

Member Newsletter

MAY 2023



IN THIS EDITION...

- Still Time to Apply for a Golden Apple Award!
- Be on Guard for AI Fraud
- New Loan Payment Options with Freedom
- Vacation Budgeting 101
- Upcoming Events
- ...And more!

Connect With Us on Social Media!



800.440.4120

www.freedomfcu.org



Thank you to everyone who came out and celebrated the relocation of our Swan Creek branch on May 20th! We had a great turnout, and we were excited to launch our new home in such a positive way.

The day was full of games, music and prizes, with our \$50 American Steakhouse giftcard drawing going to Ms. Maria Holcomb! Thanks again to everyone who joined in on the fun.



EXPECT MORE FROM YOUR CHECKING

The new standard of FREE Checking!

Grow your savings, with all the freedom of a checking account. **Earn 3.00 APY*** with a FREE high-yield empower checking account.

LEARN MORE

RISE ABOVE INFLATION

Open a Certificate with Freedom today!

Take your savings higher with NEW Certificate Specials, including our 25-Month Special at 4.85% APY*¹.

Certificates are a federally insured way to earn a higher interest with terms to fit your goals.

LEARN MORE



*Annual Percentage Yield (APY) as of April 18, 2023. If your account meets the criteria described below, you will earn 3.00% Annual Percentage Yield (APY) on balances up to \$10,000 and 0.25% APY on balances of \$10,000.01 and higher. Balances that do not meet the account requirements for a given month will earn 0.05% APY.

¹ Upon maturity a Special 25-Month Jumbo Certificate renews to a 24-Month Jumbo Share or Jumbo IRA Certificate. All accounts insured by the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA). The National Credit Union Share Insurance Fund (NCUSIF) protects aggregate savings up to at least \$250,000 in your regular Share Savings, Certificates, Checking, and Coverdell ESA accounts.

APPLY NOW FOR A GOLDEN APPLE AWARD!

We are accepting entries for this year's Golden Apple Educator Award until May 31st! Entrants must be a Freedom Member* and an employee at a Harford or Baltimore County school (public or private). You could receive up to \$2,000 for your school!

Visit our [website](#) for further details and to access the [entry form](#).

*New members are also welcome to apply!

BE ON GUARD FOR AI FRAUD

Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing the way we live and work. Unfortunately, though, it's also revolutionizing the way scammers play their games. Here's what you need to know about AI fraud and how to protect yourself.

WHAT IS AI FRAUD? AI fraud is the use of artificial intelligence to deceive or defraud individuals or organizations. When using AI to pull off a scam, fraudsters use algorithms to create convincing fake identities, manipulate social media, generate realistic fake images and videos (AKA "deepfakes") and more. The scammers then create fake social media profiles and email addresses using bogus identities and footage. They may create fake websites or emails that appear to be from legitimate sources, such as financial institutions or government agencies, and ask people to provide their personal information or login credentials.

AI fraud comes in several forms, including:

- Phishing
- Fake news
- ID theft
- Social engineering
- Deepfakes
- Chatbot scams

Look out for these red flags:

- Multiple unsolicited emails and/or text messages
- Asked to provide personal info or login credentials by an unverified contact
- Unusual activity on your social media accounts

If you notice any of these signs, it's important to investigate. If the contact claims to represent a government agency or financial institution, do not engage. Reach out to the agency that supposedly contacted you to see if the communication is legit.

Ways to protect yourself:

- Never share sensitive info with an unverified contact.
- Use strong, unique passwords across all of your accounts.
- Keep your device's security on its strongest setting.
- Use updated antivirus software.

If you suspect you've been the victim of AI fraud, act quickly to mitigate damage. First, contact Freedom FCU at to let us know your information has been compromised. Similarly, reach out to your credit card companies to let them know about the fraud. Next, report the fraud to the FTC so they can take appropriate measures in catching the humans behind the bot-generated scam. You'll also want to change your passwords and consider a credit freeze. Finally, if your identity has been stolen, reach out to [identitytheft.gov](https://www.identitytheft.gov) to learn your next steps.

Stay safe!

