

# MICHIGAN FIRST MONEYWISE

Winter 2021



## 2020 Year In Review

With each new year, we talk about significant growth – and while 2020 was by no means typical, we worked hard to adapt and continue the previous year's forward momentum. So how exactly did we grow?

### Here are some of the ways we grew and succeeded in 2020:

- We now have over 175,000 members, and our total assets have grown to more than \$1.3 billion. This represents a growth of over \$325 million during the year.
- More than \$225 million in consumer loans were granted to members.
- 365 Live, our around-the-clock call center, continues to take a record number of member calls and provides service anytime a member may need us.
- More than 94% of members were served within seven minutes at our teller lines.
- More than 75% of members visiting our financial service representatives received service within 10 minutes.
- Michigan First Insurance Agency, which launched in May 2016, maintained strong growth. Members continue to save money with a broad array of insurance products.
- Our Mortgage division continues to grow in volume and serving members. Originations in 2020 totaled more than \$400 million, up over \$270 million from the year before.
- Through the Michigan First Foundation, our commitment to local communities remains strong. Our scholarship program gave awards of over \$75,000 in 2020, and over \$1.3 million to deserving students over the past 18 years.

We would all agree this has been an unexpected year and business has been anything but usual. However, we have done our best to ensure that members continue to have all the access and high level of service they have enjoyed for years. While other financial institutions closed branches, we kept ours open. It hasn't always been easy, but our members have adjusted their schedules and helped us alleviate high levels of branch traffic. Thank you for that!

As a result of these and other efforts, the Credit Union won a number of local and national awards again, including 101 Best and Brightest to Work For (local, West Michigan and national), Detroit Free Press Top 100 Places to Work, and many others. Our team members work hard to provide exceptional service; we are very proud of them and their many accomplishments.

### During 2021, expect to see:

- Continued efforts to reduce pricing for members.
- Virtual seminars and other educational resources focused on financial literacy.
- Continued growth for Michigan First Mortgage and Michigan First Insurance Agency.
- More features added to our mobile app, which will make on-the-go banking even easier.

Thank you again for continuing to do business with us and giving us a record high number of referrals during 2020. We appreciate your help in keeping our team members and members safe during this year.

We look forward to even greater levels of growth and service in the future. Thank you for your loyalty, business and for choosing Michigan First!

*Michael Poulos*

Michael Poulos, President/CEO



# Fees for 2021

We make every effort to be competitive and give members alternative ways to avoid fees. Below, please find updated fees for 2021:

## ATM/Debit Card

Card Replacement - Lost/Stolen .....	\$12
Foreign Transaction: 1% of Each Transaction in U.S. Dollars	
MoneyNow® Debit Card Transaction.....	\$19
Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF)** .....	\$31
PIN Reorder .....	\$2
Sales Receipt Copy .....	\$5

## ATM Transactions

All Michigan First/CO-OP ATMs.....	Free
All Other ATM Networks .....	\$2.50
MoneyNow® ATM - Up to Each \$500 Increment.....	\$29
Surcharge for Non-CO-OP Network Transactions at Michigan First Machines.....	\$5

## Certificates of Deposit (CD)

CD Early Withdrawal Penalty	
Through 1 Year .....	90 days interest
Over 1 Year .....	180 days interest

## Credit Card

Card Replacement - Lost/Stolen .....	\$12
Cash Advance .....	3% of advance, min. \$10
Credit Card Late Payment .....	\$25
Foreign Transaction: 1% of Each Transaction in U.S. Dollars	
NSF (Returned Payment) .....	\$25
Secured Credit Card - Annual Fee.....	\$50

## Checking Accounts

Account Reconciliation.....	\$25/hour
Check Copy .....	\$5
Check Printing and Reorders .....	Varies
Classic Checking .....	\$20/month
MoneyNow® Checks <b>Not</b> Negotiated Through Teller.....	\$19
Any MoneyNow® Transactions Negotiated Through Teller Up to Each \$500 Increment.....	\$29
MoneyNow® Zelle® Transaction Up to Each \$500 Increment.....	\$29
Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF)** .....	\$31
NSF Return - Deposited Check	
With Ownership in Drawing Account.....	\$31
Without Ownership in Drawing Account.....	Free
Overdraft Transfer From Savings.....	1 Free/month \$4/each additional
Stop Payment .....	\$31
Zelle® Transactions .....	Free

