

*The Employees of Empower Credit Union
wish you a happy and prosperous 2009!*



*Thank you for contributing to our food drive in December!
We collected over 30 boxes of food benefiting the House of Peace!*

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empower
Credit Union
231 W. Michigan St., P258
Milwaukee, WI 53203-2918

Financial Force

Winter 2009

Serving the Employees & Retirees of Wisconsin Energy Corporation, Its Subsidiaries, & Affiliates

Celebrating
95 years of
Member Service!

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From The Vault

2009 – 95 years as YOUR credit union!

I think I speak for many as we say goodbye to 2008. With the historic upheaval of the financial markets, all of us were affected — from students, to employees, to retirees. Who would have thought we would have seen interest rates drop 4%, many of the largest financial companies fail and/or disappear, and the decline of the Big Three auto makers?

As for Empower Credit Union, **we had a great year operationally.** We ended 2008 at \$124 million in assets and with a capital ratio of over 14% — that is over \$17 million in reserves! And while we've seen some slight increases in our mortgage and consumer loan delinquencies, they are still quite low and we are keeping charge-offs to a minimum. **We thank you — our members — for another successful year and your continued support of the credit union!**

Looking ahead to 2009, we will be involved in:

- Celebrating our 95th Anniversary as a financial institution
- Helping members during one of the most difficult economic periods since the Great Depression
- One of the largest mortgage refinance periods in history
- Responding to the unprecedented changes that continue to occur in the financial landscape

Please remember that in 2009 you can continue to look to Empower Credit Union to help you. Whether it is to refinance your mortgage or home equity loans, consolidate debt, build an emergency savings fund, or to just get answers to your financial questions, we are here for you. **And the sooner you come to us, the more we can help you get you on the right financial path for the rest of the year — and the rest of your life!**

Jennifer Schilling, President

414-221-2958

JSchilling@empower-cu.org

Happy Anniversary!

Empower Credit Union was originally chartered as The Employee's Mutual Savings, Building and Loan Association in 1914. The charter was changed in 1997 to that of a credit union. In 2007, our name became Empower Credit Union.

95 years
1914-2009
empower
Credit Union

We are celebrating 95 years of service in 2009, so watch for future announcements of special anniversary offerings and events throughout the year.



Hours:
8:00am - 4:30pm
Monday - Friday

Phone:
414-221-3451

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**CREDIT UNION
SERVICE CENTERS.**
The Member-Friendly Financial Network

www.cuservicecenter.com



Take a Break from Your Visa® Credit Card Bill

When you receive your Empower Visa Card statement in early January, check out the minimum payment due.

To help members pay off holiday expenses and stretch their budget, we are allowing Visa Credit Card holders with accounts in good standing to not make a payment until February.

You should find that the required payment is zero. That's right, nothing.

There is no fee for skipping your January payment, and it will not affect your credit rating. In addition, the interest rate on purchases from November 1st to December 31st was reduced to 4.9% APR, providing our cardholders even more savings.

If you don't have an Empower Visa credit card, consider what you are missing. **Apply for your card soon either at the credit union or online at www.empower-cu.org.**

First Time Home Buyer Tax Credit Available

A maximum \$7,500 federal tax credit is now available to first time home buyers. People purchasing their first home and closing by July 1, 2009 are eligible. This is a direct credit or reduction of income tax owed and equals 10% of the purchase price, or \$7,500, whichever is less. **The credit must be paid back over the next 15 years, beginning in 2010.** In essence, the credit is an interest free loan from the government. For more information about this program and to find out more about getting a home loan from the credit union, **Call Jim Heinzelman at 414-221-3616, or Diana Stock at 414-221-4072.**

Loan Special Extended Through February

Another way the credit union can help you recover financially from the holidays is with our Holiday Cash loan. These personal loans at reduced rates are available through February 28, 2009. You can use the money to pay off a high rate credit card balance or other expenses. Payments can be made via direct deposit, automatic transfer, online, or through the mail. Check out our web site for the details or call **Michelle at 414-221-2213 or Kemaine at 414-221-3461** before February 28th.



FREE GAS FOR A YEAR with Enterprise Car Sales New Year's REV-VOLUTIONS!

Turn your New Year's resolution to reduce your expenses into a rev-revolution! Members looking for a better value, a reliable vehicle and outstanding service from experienced professionals can trust Enterprise Car Sales.

Through our partnership with Enterprise Car Sales, you get a great price and exceptional service from a reputable used car dealer, combined with the credit union's exceptional auto loan rates. **In addition to their trademark no-haggle pricing, Enterprise is offering Empower Credit Union members free gas for one year.**

That's right, when you get financed through our credit union and purchase a car from Enterprise Car Sales during the month of January 2009, they will give you a \$25 gas card every month for 12 months.

