit union's fifth branch in St. Tammany Parish and the second one in Mandeville, joining the Beau Chene branch.

The new team consists of Branch Manager Suzie Siragusa, an assistant branch manager, two financial service representatives and three tellers. Siragusa, who began her Keesler Federal career in 2017 as financial services representative at Beau Chene before being promoted to

assistant branch manager and now branch manager, has more than nine years of financial industry experience. According to Regional Branch Manager Danny Trahan, Siragusa also has a long history of giving back in Mandeville and St. Tammany Parish by actively working with local organizations and schools.

"Keesler Federal's success in the Louisiana market is due to our ongoing commitment to helping members achieve their goals through exceptional loan rates, high returns on deposits, and exciting member givebacks," said Ben Donald, Director of Branch Operations for the Western Region. "We are so proud to be a part of this vibrant and growing community."

For more information or to schedule an appointment, visit kfcu.org/branches-atms.

A look inside the 2024 Annual Meeting

Designed to be both informative and festive, Keesler Federal's annual meetings are anything but average. In addition to financial recaps and board elections, the over 2,000 members who attended on March 26 enjoyed gift bags, prize drawings, surprise announcements, and celebrity guests. Thank you for making it a night to remember!



Grand prize winner with
New Orleans Saints Johnathan Abram



For a copy of the Annual Report go to kfcu.org/news and click on **Annual Report**.



New Orleans Saints Johnathan Abram



Keesler Federal Board of Directors and Supervisory Committee.



Key Highlights of 2023

Total Assets
\$4,074,446,833

Total Shares
\$3,147,405,03

Total Loans
\$3,081,076,800

Total Members
318,904

New Loans
\$1,131,782,142

Number of Loans
31,627

Total Dividends Paid
\$24,997,117



2023 Total Member Givebacks
\$12.6+ Million

Over \$12.6 million in member givebacks through monthly member giveback drawings, Mississippi Aquarium savings, scholarship awards, and more!

Keep More of Your Money and Peace of Mind

"It's not what you make, it's what you keep." This is not a new idea. But, it's one we need to be reminded of from time to time. It's too tempting and easy to spend more as we make more. However, by repeating that cycle, we'll never get ahead or be able to save money for the future and the really important things.

This can lead to overspending our income, aka getting into debt, usually through irresponsible credit card use. A good income together with low debt is a double-edged sword. It's a great start to a financial credit rating, which if used wisely, can benefit us in securing financial security. On the other hand, a good credit rating enables us to take on more debt and if we're not careful, too much debt which then harms our credit rating. Financial institutions look at your debt to income ratio in determining your eligibility for loans and the interest rate on those loans.

The key to success here is striking that balance between manageable debt and credit availability by living

below your means. That doesn't mean a life of deprivation, but one of good judgment and spending less than you make. You'll not only improve your financial well-being, but your personal stress level can go way down when you're not panicking over how to pay your bills.

Here are some tips to help you accomplish living below your means:

Determine your income from all sources and identify monthly expenses. Collect a month worth of receipts for a more accurate account. This will help determine a budget for you.

Next, understand your current financial habits. Use your bank and credit card statements to find spending patterns and where you can cut back. Were eleven trips to the drive-thru at Happy Burger really necessary? Breaking the fast food habit can create a healthier one like, picking up healthy snacks while grocery shopping or creating a meal plan.



Check the interest rate you're paying while you've got those credit card statements out, Revolving credit rates, especially those from retail store accounts, can be north of 18% to 24%. If your rate(s) are anywhere near those, you'd be wise to check out the Keesler Federal Visa Signature® and Platinum® credit cards with rates as low as prime. As of this writing, that was only 8.5%! Moving high interest balances to a lower rate Keesler Federal Visa® is like putting money in your pocket, or better yet, in your Keesler Federal share account. **You can apply securely online today at kfcu.org.**

References: Paul Mallery, capitalone.com, kfcu.org



A Commitment to Member Service

**Extraordinary Employees.
Extraordinary Credit Union.**

Keesler Federal team members believe in the credit union philosophy, and it shows in their tenure. Our team members are dedicated to making a difference in the lives of members, and, in turn, Keesler Federal has made a difference in their lives. This may explain why so many people begin and end their careers with Keesler Federal.