## Loan Programs

Delinquent Loan/Late Fee .....	20% of delinquent interest (10 day grace period)
Extension Agreement .....	\$40
NSF Loan Payment** .....	\$31
Refinance Program - Soft Credit Pull .....	\$15
Refinance Program - Loan Modification.....	\$25
Additional Skip-A-Pay for Eligible Loans.....	\$40
	\$60 for home equities

## General Fees

Account History - From Staff, No Limit on Pages .....	\$5
Account/Loan Number Change, Member Request.....	\$50
Account Reopening Within 1 Year of Closing .....	\$50
Account Reopening After Charged Off .....	\$50
Account Research - Members.....	\$25/hour
Account Research - Outside Agencies .....	\$50/hour
Cash Advance - Another Financial Institution Card .....	\$5
Foreign Checks - Collection Items .....	\$10 + bank charges
Levies and Garnishments .....	\$100
Minimum Balance Fee* (After 3 Months) .....	\$3/month
Money Orders .....	\$3
Non-Member Transactions	
Cash Advance .....	\$10
Check Cashing.....	\$10
Official Check .....	\$3
Official Check Copy .....	\$5
Official Check-Stop Payment .....	\$31
Phone Transfer Within Own Account via Call Center .....	\$1
Phone Transfer/Payment From External Account .....	\$5
Safe Deposit Box 3x5 .....	\$40/year
Safe Deposit Box 3x10 .....	\$55/year
Safe Deposit Box 5x10 .....	\$90/year
Safe Deposit Box 10x10 .....	\$120/year
Safe Deposit Box Drilling .....	\$200
Safe Deposit Box Lost Key .....	\$20
Service Centers/Shared Branch.....	\$4/teller cash withdrawal
Statement Copy - No Limit on Pages.....	\$5
Unclaimed Property Fee.....	\$50
Undeliverable Mail/Returned .....	\$5
Verification of Deposits .....	\$10

## ACH/Electronic Funds

Manual Posting of an ACH Item .....	\$20/item after appropriate notice
MoneyNow® ACH Transactions.....	\$19
Returned ACH** .....	\$31
Stop Payment .....	\$31
Wire Transfers - Incoming .....	Free
Wire Transfers - Outgoing Domestic.....	\$25
Wire Transfers - Outgoing International .....	\$50

## Ways to Avoid Paying Fees

- Make loan payments on or before the due date.
- Don't bounce checks. Apply for a line of credit.
- Use MoneyPerks® points for certain fee waivers.

\*Fee applies if aggregate balance falls below \$100 in any month after 3 months. Fee waived for minors and First Gear Accounts.

\*\*Fee will be assessed each time the item is presented for payment; the credit union has no control over how many times an item is presented to us for payment.



# Understanding Your Credit Score



We have all heard the saying “credit is king.” Your three-digit credit score can play a big role in your life’s important moments – like buying a house, purchasing a new car, and even getting a job. But what makes up a credit score? How do we keep it in good standing?

## Payment History

This is the most important factor to keep in mind when thinking of your credit score. Are you making monthly payments on time? Are you missing payments or not paying at all? Payment history can significantly impact your credit score. In fact, late payments can stay on your credit report for a full seven years.

## Capacity

Similar in meaning to your “credit utilization ratio,” capacity is the measurement of how much credit you have available, or have not used, compared to your total available lines of credit (credit cards, overdraft lines, home equity lines, etc.). For example, if your credit limit is \$5,000 and you spend

\$1,100, your capacity is 78%  $((5,000 - 1,100)/5,000)$ . The higher your capacity, the higher your score will be. It tells lenders that you are responsible with your credit and aren’t overextending yourself. The ideal ratio is 70% or higher.

## Credit Length

The longer your credit history, the better. The general rule is to always keep your first credit card open. Closing that first card shortens your credit history, which can impact your credit score and getting approved for a loan.

## Types of Credit

Having a variety of credit sources is conducive to a positive credit score. There are three types of credit in a credit bureau scoring model: revolving (credit and charge cards), installment credit (loans), and mortgages. Overall, the average person will naturally earn a variety of credit types over the years.

## Credit Pulls

While a soft inquiry doesn’t affect your credit score, hard inquiries can cause a temporary dip. How do you know if it is a soft pull or hard pull? A hard pull typically occurs when a financial institution – like a lender or credit card issuer – is doing the inquiry. A soft pull is often done when your credit is reviewed as part of a background check. In addition, an employer may do a soft pull before hiring you. More often than not, your permission will be secured before a hard inquiry is conducted; however, this may not always be the case.

