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Winter 2009

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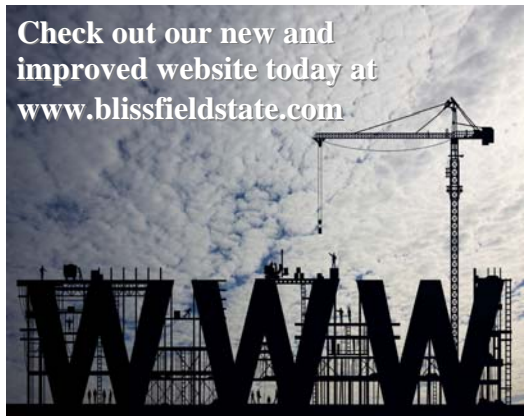
Caution Produces Comfort

The news these days is filled with tales of identity (ID) theft, fraud, scams and thievery. Thanks to the diligent work of our local police, numerous break-ins of local autos were stopped and suspects have been arrested. No further damage involving the use of credit cards, debit cards and identity is believed to have occurred. In our Blissfield area we are very fortunate; however the world at large can be a treacherous place.

Your private information is critical to the success of criminal scams and ID theft. By safeguarding your personal data you can prevent con artists from manipulating your identity into lost funds and/or ruined credit. Never give information to a telemarketer without knowing exactly to whom you are speaking. Banks do not call and solicit your information by phone, nor do they email you for account, PIN, or password information. Any communication should be initiated by you with notification from the bank simply asking you to return a call to the number you already know. Emails should only announce information to which you can personally respond. Pop-up advertising should be blocked on your computer with security

settings high. Computer security is at its best when trusting a reliable antivirus/firewall product and employing the tools within your computer together for control of adware, spyware, etc. Worms, viruses, spam and phishing are commonplace, often without the respondent aware of the incident until it's too late. Always be mindful that a few clicks can result in permanent damage to your computer – at home or at the office. The now popular lotteries and contests announcing you have won are most likely foreign tricks to take your money. If notified of winnings – consider, did you enter any such contest or lottery? How could anyone win money they never signed up to win? Most likely your hard earned money will fund criminal activity beyond our borders. Beware, especially, of Canadian, Nigerian, Netherlands, Australia and Romanian origin. There are others, so stay informed by reading or staying abreast of current events about the latest scams and fraud attempts. Finally, it is during this time of year many are tricked into making heartfelt donations that never help anyone. When making a donation to a new or unknown organization, check the

name of the organization through the Better Business Bureau at www.bbb.org. By entering a zip code and then selecting, "check out a business or charity," the site provides information regarding the legality and disbursement of funding. One can see if the organization is approved by BBB and may even be able to peruse financial information. If in doubt – give locally; the Blissfield Food Pantry, churches, Blissfield Education Foundation, Lenawee Community Foundation—Blissfield Fund, Lenawee United Way and many others will gladly accept your donation and it will stay here. We hope these tips have been helpful and may this season be filled with blessings of security for you and yours! ♦ ♦ ♦



Solemn Retrospection



*William M.
Ellis*

The end of every year leads us into retrospection. We look at the year in review and assess our progress. As a country, this past year has been filled with disappointment and fear. Sadly, many have seen their jobs eliminated and many more find themselves under-employed making it extremely hard to make ends meet. Many financial ‘nest eggs’ have sustained major erosion resulting in delayed retirements and hardships for those in retirement. Many have lost their homes causing the tragic breakup of families.

We have witnessed monumental measures taken by our leaders to stem the near economic meltdown caused by greed and avarice emanating from Wall Street. The term “too big to fail” has again been coined to identify the huge financial conglomerates who have been allowed to grow unchecked over many decades. We now pay the price for the imprudent removal of laws designed to separate business and finance that were put in place after the Great Depression. By not learning the lessons of history, we are bound to repeat the mistakes. So here we are – again.

For those exercising prudence and sound judgment, the price will not be quite so dear. Common sense and moderation, seemingly scarce commodities these days,

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Fay Campbell to Retire

Fay Campbell has announced a February 2010 retirement from Blissfield State Bank after working as a teller for over 25 years. Hired in 1984, Fay first worked at the main office and then the W. Adrian Street branch at the Coachlight Plaza. Fay remained there to become Branch manager until 2009. Over the past year Fay has been an asset back at the main office in anticipation of her retirement. Fay resides in Blissfield and is the mother of two daughters and grandmother to four. Fay looks forward to spending time with family upon retirement. Stop by the main office to wish Fay a “Happy Retirement!”