Keesler Federal team members are recognized for service in 5-year increments (3-year in the UK). We are proud to recognize the following team members who have service anniversaries during the first quarter of 2024:

30 YEARS OF SERVICE

Virginia Hilton, *Talent Acquisition Specialist*
DeWanda Kropp, *Retail Support Manager*

25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Tara Crain, *Consumer Central Underwriting Mgr*

20 YEARS OF SERVICE

Sharon Tagert, *Collateral & Records Manager*

15 YEARS OF SERVICE

Gary Fulton, *Director-Branch Ops Central Region*
William Marquez, *Sr Mortgage Loan Originator*
Maria Rivera, *Financial Service Rep II*

10 YEARS OF SERVICE

Elena Allen, *Member Records Manager*
Melissa Martin, *Bankruptcy Specialist II*
Stefanie Moran, *Director-Info Security*

5 YEARS OF SERVICE

Candance Wells, *Member Contact Spec III*
Rachel McClure, *Regional Manager-UK*
Emily LaFontaine, *Accounting Specialist II*
Maggie Hardy, *Mortgage Servicing Investor*
Reporting Team Lead

Jenna Garrison, *Indirect Loan Underwriter I*
Joelle McClanahan, *Dealer Services Rep I*
Katlynn Harmon, *Card Services Rep I*
Gracie Feeney, *Vendor Analyst I*
Angela Bentz, *Financial Service Rep I*
Mitchell Williams Jr., *Branch Manager II*
Esther Small, *Financial Services Rep I*
Kirstie Simmons, *Card Services Rep I*
Ashlea Seymour, *Asst Branch Manager I*
Kari Mailes, *MCC Team Lead*
Lorie Lund, *Mortgage Loan Originator*



Car Shop the Keesler Federal Way

Let Keesler Federal Credit Union take some of the stress out of car shopping and help you save money on your financing. First, pre-qualifying for your loan with Keesler Federal allows you to negotiate like a cash buyer and you can do it online at kfcu.org. Knowing what you can afford before you shop saves time looking at vehicles you can't afford and waiting nervously in a dealership to see if you qualify for their financing. You can zero in on the car or truck you want at the price you want a lot quicker with the confidence of knowing your accepted offer will go through.

Keesler Federal also posts its current loan rates on kfcu.org/auto-loans for a number of scenarios incorporating the length of the loan and age of the vehicle. You can use this guide to compare rates and terms to those of automobile makers and other financial institutions too. Use the free loan payment calculators to compute possible monthly payments on the same web page. These calculators can compare a purchase vs. a lease, a discounted interest rate vs. cash back, and gas savings in addition to loan terms and affordability by loan term length.

Don't forget to figure in your active duty discount if you qualify!

Now, if you're thinking that car shopping can't get any easier than this, think again.

While you're on the kfcu.org/auto-loans page, **click on the TrueCar link.** TrueCar is an online platform that helps you shop for new and used cars, sell or trade your current car and find vehicle information. Not only can you shop for new and used vehicles, you can sell or trade your old one. With TrueCar, you'll get an actual, upfront price from a dealer online so you'll know exactly

what you're expected to pay before you visit the dealership. In addition to transparent pricing, you can find manufacturer incentives and reviews for your favorite brands.

Speaking of manufacturer incentives, take these into account as they are often offered as price discounts or a low interest rate but rarely both. The calculators we mentioned above can help you sort out the best option.

Now that you're ready to shop, visit kfcu.org/auto-loans and let's get started!

Sources: Paul Mallery, kfcu.org



Afford Your Fun with Proper Planning!