Keeping these five items in mind will help get you on the right path to improving your credit score.

## Important 2020 Year-End Tax Information

Your 2020 year-end tax information was included on the last page of your December 31, 2020 statement (or e-statement) from Michigan First.

## Are You Using Zelle® Yet?

Michigan First Credit Union members can safely send and receive money with friends and family using Zelle — right through the Michigan First mobile app. Rather than writing personal checks or getting cash from the ATM, you can quickly transfer money directly to people you trust with a U.S. bank account. To learn more, visit [MichiganFirst.com](https://michiganfirst.com).

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# First for Good Continues to Spread Cheer

We have been working hard to continue spreading kindness and making a positive impact in the areas in which we operate through First for Good – our community giving initiative. We launched this program in 2019 and since then, our First for Good Community Crew has surprised and delighted over 2,000 people in the Grand Rapids area. In November, we officially expanded the program into the Metro Detroit area as well, so be sure to keep an eye out for us around your community! Here are a few of our recent community activities:

## Walmart Gift Card Surprise

Our Community Crew surprised random Walmart shoppers with a Walmart gift card and Michigan First shopping tote. In total, 60 bags were given out to excited customers.

## Surprise Ice Cream Truck

This past August, we partnered with Bumblebee Ice Cream to provide free ice cream to construction workers and other people walking around downtown Grand Rapids.

## Dickinson Academy Teacher Gifts

This year has been particularly difficult for teachers and school staff, so we partnered with the principal at Dickinson Academy to do something special and show our gratitude. We were able to gift the school's 27 teachers and support staff with gift cards and hand-written thank you cards.

## Puzzle & Game Drive

Grand Rapids-area branches collected more than 130 new, unopened puzzles, card games and board games for senior citizens at the Vista Springs Northview Assisted Living Facility. Upon delivering the items, we found out that the facility is in the process of redesigning its activities center, and our donations fully stocked their shelves!

## Thanksgiving Donations

Thanksgiving is a time to come together to celebrate what we have while also doing what we can to help those around us. With this in mind, the First for Good team set out to provide support for residents in the communities we serve.

## Grand Rapids:

Our Community Crew teamed up with Northwest Food Pantry – an organization that assists Western Michigan families who are facing a loss of income or any other short-

term emergencies. We donated over \$1,000 worth of food and personal care items to help local families around the holidays.

## Metro Detroit:

We partnered with Vets Returning Home to provide pre-packaged Thanksgiving meals to local veterans and their families. Vets Returning Home is a Roseville-based organization that has made a commitment to ending chronic homelessness among veterans. We hope these meals went a long way toward making this Thanksgiving a little more special.

This has been a monumental year for First for Good, and we look forward to doing even more for our local communities in 2021!

## Coming Soon: Contactless Experience Michigan First Rewards® Visa® Cards!

### Introducing touch-free payments

In addition to inserting or swiping at checkout, contactless card technology will soon allow you to tap to pay with all newly issued Experience Michigan First Rewards® Visa® credit cards. Simply tap your card and head on your way.

### Fast

Faster than using traditional card readers

### Easy

Tap your card at checkout anywhere the contactless indicator is displayed

### Secure

Offers the same high level of security as chip cards

### Is your card contactless?

Contactless functionality is not yet available, but will be soon. In the meantime, if you have questions about contactless cards, please call our 365 Live Team at **800.664.3828**.



800.664.3828 | [MICHIGANFIRST.COM](https://www.MICHIGANFIRST.COM)  
ROUTING & TRANSIT NUMBER: 272078365

NMLS#493687







## Annual Meeting and Board of Directors Election

### Save the Date for our Annual Meeting

**Thursday, April 22**

**Located in The Mint at Michigan First Conference Center**

27000 Evergreen Rd.

Lathrup Village, MI 48076

In accordance with the credit union's bylaws, the Nominating Committee has nominated the following individuals for three-year terms on the Board of Directors:

- Linda Height
- Michael Hohf
- Donna VanderVries

The Nominating Committee has nominated the following individual for a three-year term on the Supervisory Committee:

- Lisa Fort

As stated in the bylaws, Michigan First members in good standing may place their names in nomination. Petition forms, along with instructions, may be obtained by contacting Christine Wismann, Senior Executive Assistant, at **248.443.4602** or **[cwismann@MichiganFirst.com](mailto:cwismann@MichiganFirst.com)**.