BEST TIPS FOR AVOIDING OVERDRAFT FEES

In an effort to educate customers, Independent Community Bankers Association and Blissfield State Bank recommends the following best tips for avoiding overdrafts:

Keep an eye on your account balance prior to writing a check or using your debit card. Prevention is your best medicine.

- o Review your transactions on an ongoing basis.
- o Use services, such as online banking. We provide this service to help you keep up-to-date with your balance.
- o Remember to record and deduct checks, automatic recurring payments and debit card transactions and to add any deposits that have not yet been posted to your account.
- o Do not use your debit card like you use your credit card. Your debit card is like an electronic check and the funds

are automatically deducted from your account.

Ask Blissfield State Bank about all of its overdraft services. Community banks generally offer three types of overdraft services:

overdraft lines of credit (Overdraft Protection), transfers or sweeps from a savings account or another checking account, and overdraft coverage (Overdraft Privilege).

- o Overdraft Protection charges interest but provides a safety net. This may also have a transaction and/or annual fee. If needed, disbursements can be repaid over a period of time.
- o Transfer or sweep arrangements allow customers to cover overdrafts using their own funds for a small transaction fee.
- o Many times a bank will choose to pay an overdraft for a fee to avoid consumers having the inconvenience of returned transactions – embarrassment, fees and hassles from merchants. Talk to our new accounts representatives about the best choice(s) for you.



When is a Check “Good”?

*What every bank
customer should know*

With the increased use of the internet and e-mail, there are a growing number of ways which good, well-known bank customers are being scammed. These scams vary in size from a few hundred dollars to hundreds of thousands of dollars stolen from a single customer. There are many stories used in these scams; they are too numerous to list. The scams all have two things in common.

First, the scams involve convincing the good bank customer that the stranger is “trusting” the victim with his funds. The crook wants the victim to be in a position to “prove” he can be trusted. Second, a check of some sort is sent to be deposited to the victim’s account. When the victim is a longtime, well-known customer of the bank, it is not likely that the bank will refuse to accept a check to deposit. However, in every case, these checks are not valid. It may be a completely fictitious check drawn on a nonexistent entity at a nonexistent bank. It may be a properly issued check which was stolen from the mail, chemically washed to remove the original payee and then altered to show the victim as payee.

How does the crook get the money?

The crook convinces the victim to send part of the check proceeds to an accomplice. The reason given for sending the money varies. Funds

may need to be paid to release additional funds. Funds may need to be paid for alleged taxes, licenses, fees or attorney fees for the deal. The amount of the check may be more than what was owed so a portion of the funds need to be returned. The customer may be told that a foreign company needs an agent to cash a check in the U.S. and then wire the funds. The stories are sometimes very believable.

How long should I wait to know the check is good?

It is almost impossible to tell when you have waited long enough. Just because an account is credited and the bank releases any holds on the funds does not mean that the check is good. It is possible under normal circumstances for a check drawn on another U. S. bank to be returned for a forged maker’s signature two weeks after the deposit is made. If the check is drawn on a Canadian bank, the check can be returned several months later. If it is a fictitious check drawn on the U.S. Treasury, the credit can be reversed many months after the check was deposited. However, waiting weeks or even months is not always safe. If a legitimate check was stolen from the mail and then altered, the check can be returned for three years, or more, after it was deposited. When the check can be returned to the depository bank, the depository customer will be liable for the check.

How can I verify that a check is “good”?

It is almost impossible to tell if a check is “good”. It is often possible, to verify that the check is definitely invalid. If the check is drawn on a phony account or is a phony cashier’s check, contacting the bank it is allegedly drawn on, may help determine that it is worthless. Only the maker of the check can provide information if the check was stolen. You may be able to contact the maker of the check directly; however you should never use a phone number listed on the check. You will need to independently locate the phone number of the maker. Even if you do all the verification possible, there is still a possibility that the check could be returned years later, and you will be stuck.

Too Good to be True?

Most of these scams fall into the “too good to be true” category. If it seems to be too good to be true, it is. The crooks take advantage of the fact that even their skeptical victims often can’t figure out how they are being scammed. Whenever you negotiate a check, you have the potential or long-term liability. If you are being asked to cash a check for a stranger and send someone part of the money, you are being scammed. Don’t do it.

