

# Member Newsletter

AUGUST 2023



## IN THIS EDITION...

- Take Your Savings Higher: 7-Month CD at 5.00% APY
- Mail Fraud and Check Washing
- Stay Alert: Gift Card Scams
- The Kelly Group: Avoid Costly Medicare Mistakes
- Refer-a-Friend and Earn \$70!

...And more!

Connect With Us on Social Media!



800.440.4120  
freedomfcu.org



## #SUMMEROFFREEDOMFCU 2023 WRAP UP

Thank you to everyone who participated in our 2023 #SummerofFreedomFCU photo contest!

This year's Grand Prize winner, Diane May, took home \$1,000, with Brooke Wagoner coming in 2nd place (\$250) and Diana Neville scored the 3rd place prize (\$100).

If you missed out on the fun, be sure to follow our social media channels to get updates on contests and events. Just tap the social icons above to find us.

We hope to see you next year!





## LOOKING FOR A SMARTER WAY TO PAY FOR COLLEGE?

*We've Got You Covered*

Freedom has partnered with Sallie Mae to offer **Student Loan options that are designed specifically for you\***! Invest in yourself and your dreams!

**LEARN MORE**

## RISE ABOVE INFLATION

*Open a Certificate with Freedom today!*

Take your savings higher with **NEW Certificate Specials**, including our **7-Month Special at 5.00% APY.**<sup>1</sup>

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

**LEARN MORE**



\*These loans are made by Sallie Mae Bank or a lender partner. Freedom Federal Credit Union is not the creditor for these loans and is compensated by Sallie Mae for the referral of loan customer. 1\$300 minimum opening deposit for all special Certificates. Upon maturity a Special 7-Month Certificate renews to a 6-Month Share or 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.

## WE'RE HIRING!

Ready to work at one of the best Credit Unions in Harford and Baltimore County? Check out our [website](#) for current openings, and apply today! Consider Freedom for a career that propels you forward and offers benefits like PTO and Tuition Reimbursement. Current openings include:

- SVP - Member Services
- Assistant Branch Manager
- Collateral Support Specialist
- Contact Center Representative

# PROTECT YOURSELF FROM MAIL + CHECK FRAUD

Due to a significant surge in instances of mail and check theft, the USPS advises consumers to be vigilant when mailing checks and sensitive documents. Consumers can significantly reduce the chance of being victimized by bringing your mail directly to the post office, using your home mailbox for mail pick-up and avoiding the use of unsecure, public-facing blue collection boxes. Additionally, avoid leaving your incoming mail from sitting in your mailbox for too long.

For more tips on how to protect yourself from becoming a victim of mail or check theft, please visit <https://www.uspis.gov/tips-prevention/mail-theft>. Learn more below...

Experts are reporting a “nationwide surge” in check fraud schemes, with criminals increasingly snatching checks from mailboxes. Thieves manage to steal mail from residential mailboxes, cluster box units and even United States Postal Service (USPS) blue collection boxes. They use check washing tactics to alter the check and steal thousands from unsuspecting victims.

According to the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network [FinCEN] in coordination with the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), the growing crime “represents one of the most significant money laundering threats to the United States.”

Unfortunately, the problem has only gotten worse. Recently, postal authorities are warning Americans to avoid mailing checks if possible, or at least to use a secure mail drop (i.e. inside the post office).

If a postal customer does fall victim to mail theft, or identity theft as a result of mail theft, they should immediately file a mail related check fraud report with local law enforcement (as well as with the Postal Inspection Service) at <https://www.uspis.gov/report>. Mail theft victims are encouraged to closely monitor financial accounts and credit profiles to get ahead of any fraudulent activity.

Looking for an extra layer of safety? At Freedom, we’re serious about protecting you from fraudulent activity on your accounts. Our Fraud Alert System can identify threats faster, notify you sooner, and give you the tools you need to take IMMEDIATE action against fraud.

The Alert System allows you to receive an automated call that easily walks you through reviewing suspicious activity on your card. You may also sign-up to receive Automated Fraud Alert text messages on your mobile phone. While Freedom does monitor fraudulent or suspicious account activity and may proactively contact a member about this activity, we will never call and ask for confidential information such as your entire account number or PIN.

**LEARN MORE AND ENROLL IN FREEDOM’S FRAUD ALERT SYSTEM**



## STAY ALERT: GIFT CARD SCAMS

Did someone tell you to buy a gift card and give them the numbers? That's a scam. Your money was gone the moment you gave someone those gift card numbers. But now, some gift card companies might be able to get your money back.

**Gift card scams** start with calls, texts, emails, or social media messages. The scammer pretends to be someone they're not: a company, the government, a family member, or romantic interest. Their message is always urgent. And they want money. They'll tell you to buy a gift card or maybe multiple gift cards. Once you do, they'll demand you send a photo of the card or give them the numbers on the back of the card.