These forms require the valid signatures of one percent of the total membership, each of whom must be a member in good standing.

The completed forms must be returned in person by 5 p.m. on Monday, February 3, 2021 to the President/CEO's office at the Evergreen branch.

## Update to Michigan First/Sprint Partnership

In the past, Michigan First Credit Union members have enjoyed a special offer from Sprint through the **Love My Credit Union Rewards** program. Because of T-Mobile's 2019 acquisition of Sprint, this offer will unfortunately no longer be available. We are always looking for new and exciting rewards and benefits programs for our members, so be sure to keep an eye out for future announcements!

## 2021 Holiday Reminders

- **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**  
**Monday, January 18**  
All branches closed
- **Presidents' Day**  
**Monday, February 15**  
All branches closed
- **Memorial Day**  
**Monday, May 31**  
All branches closed

Although our branches are closed, you can log in to our mobile app to do your banking anytime, anywhere! If you need to speak with us, please call:

**365Live**  
our 24-hour call center  
**800.664.3828**

## A Fresh Look for Michigan First Mortgage

Some exciting changes are coming for Michigan First Mortgage! Be on the lookout for a brand-new logo, updated website, and more.



# Keeping Your Home Safe While You're Away

While it may be hard to believe, there will come a time when we'll once again be loading up the car or rushing to catch our flight. Whether your next trip consists of taking the family up north for a long weekend or traveling across the country in search of warmer weather, there are some things you'll want to keep in mind before packing your bags.

When preparing to leave for a vacation, it's easy to overlook basic home safety precautions. There are a number of hazards that could affect your home while you're away, including fire, theft, and flooding. Luckily, there are some simple tips that help keep your house and valued possessions safe.

## Help Prevent Home Fires

Fires continue to be a huge problem in the United States. In fact, according to a 2020 report from the National Fire Protection Association, local fire departments responded to an estimated 1.3 million fires in 2019. These fires resulted in more than \$14 billion worth of damage.

While in some instances home fires are completely unavoidable, there are precautions you can take before traveling to minimize risk. Chances are, if you are going away on vacation, you won't be needing any of your electrical appliances. With that said, it is a good idea to unplug them to eliminate the risk of an electrical fire.

It is also a good idea to ask a neighbor or friend to keep an eye on your home while you are away. Having someone periodically check on your home will ensure that if something bad does happen, it can be quickly detected.

## Minimizing Home Theft

Burglary is perhaps the thing homeowners fear most when traveling. Coming home to a ransacked house will quickly ruin all the amazing vacation memories you and your family just made, so it is important to take a proactive approach to your home's security. While reported burglaries have been steadily declining over the past few years, there is still a risk – especially when leaving your home for an extended period of time.



Making it appear that your home is occupied while you're away is among the most important steps you can take before setting out on vacation. According to FBI reports on crime statistics, more than half of reported burglaries take place during the daytime – making empty houses a prime target. For this reason, consider setting timers on inside lights and adding motion-controlled floodlights to the exterior of your home.

Being careful about what you post on social media is critically important to the safety and security of your home. Avoid posting anything that details when you will be setting off on an exciting new trip. Burglars can use this information to break into homes without risk of anyone being there to stop them. It is just as important to refrain from posting pictures while on vacation, as would-be thieves could see you on the beach and reasonably infer you are not at your snow-covered, Michigan home.

Taking the proper precautions before you go on vacation can make all the difference when it comes to preventing damage to your home. However, accidents can still occur, so it's important to ensure you have adequate insurance coverage. Visit [MichiganFirstInsurance.com](https://michiganfirstinsurance.com) or call us at **844.788.0818** to learn more.



# Money Mentor Goes Virtual

Are you part of a group that is interested in financial education? Money Mentor is now offering virtual presentations! Money Mentor presentations cover multiple subjects, including credit scores, budgeting and the difference between banks and credit unions. Don't put your financial education on hold – request a FREE virtual presentation today at [MichiganFirstMoneyMentor.com](https://michiganfirstmoneymentor.com). And don't forget to follow Michigan First Credit Union on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to see the latest Money Mentor posts and content.



# The Importance of an Emergency Fund

One of the biggest financial fears held by many is suddenly finding themselves without an income. While it is impossible to be prepared for every outcome, it's important to have an emergency fund, which will help ensure your financial security in the event life throws something unexpected your way.