The Bottom Line

When a check is cashed, your bank often allows the funds to be withdrawn within a few days. However, if the check is not valid, the depositor can be liable for the check for a very long period of time. You need to be skeptical of any check received from a stranger. If you are asked to deposit a check and send some of the funds to others, simply refuse. It could save you from a long-term financial mess.



Royal Savings Account

Blissfield State Bank has a Financial Education Program for Blissfield Elementary students in the first through fifth grades. We would like to invite your student to participate in our "ROYAL SAVER" program.

Your student can open a Royal Savings account and make deposits each week at school. Each student will receive a passbook (to record deposits at home after being given a receipt at school) and a special coin purse to keep deposit money separate from lunch money.

The following applies to our "ROYAL SAVER" account:

- Minimum deposit - \$1.00

For security, the school set maximum deposits of \$5.00 in 1st and 2nd grade, and \$20.00 in 3rd 4th and 5th grade.

- No minimum balance required and no monthly fees.
- Earns a higher rate of interest than regular savings accounts.

For security reasons, no withdrawals are allowed at school, however, withdrawals are allowed at the bank with designated parent/guardian listed on the signature card. These accounts automatically convert to regular savings accounts when the owners reach the age of 18.

We invite each student to participate in this fun and simple way to save money and learn responsibility.

Blissfield State Bank's partnership with the school will help our children in their process of learning money management skills and becoming responsible citizens at an early age.

For any questions contact Blissfield State Bank.

Kidz Corner

Find the Difference

Ten things in the picture on the right are missing or different in the picture on the left. Can you find them all?





FUNDS AVAILABILITY POLICY

Our general policy is to allow you to withdraw funds deposited in your account on the first business day after the day we receive your deposit. Funds from electronic direct deposits will be available on the day we receive the deposit. In some cases, we may delay your ability to withdraw funds beyond the first business day. Then, the funds will generally be available by the second business day after the day of deposit.

COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS ONLY

UNLAWFUL INTERNET GAMBLING NOTICE:

Restricted transactions as defined in Federal Reserve Regulation GG are prohibited from being processed through this account or relationship. Restricted transactions generally include, but are not limited to, those in which credit, electronic fund transfers, checks, or drafts are knowingly accepted by gambling businesses in connection with the participation by others in unlawful Internet gambling.

Salvation Army Kettle Drive

Blissfield State Bank asks for your support with The Salvation Army kettle drive to assist needy families in Lenawee County. This year we will place “counter top kettles” at our offices to collect donations for The Salvation Army. These will be placed at our locations in November through late December. You may also go to our website and click on the link, <http://www.salvationarmy.org/>, to donate online directly from your Blissfield State Bank account. Any and all donations are appreciated!



Solemn Retrospection continued...

have kept the majority from failure. This is especially true for our nation’s 8,000 community banks. Though admittedly many have failed with more to follow; over 95% of all community banks are expected to survive because they are well capitalized and managed effectively.

I am proud to state that Blissfield State Bank continues to receive the highest possible ranking (5-star) from *BauerFinancial*, is rated among the top third of all Michigan banks by the *Financial Management Consulting Group*, and was favorably rated during a recent

regularly scheduled full-scope safety and soundness examination. As with the greatest number of fellow peer banks, Blissfield State Bank continues to provide our community with consistently dependable financial support.

I wish you good health, safe travels and may God bless you.

Bill Ellis

Effective January 1, 2010

The following products and services reflect new pricing as of January 1, 2010:

Overdraft Privilege/item	\$30.00
daily charge limit = 4 items	
Returned check (bounced)	\$25.00
maximum charge	\$100 or 4 items
Cashier’s Check	\$ 4.00
Money Order	\$ 3.00
Dormant checking (no activity for one year) per month	\$ 5.00
Coin machine – Customers only	
Collection item	\$15 + postage
Stop Payment (all items)	\$27.00
Wire transfer incoming	
Domestic	\$10.00
Foreign	\$20.00
Wire transfer outgoing	
Domestic	\$20.00
Foreign	\$45.00
Dormant savings (no activity for two years) per month charge	\$ 5.00
Safety Deposit Box late fee after 60 days	\$5.00

A complete list of all other fees and charges is available upon request.

Welcome Home