#SUMMEROFFREEDOMFCU



Get ready to grab your Freedom sunglasses and start snapping some photos, because #SummerofFreedomFCU is coming back!

This year, we'll be including Instagram in the voting system!

Keep an eye on our Facebook and Instagram to find out when sunglasses will be available for pick-up at your branch, and for more information about contest prizes and details.

YOUR LOAN PAYMENT. YOUR WAY.



Freedom is pleased to introduce a new easy-pay option for you, our members, to make one-time payments on your Freedom-issued loans.

The new Freedom Federal Credit Union Payment Portal is a self-service tool that allows you to make one-time loan payments using debit cards from another financial institution.

Pay via Express Pay as a guest or register to make a payment more quickly in the future and view your pending payments along with past transactions...

[CONTINUE READING](#)

VACATION BUDGETING 101

It's great to get away from the daily grind, but budgets never go on vacation. Here's what you need to know about planning your funds for your next trip.

SET YOUR BUDGET First, determine how much you can actually spend while on your trip. Research the location you want to visit and the cost to get there, the price you'll pay for accommodations and transportation. Look up the cost of local attractions. Make a basic list of anticipated expenses and work with that number to set a vacation budget.

PLAN YOUR EXPENSES Once you have your budget and a basic list of expenses, work on setting an exact dollar amount for each vacation category. If the total amount is outside your affordable range, consider swapping out some expenses for cheaper, or even free, alternatives.

TRACK YOUR EXPENSES Next, you'll need to track your expenses to ensure you stick to your spending plan. A budgeting app, like Mint or YNAB, can make this easier. If you find yourself overspending in any category, look for last-minute ways to cut back.

TIPS FOR STICKING TO YOUR BUDGET

- **Use cash.** Keeping the plastic hidden while on vacation will force you to stick to your plan.
- **Book in advance.** Hotel stays, car rentals, tours and more are nearly always cheaper when reserved ahead. You'll also leave fewer spending choices for your actual vacation when your willpower may be weaker.
- **Keep a copy of your budget with you on vacation.** Pull out your copy whenever you come up against a money challenge on vacation to remind you of your spending plan.

Happy trails!

UPCOMING EVENTS



There's a lot happening at Freedom, and across Harford County with our Community Partners! Check out the overview below, and follow us on [Facebook](#) to be the first to know when new events are added.

Shred Day

June 3rd - 9A-1P

Bring up to 4 boxes of documents to shred at our Swan Creek branch.

Social Security Strategies for a Healthy Retirement

June 22nd - 6:30P-8:30P

Our partners at The Kelly Group are offering multiple seminars this summer and fall! Learn more on Harford Community College's [website](#).

We hope you'll join us!

WANT TO WIN \$25.00?

Of course you do. Find the Green Dollar Sign (\$), hidden on a page in this newsletter. Click [HERE](#) to tell us which article it was in and you will be entered to win a \$25.00 Gift Card* -- Good luck!

CONGRATULATIONS to last issue's winner:

Hina G.!

*Must be 18 or older to enter. Employees and Members of the Board of Directors of FFCU are not eligible to win. Gift Card will be digital, sent via email. Drawing runs until 6/15/2023.



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[freedomfcu.org](#)

BRANCHES

For hours and ATM info,
visit [freedomfcu.org](#)

Park Avenue

2019 Emmorton Rd
Bel Air, MD 21015

Forest Lakes

1990 Rock Spring Rd
Forest Hill, MD 21050

Swan Creek

2025 Pulaski Hwy
Havre de Grace, MD
21078

Fountain Green

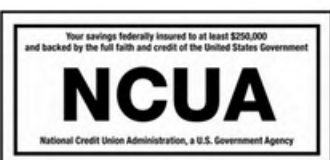
1304 Churchville Rd
Bel Air, MD 21014

Edgewood*

8213 Hoadley Rd,
Building E 5002
Gunpowder, MD 21010
**Access restricted to APG
Base personnel and visitors.*

Honeygo

5000 Honeygo Center Dr,
Perry Hall, MD 21128



Happy with your Freedom experience? Consider referring us to friends and family, sharing your experience, or leaving us a review [online](#).