## What is an Emergency Fund?

An emergency fund is money set aside to cover unexpected life events. Think of it as a financial safety net that can help prevent additional debt and stress. Your emergency fund is important to help you cover healthcare expenses or to prevent financial hardship due to home or auto repairs, theft, or job loss.

Your emergency fund should be separate from your checking or savings account so you can't easily dip into it for normal expenses. Avoid accounts that tack on a penalty for withdrawing the money before the account matures, like a Certificate of Deposit (CD).

Instead, make sure you can easily access your funds in a liquid account like a normal savings or a Money Market account.

## Using your Emergency Fund

It's in the name! The emergency fund is for emergencies only. It's not a savings account to use for vacations, pay off credit card debt, or to purchase items you want. Some things that may require you to dip into your fund are:

- Medical emergencies where health insurance may not fully cover you or a loved one.
- Loss of a job or income that may prevent you from covering your bills.
- Travel expenses if a loved one passes away or falls ill.
- Unexpected and necessary repairs of your home or car.

## Saving for your Fund

Most experts advise having enough money saved to cover at least six months of expenses with a little bit of cushion. When determining the amount of money you should keep in your emergency fund, calculate how much you need to live comfortably each month. Start with your take-home pay and subtract all your monthly expenses from it. Include what you pay for housing, utilities, bills, food, and other necessary expenses.

Then determine your goal: how many months of savings you want to have. Once you know your goal, you can look at your finances to see how much you can contribute to



your emergency fund each month and determine how long it will take to fund the account.

To begin saving, try to contribute either a percentage of your leftover budget or a set amount from every paycheck. Direct deposit is a great tool because you never see the money – which removes the temptation to spend it!

## Saving Tips

Bulking up your emergency fund can be a slow process, but there are ways to speed up your saving so you can meet your goal faster. Here are some tips:

- We know how tempting extra spending money can be, but saving bonuses, gifts, or tax refunds is helpful to move your fund forward.
- Boost your income by starting a side hustle that utilizes your skills and passions, or try selling items you no longer use.
- Whenever you feel like making an impulsive purchase, put the money aside. If you still want to buy the item after 30 days, do it. If not, put the money into your emergency fund.
- Reduce the amount you spend on takeout, monthly subscriptions, or shopping by cutting them out or utilizing coupons and resale stores.
- Contact us for a quote on refinancing your home, car or other debts. Often times this can save additional money each month that can be placed directly into your emergency fund.
- Reach out to Michigan First Insurance Agency to see if you can lower your home, auto, life or other insurance premiums.

Cutting back on your expenses and boosting your income work hand-in-hand to get you to your goal faster.

If you have questions about how to achieve your financial goals, ask the experts! Michigan First Wealth Management Group can help you accomplish your goals by ensuring your money is invested wisely.







27000 Evergreen Road  
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## Fraud Prevention

With the holidays winding down and tax season fast approaching, fraud schemes are especially prevalent this time of year. It's important to always monitor your account and credit card activity and be aware of your surroundings. If you get a call, text or email from someone claiming to be from Michigan First, proceed with caution. We will never ask you for account passwords, PIN number, debit or credit card number or other sensitive account information. Do not respond to an email, text, or questions over the phone. Instead, immediately hang up and call us back at **800.664.3828**.

If you think something seems suspicious, follow your instincts and give us a call. We are always here to help keep your accounts safe.

**Students can win up to \$10,000**  
**NOTE:** The number of scholarships awarded and prize amounts will be dependent on the number of eligible entrants.  
To enter the contest, students will be asked a question which can be answered via video or essay submission. The scholarship question will be posted May 3 on [MichiganFirst.com](http://MichiganFirst.com). Participants will have until June 4 to enter. Good luck!



## Michigan First Golfers Help Students Swing Tuition

It's no secret that 2020 was an unusual year. Faced with multiple challenges, our Business Development & Community Relations team did a great job reworking the annual golf outing to create a safe and fun atmosphere for all involved. We were able to raise more than \$40,000 for our Michigan First Foundation's scholarship program. Thank you to everyone who participated!

We also want to recognize Cheryl Ryder, who has done a phenomenal job of managing the annual golf event since 2010. Cheryl retired from Michigan First in September. We wish her well in her retirement.

### Scholarship

Our annual scholarship competition kicks off a little later this year, on May 3. We're excited to once again offer students a chance to win some serious cash for college!