

Hi everyone, Jerry Manor here. Halloween is next week so today on SeaComm Money Matters we'll talk about some information that might and maybe should scare you.

According to a recent survey, more than half of the U.S. population lives paycheck to paycheck. If this is you, a possible fix is getting your budget into shape. Start with a spending log, write down every penny you spend. Everything from your rent, groceries and utilities to stopping for snacks and going out with friends. After a few months, take a look. You'll see what should go into a budget but also where you are wasting money. If your budget is not in shape there are two things you can do. Either make more money or cut your spending. In addition to the availability of budgeting apps and calculators online, sometimes putting pencil to paper can be a great exercise on your way to a workable budget.

How about this to give you a fright...The average American spends \$5,400 per year on impulse purchases. Think twice before making impulsive buys. While life is worth living, and it's perfectly fine to splurge occasionally on things that bring you joy, it's crucial to ensure that your spending aligns with your financial means. Balancing enjoyment with financial responsibility is the key to a secure and fulfilling future.

Another recent survey found that just over 20% of Americans don't save anything from their income. As a result of this over 60% would be unable to afford a \$1000 emergency, nearly 40% couldn't handle a \$400 hit to their budget. The importance of an emergency fund can never be understated or overestimated enough! Starting an emergency fund takes work. Some financial experts recommend having an emergency fund of six to 12 months living expenses. I think that is a great goal but be realistic. Every situation is different so your emergency savings account may not have to be that large depending on where you are in life, how secure is your current situation and other factors. Make that hard decision to start saving for emergencies and make it a regular thing.

Speaking of saving, nearly a third of Americans have nothing saved for retirement. Fewer and fewer workers have access to the traditional pension or what's known as a defined benefits retirement plan. Defined benefit plans are retirement plans that provide employees with guaranteed retirement benefits based on a formula. Factors that may affect the benefits received include the employee's retirement age, length of service, and earnings before retirement. What is more prevalent now is a defined contributions retirement plan such as a 401k or similar. Where in a traditional pension the employer funds the plan, in defined contribution plans, the employee funds the plan sometimes with matching funds from the employer. Learn what is available to you and make sure you contribute and if a certain amount is required to get the match, contribute at least that amount. If there is no retirement program where you work, you can do one on your own. It's called an individual retirement account or IRA. We have them here at SeaComm so stop in and see us. The important thing is to get started saving for retirement now. The sooner you start, the more you'll have saved when it's time to step back.

Now this is scary... The average American carries a credit card debt of over \$6,000. Pay off high-interest debt as quickly as possible and work towards maintaining a debt-free lifestyle. If you are having trouble with this, debt professionals at Greenpath Financial Counseling can help you get in shape and even

help with debt settlements without doing damage to your credit score. Go to our website seacomm.org, click on resources, tools and Greenpath financial. This service is free to SeaComm members.

Our final fright today, only 34% of U.S. adults can answer four out of five financial literacy questions correctly. Do your research and stay informed. There is a wealth of financial information available on our website seacomm.org and just stop in and see us at SeaComm, we have certified financial counselors on staff.

That's it for today, Have a great weekend and a Happy Halloween.