



3rd Quarter 2006

# The Connection

Your member newsletter . . . Just for you!

## Celebrate Oktoberfest WITH YOUR CREDIT UNION

It was such a hit last year that the St. Cloud City & County Employees Credit Union is once again going to celebrate Credit Union Week in the festive spirit of Oktoberfest. Credit Union Week will be celebrated Thursday and Friday, October 19th and 20th. Stop in at the Credit Union one of those days to enjoy their open house. Anyone who visits will get a free glass of root beer and a Credit Union giveaway. You can also enjoy cookies and a chance to win one of many great prizes!

Also as part of Credit Union Day, we are sponsoring a coloring contest for kids age 10 and under. Stop in at the Credit Union anytime to get the picture to be colored, or go to our web site at [www.stcloudcu.org](http://www.stcloudcu.org). You have until the end of Credit Union Week, Friday, October 20th, to submit the picture for the contest. In this contest, every child who enters is a winner and will get a special prize. The top 2 entrants in 2 age categories, 6 and under and ages 7 to 10, will also win an additional prize. The top prize is a \$50 savings bond and the 2nd place prize is \$10 cash.

All prizes will be awarded the Monday morning after Credit Union Week. We hope you will join us as we celebrate Oktoberfest during Credit Union Week!

## ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT?

It's a tough choice for a homeowner. Move into a new house, or improve the one you have. It seems so easy to call a realtor and arrange a showing. But your current home has something no new home can offer - equity.

Home equity is on the rise, providing homeowners a ready financing source to turn home sweet home into home sweet dream home. Over the past 20 years, home equity loans have skyrocketed, with Americans borrowing more than \$500 billion.

On average, homeowners spend 18 months planning home improvements. It's time well spent; some renovations pay off better than others. Bathroom and kitchen renovations provide the greatest return, between 90% and 95%. Decks and home offices hold the low end, between 65% and 70%.

As you plan, look beyond your house to your neighborhood. Will renovations put you in a different league - and price range - than your neighbors? Also, keep in mind how long you'll be in your house. If you are going to fix it up and sell in six months, you'll get all the pain of remodeling and not much gain. But if you plan to live in the house more than three years, it makes economic sense to remodel.

How do you calculate your available equity? First step: Say you made a down payment of \$20,000 on a house priced at \$100,000 five years ago. Since then, you've paid \$15,000 toward the principal, and the market value of your house has increased to \$115,000. The sum of your down payment (\$20,000), principal paid (\$15,000), and the increase in property value (\$15,000) gives you \$50,000 in equity.

Second step: Ideally, what you owe on your home - mortgage plus home equity loan - shouldn't exceed 80% of your home's value. So 80% of \$115,000 suggests, if you meet other lending yardsticks, you may be eligible for as much as a \$27,000 home equity loan (house is worth \$115,000; 80% of that is \$92,000; you still owe \$65,000 on the first mortgage; so \$92,000 - \$65,000 = \$27,000).

## PHISHING & PHARMING HAVE YOU HEARD THE TERMS?

With the increase in Internet use, there are many threats to be aware of. PHISHING and PHARMING are two of them.

PHISHING is an attempt to steal your personal account information by getting you to go to a fake website. This is usually accomplished by sending you an e-mail that looks like it is from a well-known company, such as eBay, telling you that you need to login and verify your information by clicking on the link provided. DO NOT click on that link. It will probably take you to a false website that looks like the official one; however, your account information may be stolen if you enter it.

PHARMING is a little different. With this, a program is unknowingly installed on your computer through spy ware that will redirect you when on-line. An example is that you type in [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com); the pharming program will redirect you to a fake eBay site in an attempt to steal your account information. The more you know, the better prepared you are to deal with these types of attacks.

## *Take Me Out to the Ballgame!*

The Credit Union gave away over 100 tickets to the August 2nd St. Cloud River Bats game. Any Kids Club member who brought in a quarterly deposit of \$10.00 received a free ticket for themselves and their parents. The Credit Union also had daily ticket drawings from July 10th through July 21st. The winners were: Charlene Lahr, Lynn Jumer, Angie Berg, Joyce Wong, Steve Blommer, Lori Pappenfus, Suzanne Stenseth, Carol Braegelmann, Jane Szczech and Gary Fletcher. The River Bats lost an exciting game 5-2 in extra innings.

## *It Pays to be a Credit Union Member*

The Credit Union is currently running a membership drive. Refer a new eligible member to the Credit Union and we will deposit \$20.00 into your share account. Please contact the Credit Union for more details.

## *For Sale By Credit Union*

2002 Harley Davidson  
Screaming Eagle Fatboy

Please contact Todd or Mel at  
(320) 255-1343 for more details.

# **AVOID BECOMING A VICTIM**

ID theft occurs when a criminal steals your account or personal information and uses it to secure loans, credit cards, checks, merchandise, etc. Good news – you can dramatically reduce the risk of becoming a victim of identity theft by following these relatively simple steps:

- ✓ Documents – lighten your wallet. Remove all PIN codes for your plastic, your Social Security card, and your checkbook. With a Debit card you can make purchases even easier than with cash or a check.
- ✓ Checks – do not print either your driver's license or Social Security number on your checks. When you order a new batch, just have your initials and last name printed, no phone number. Order checks from your credit union (who will keep your information private) and seek out security features such as paper that is tamper proof.
- ✓ Lock up your at-home documents. One in seven cases of ID theft traced to the source turns out to be a family member or other trusted associate.
- ✓ Shred – credit card offers, ATM receipts, checks, deposit slips, insurance papers, pay stubs, tax records, etc.
- ✓ Credit reporting bureaus sell your name to the credit card companies that flood your mailbox with offers. To eliminate future trash at its source, call the credit bureaus' dedicated opt-out line at 888-567-8688 from your home telephone or register at [www.optoutprescreen.com](http://www.optoutprescreen.com). You can opt-out for five years or forever.
- ✓ If possible, get your credit and debit cards with your picture on it.
- ✓ Make photocopies and keep a record of all your credit and ID cards. Keep the information in a secure place. You will have the information necessary to cancel in case any of your cards become lost or stolen.
- ✓ Make sure all of your mail goes directly into a post office or a U.S. Postal Service mailbox.
- ✓ Never allow sales clerks to write your credit card numbers on your checks for additional information.
- ✓ Keep an eye on the expiration date on your credit cards. If you do not receive a new one in a timely manner, call the credit card company.
- ✓ Do not buy anything over the telephone or Internet unless you initiate the call or transaction.
- ✓ Never give your personal information, credit card, or Social Security number over the telephone to someone claiming you have won a prize.
- ✓ Go inside the credit union to use the automated tellers – or the human ones.
- ✓ Check your credit report at least once a year. Examine it thoroughly. You can receive a free credit report from each of the three bureaus once yearly. The web site to request on-line is: [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com). The mailing address is: Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5181 or you can call 1-877-322-8228.

*The Credit Union is closed  
for the following holidays:*

Thanksgiving – Thursday, November 23rd

Christmas – Monday, December 25th

New Years – Monday, January 1st

## **ST. CLOUD CITY & COUNTY EMPLOYEES CREDIT UNION**

P.O. Box 715, St. Cloud, MN 56302

120 – 10th Ave. N., St. Cloud, MN 56303

(320) 255-1343

Fax: (320) 255-0260

Office hours: Monday – Friday 8:30-5:00

Web Site: <http://www.stcloudcu.org>