But now, some **gift card companies** are flagging fraudulent transactions and freezing stolen gift card money so that scammers can't get it. And those gift card companies want to give that money back.

So, if a gift card scam happens to you, act fast:

- **Report it** to the gift card company. Tell them you were scammed. Give the gift card company the information from your receipt or a copy of the numbers on your gift card.
- **Ask for your money back.** Once you report a gift card scam to the gift card company, ask for your money back. If the money was frozen or not downloaded by the scammer, some gift card companies will give the money back.
- **Report to the FTC** at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/ReportFraud). Your report makes a difference and helps #stopscams.

The faster you contact any gift card company to report a gift card scam, the better the chance of getting your money back. But it doesn't matter when you were scammed with a gift card.

**For more information about avoiding and reporting gift card scams, visit [ftc.gov/giftcards](https://www.ftc.gov/giftcards).**

## YOUR SMALL-TOWN DOCTOR OF FINANCIAL PLANNING SAYS: AVOID COSTLY MEDICARE MISTAKES

Freedom offers financial planning and wealth management services through our trusted partner, **The Kelly Group**. If you are in need of professional, guided financial planning and investment services, learn more about what **The Kelly Group** can offer.

As you may know, once you turn age 65, Medicare (Parts A and B) generally becomes your primary source of health insurance. Health insurance is a vital element in your financial wellbeing and common mistakes related to Medicare can be extremely costly. You need to be aware of the key decisions you must make and when you need to enroll.

If Medicare is expected to become your primary source of health insurance, you need to enroll during what is called the "Initial Enrollment Period" ("IEP"): That is, beginning the three months before your 65th birthday month and ending three months after your 65th birthday month. (If your birthday is on the first of the month, for these purposes, assume your birthday is the last day of the prior month.) You do not need to enroll in Medicare during the IEP if you meet all of the following conditions, or if your spouse meets the following conditions and you are covered under your spouse's plan:

1. You are working,
2. You are covered under your employer's plan, AND
3. Your employer has 20 or more employees.

Please note that you can still enroll in Medicare if you are age 65 and these conditions apply, but it is your choice. If any of these conditions no longer apply—for example you have left your employer or retired—the exception no longer applies, and you must enroll in Medicare within the subsequent 8 months (the "Special Enrollment Period").

It is important to enroll in Medicare on time to avoid higher premiums and/or a gap in coverage. Thus, in general we recommend that you have all your Medicare pieces in place by...

**CONTINUE READING**

# REFER-A-FRIEND AND EARN \$70\*

Freedom is celebrating our 70th Anniversary, and rewarding our loyal members who share their love of Freedom membership with their family and friends. Simply fill out the Refer-A-Friend Form on our [website](#). You'll earn a \$70 bonus for every friend who opens a new Freedom membership and checking account\*. And your friend will also receive a \$70 bonus!\*

## LEARN MORE

\*Referred member must not have been a member of Freedom Federal Credit Union within the last 12 months to receive the bonus. Youth and business memberships are excluded and you must be at least 18 years old to receive referral bonus. New member must join and open an Empower Checking account within 30 days of referral in order to qualify. Referral bonus will be paid to both parties within seven business days of new membership opening with incentive deposited into Primary Share account. Bonus funds will be on hold for the first 90 days after deposit. You must meet membership eligibility requirements, be of legal contract age, and establish membership at Freedom to qualify. All accounts are subject to our normal approval process. Members and accounts must be in good standing to receive bonuses. In the event that more than one member refers the same person we will award the bonus to the first member making the referral. Referred member must be new to Freedom. Each member is limited to 10 referral bonuses per calendar month. Bonuses are considered interest and will be reported on IRS form 1099-INT. Fees can reduce earnings on the account. This offer is non-transferable and may be canceled without prior notice. Cannot be combined with any other incentive offer. \$70 bonus offer effective 7/1/23 until 9/30/23 and is subject to change at any time. We reserve the right to disqualify any referrals in circumstances where we reasonably believe they were not sent to us in good faith. Freedom Federal Credit Union reserves the right to revise program terms, refuse bonuses or terminate the program at any time upon our discretion. Ask us for details.

## 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:  
**SUZANNE D.!**

\*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 9/15/2023.



P.O. Box 1545 Bel Air, MD  
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[freedomfcu.org](http://freedomfcu.org)

## BRANCHES

For hours and ATM info,  
visit [freedomfcu.org](http://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

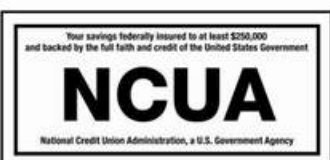
1304 Churchville Rd  
Bel Air, MD 21014

### 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](#).