Vacations are supposed to be fun, relaxing and help take your mind off everyday worries, so wondering how to pay for your well-deserved escape shouldn't keep you up at night whether you're at an all-inclusive resort or off-the-grid yurt. The best way to avoid stressing out about expenses while on vacation is by thoroughly planning and budgeting for your trip well in advance.

Estimate as best you can the total cost of the vacation and ease into building your holiday fund by setting up regular, automatic transfers from your Keesler Federal share account to a liquid high-yield savings

account like a HIMMA Premier. Think about your big-dollar goal in terms of more manageable amounts, like "it's just \$25 a day for a couple months," not "I have to save \$1,500." Always make sure must haves like travel, lodging and unavoidable expenses are covered, then add a little "me" money for spontaneous treats.

Using your no-annual-fee Keesler Federal Visa Signature or Platinum rewards card with a competitive interest rate is also a convenient way to pay for travel. Purchases earn points that can be redeemed cash back or for merchandise, travel, and other opportunities.

Staying in a place where you can cook meals? For a fun and financially rewarding activity, forgo eating out every night by visiting farmers' markets and trying your hand at local recipes.

Visit attractions' web sites where you can often find insider deals and discounts including free admission during non-peak hours or on certain days. This is especially true for national parks and museums. If you crave an urban scene, a trip to a city with lots of free museums, landmark monuments and parks should be on your list.

Factor in timing. Research the most popular times to visit your

preferred destination and book on the "shoulder" seasons, just adjacent to when the crowds start showing up. For a summer vacation, this could mean May or September.

Prioritizing things you want to accomplish on your trip rather trying to fit in everything can help keep expenses in check. Looking for quality time with family or friends? Savoring the local food scene? Experiencing arts and culture? Exploring outdoor recreation? Remembering your priorities makes it easier to forgo spending opportunities or "shiny objects" that don't fit in with your goals.

Sources: Kiplinger.com Julia Phan, sevendcorners.com Grace Lower, Paul Mallery



Annual Lisa J. Stubbs Memorial Scholarship Essay Contest

Here's your chance to win **\$1,000** towards your education! Keesler Federal will award scholarships to six dependent and four adult college students for winning entries in this year's essay contest.

ALL APPLICANTS

- The contest is open to Keesler Federal members in good standing who will be full-time college students in the upcoming school year. Employees and officials of Keesler Federal and their dependents are not eligible to compete in the scholarship contest.
- Applicants must submit an entry of 500 words or less that is typed in the space provided through the online application.
- School classification for the upcoming school year will be college freshman, sophomore, junior, senior or graduate student.

ADULT APPLICANTS

- Adult students must not be dependents of their parents and must be at least 21 years old and a member in good standing with Keesler Federal.
- Your entry should include your name, address, phone number, major, school name and school classification for the upcoming year.

DEPENDENT APPLICANTS

- Dependent applicants and at least one parent must be members in good standing with Keesler Federal.
- Your entry should include your name, address, phone number, major, school name and school classification for the upcoming year and your parent/guardian's name.

In 1992, the scholarship program was dedicated to Lisa J. Stubbs, a Keesler Federal employee of over 8 years. While employed full time at the credit union, Lisa attended night classes, working toward her degree. Lisa died at the age of 25 after a lifelong struggle with cystic fibrosis. Since Lisa's courage and determination were an inspiration to all who knew her, the scholarship program was renamed in her honor in hopes that her spirit of achievement would inspire others to reach new heights.

Keesler Federal: Official Credit Union of New Orleans Saints & Pelicans



After months of meticulous planning, Keesler Federal is thrilled to reveal that we are now playing in the big leagues – as the official credit union of the New Orleans Saints and New Orleans Pelicans! The public announcement was made at the culmination of the annual membership meeting on March 26 with much fanfare including special appearances by Saints safety, Johnathan Abram, cheerleaders from both teams, and Saints mascot Gumbo.