Now is the perfect time to get pre-approved to take advantage of our credit union's low rates on used auto loans and drive away in a great car from Enterprise!

For more information about Enterprise Car Sales and our partnership, call us or, visit www.cuautodeals.com or call Enterprise at (414) 325-6000 today!

Devoted to Turtles and Her Credit Union

If you ever have a conversation with Christine Anderson, you will hear about her painted turtle, Stoney. **Christine has been an advocate for wildlife preservation for decades, with a great interest in turtles.** A pet turtle Mrs. Anderson had for many years had just died and Stoney, born May 2, 1992 in a Kenosha County pond, became its replacement. Christine's husband Edwin, a 33 year employee of Wisconsin Natural Gas until his retirement in 1988, wasn't at first the turtle enthusiast that his wife was. But it didn't take long for Stoney to become Ed's pet, and they were constant companions until Ed's passing in January of 2008. Christine says she and Ed treated Stoney like a member of the family, celebrating her birthdays, and even taking her on road trips.



When asked about the service she receives from her credit union, Mrs. Anderson responded, "I couldn't have it any better."

Mrs. Anderson is also devoted to her credit union. She joined EMBSLA when her husband was still working, opening her own IRA in the mid 1980's. As beneficiary of Edwin's IRA, she decided to move it out of mutual funds at a brokerage firm to Empower. The transfer was handled smoothly and easily with the help of the credit union's IRA specialist, Cindy Hildebrandt. Why did she transfer the account to Empower? Mrs. Anderson says she was "very pleased with the way her account has been handled", and likes how her withdrawals are done automatically each year. She knows that if she has a question, she just has to pick up the phone and call.

So if you are looking for the best place to set up a new, **no-fee IRA** or to move an existing account, **give Cindy a call at 414-221-3433.** But if you want advice on raising turtles, we suggest you talk to Christine Anderson.

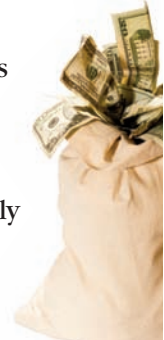
Avoid the Bill Paying Hassle — Pay Online

Don't waste time and money writing checks, buying stamps and driving to the post office to pay your bills. **By using Empower's On-Line Bill Pay you can pay just about any business or individual right from your Empower Checking account.** It is safe and secure, easy and convenient, and it's FREE. No worries about forgotten bills, late fees or misrouted payments either. You can schedule your payments, verify payments have been made, and get e-alerts to let you know when a bill is due or has been paid. There is even a secure Messaging Center where you can use encrypted email to inquire about accounts or payments.

You will need to have an active Empower checking account to be eligible for on-line bill pay services. **To get started, just go to our website, www.empower-cu.org. Log on at "On-line Access" (or register if haven't already done so).** You can then start enjoying the safety and convenience of paying your bills on-line. There are also links to helpful demos for both our basic on-line banking services and bill pay. Check those out and see how paying your bills on-line can make this monthly chore less of a hassle.

We're Making Student Loans

You have probably seen or read the stories about families with college students struggling to find financial aid, particularly student loans. **We're still making student loans at Empower.** So if you or a family member will be attending a university, technical college or specialized program in the fall, we can help you with educational funding.



We are a lender for the Stafford Loan program, which provides both subsidized and unsubsidized loans, with payments deferred until after graduation. PLUS loans are available to parents of dependent students and to graduate students, and are used to supplement Stafford loans and other financial aid. **Our lender code for Stafford and PLUS loan programs is 833951.**

To find out more about these programs go to our website www.empower-cu.org and click on the "Borrow" Icon. Then go to "Consumer Loans" > "Student Loans". There you will find the applications, information and links that will help you navigate the student loan process. For more information about student loans from the credit union, **contact Michelle at 414-221-2213 or email her at mturgeon@empower-cu.org.**

An Empower IRA — Great Choice in a Rough Economy

During the last few months, as people have seen the values of their 401k's and IRA's take a tumble, members with Empower IRA's have seen their balances continue to grow. **The credit union offers both Traditional and Roth plans with several investment choices,** including a Variable Rate account and IRA Share Certificates. We would be happy to help you transfer your funds to an Empower IRA or to get started with a new account. **And if you haven't made your 2008 IRA contribution as yet, you have until the tax filing deadline, April 15, 2009, to do so. Check our website for current rates or contact Cindy at 414-221-3433 for more information.**