This game-changing partnership reflects Keesler Federal's legacy of commitment to the communities we serve. By teaming up with two of the most beloved sports brands in the Southeast, Keesler Federal will continue to grow and thrive, bringing new members into the fold. In turn, this enables us to serve all members better by offering more innovative financial solutions, competitive rates, new branch locations, and the extraordinary givebacks and service you deserve.

Stay tuned for more exciting news, including the launch of our New Orleans Pelicans debit card! For more details, visit kfcu.org/officialcu.

The 2024 essay topic is:

"What is one invention you wish existed today?"

All applications must be submitted online no later than 11:59 pm CST on Friday, May 24, 2024. Printed applications will not be accepted. To apply, visit kfcu.org/scholarship.



AACE Champions

What is the AACE Recognition Quarterly Awards Program?

Keesler Federal encourages team members to create an extraordinary culture by exhibiting approachability, authenticity, commitment and empathy in their day-to-day interactions with one another and our loyal members. Each quarter, select team members, nominated by their peers, are recognized for exemplifying these values.

Approachability Authenticity Commitment Empathy



Crystal Gonzalez
Teller Supervisor
UK Alconbury



Jordan Greiner
IT Service Analyst
Team Lead
Information Technology



Jamie Ingram
Member Contact
Specialist I
Member Contact Center



Brenda Scherzer
Special Loans Analyst
Mortgage Servicing

The Basics of Financial Fitness

Becoming financially fit requires maintaining foundational elements, including a budget, emergency fund, strong credit score, and retirement savings.

Dennis Liverett,
Ron Weatherly,
Nathan Roberts and
Lynn Hartfield are
LPL Financial Advisors with
Keesler Financial Group located
at Keesler Federal CU.

There's a subjective uncertainty associated with financial wellness. Are you financially fit? And if so, how fit are you?

While there is no clearly defined threshold for answering affirmatively, much less grading your level of fitness, there are baseline elements associated with financial fitness. To make sure that you're on the right track, develop a financial plan that lays out clear goals and timelines. Below are steps to get you started.

Budget Crunch

One of the first steps you are likely to take prior to As a first step, make a reasonable and practical budget, assessing your income and expenses (by month, if possible), to understand your cash flow and identify areas where you can trim costs. Revisit and revise your budget regularly to make sure it aligns with your personal circumstances.

Save for Unexpected Expenses

Prepare for unexpected expenses, such as a medical emergency or major home repair, by establishing an emergency fund that can pay for these costs. (Ideally, you want to keep three to six months' worth of living expenses in the fund.) Without such a backup source of payment, you may have to incur credit card debt, which can be unwise.

Regularly Assess Your Goals

Think about your short-, medium- and long-term goals at least once a year. Do you want to pay off your student debt, buy a new home, or travel during retirement? Do you have enough set aside to pay an upcoming tax bill? Your long-term goals may not change often, but your short-term goals, such as paying bills and reducing debts, may need to be reevaluated several times a year.

Stay Credit-Worthy

Check your credit report periodically to make sure there are no errors, while also using it as a tool to make sure that you're paying your bills on time and staying within your established credit limits. Such actions will help increase your credit score. **Note:** You are entitled to a free copy of your credit report annually from the three major credit reporting companies, Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion.

Establish Long-Term Financial Goals

Saving for your retirement is a personal decision that will help shape your lifestyle during your Golden Years. It's never too early (or late) to work with a financial professional to strengthen your retirement plan.

Increase Investments Potential Faster With Early Contributions

Investing early and often, such as a small recurring investment over a long period of time, has the potential to produce greater returns than investing a larger amount over a shorter period of time.

For instance, if you invest \$75 a month beginning at age 25 and continue until you are 65, your earnings will be greater than the 35-year-old who invested \$100 a month until reaching 65 (assuming an equal rate of interest for each).

(This is a hypothetical example and is not representative of any specific investment. Your results may vary.)

Review Your Plan

Establishing a financial plan is not a one-and-done proposition. Review your plan at least annually, revising it as necessary to align with your financial goals.

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Tracking # 1-05358064 Exp. 03/25

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