UNDER THE *Arch*

August 2026

Daily Habits That Make Building Wealth Easier

It is easy to think of wealth as something that happens overnight. The media often emphasizes rags to riches stories, forgetting how rare those scenarios are. News sites share stories of happy lottery winners, reports that also overlook the enormous odds ticket buyers face when they lay down their hard-earned money.

Given these misperceptions, it is easy to see why so many people haven't taken the steps that could help them achieve their financial goals. Goals that may seem unattainable. With discipline and hard work, building wealth is possible. Here are a few strategies and everyday habits that can make wealth building easier.

Pay yourself first
Pay yourself first, or "PYF," is perhaps the most effective wealth-building habit and one of the easiest to implement. With this simple strategy, you direct part of every paycheck to a savings account, mutual fund, or other investment vehicle, forcing yourself to live on less than you make.

Know how much is in your accounts
There is a reason why financial institutions make so much money on overdraft fees – a shocking number of account holders have no idea how much money is in their account. As a result, they are blindsided when writing a check or withdrawing cash from an ATM sends their balances negative. Knowing how much is in the account is an essential first step toward controlling unexpected costs and taking control of your finances.

Prioritize fee reduction and demand real value for your money
Those who manage to build wealth know that prioritizing fee reduction is a vital first step and that every dollar not spent on management costs is one more dollar that can be invested. The wealthy, and those on their way, always demand value for the money they spend on their investments.

Deposit (or invest) raises, bonuses, and other found money
If you want to build wealth, start by putting bonuses and other found money in a savings account or investing the cash in a mutual fund or other low-cost investment. When wealth builders get extra money, they avoid lifestyle inflation, opting instead to beef up their savings and investment accounts.

Take advantage of tax savings
From 401(k) contributions to IRA accounts to health savings accounts, some types of investments have a double and even triple advantage. One of the most effective ways to build wealth is to prioritize investments that offer tax savings and the promise of tax-free withdrawals. Consult a tax advisor to determine the best strategies for your situation.

Develop multiple streams of income
One of the fastest ways to build wealth is to bring in extra money, which starts with developing multiple income streams. That could be a side hustle, a home-based business, or even rental real estate. The idea is to generate extra cash, money that can be saved and invested.

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Article provided by our partner, Balance

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Save on everyday purchases

People who are successful at building wealth look for ways to save money on everyday purchases. These people choose generic and store-brand products when they go grocery shopping. You might even see them scanning the racks of the local thrift store for gently worn designer duds and used but still pristine furniture and home décor.

Take the long view

Building wealth will be a slow and steady process unless you are the one in several million who buys that winning lottery ticket. If you want to succeed, it pays to adopt the long view, saving consistently, taking calculated risks, and tracking your progress over time.

Conduct an annual financial review

Successful wealth builders know where they stand and where they are going. So they conduct annual reviews of their finances, including emergency savings, investments, insurance, and all other expenses.

Building wealth is not an easy process; in many cases, it is not fast either. If you want to build wealth for the long term, start today, and adopt these smart habits that can help you succeed. The strategies listed above can help you get started, one dollar, and one day, at a time.

Verify Your Contact Information

Just a reminder! As we move toward our October 1, 2026 merger completion, please make certain we have your correct and current:

- **Home address**
- **Email address**
- **Phone number(s)**

If you have already updated your contact information, thank you!

We’re happy to help you make sure we have your correct info. You can have any GMFCU representative assist you or you can confirm in Online Banking anytime.

Visit Online Banking today to verify your contact information is updated. Login at goGMFCU.org

Upcoming Events & Holidays

Sept 7	Labor Day - CLOSED
Oct 1	Merger Completion

Stay Tuned for Final Under the Arch Newsletter

September will mark our final edition of the Under the Arch newsletter. To commemorate this milestone, we’re planning a special feature that celebrates Gateway Metro as we prepare for the next chapter through our upcoming merger.

LOAN RATES

EFFECTIVE August 15th, 2026

VEHICLE LOANS

The following are approx. payback terms.	AS LOW AS
Up to 36 months	4.49% APR*
37 to 48 months	4.89% APR*
49 to 60 months	5.14% APR*

OTHER LOANS

	AS LOW AS
Mortgage	*Click for current rates*
Share Secured	2.05% APR*
Stock Secured	9.25% APR*
Personal Loans	9.99% APR*
Personal Line of Credit	12.90% APR*

*APR=Annual Percentage Rate. Rates are subject to change, and terms and conditions apply. Our website contains the most current rates. Contact GMFCU for complete details. NMLS #410276

LOST CREDIT/DEBIT CARDS

If your GMFCU credit or debit card is lost, stolen or if you suspect unauthorized use, please call:
CREDIT CARD - (800) 558-3424 | 24/7
DEBIT CARD - (314) 621-4575 or
(800) 621-4828 during business hours or
(800) 472-3272 | 24/7

What You Have to Say

Written by Jeri Peterson and Gateway Metro members

The Gateway Metro Federal Credit Union team is committed to serving our members and our community. We choose to stand out from other financial institutions by being member-focused, relationship-focused and fiscally responsible advocates. We build authentic relationships, adhere to rigorous professional training and are mindful that this is your credit union we take care of every day. Sharing some of the memorable testimonials we receive from members of the Gateway Metro family is an honor.

Meet the Ledbetter – Harris Family
Gateway Metro continues sharing the stories of members who represent the thousands of people we serve within the St. Louis bi-state area and around the country. We are fortunate to have generations of families within our membership. As our teen members come of age, we want to acknowledge them and their parents. They represent the present and the future of our community.

Last year Alyssa Harris applied for the 2025 Judith A. Lowe Memorial Scholarship. The Gateway Metro Federal Credit Union Board of Directors created the scholarship in honor of one of the credit union's past presidents. While it was a close vote among all the applicants, Alyssa stood out to our volunteer panelists and was awarded the scholarship. We wanted to take this moment to hear from Alyssa and her parents Kristen and Daniel to learn what this past year has been like for them as Alyssa recently completed her freshman year at college.

JP: Tell us what it was like for you as you transitioned from being a high school senior to becoming a college freshman. What experiences stood out to you most?

Alyssa: The greatest change from being in high school to becoming a college freshman was the flexibility with scheduling classes. You really get to know yourself in the first semester, and this includes if you are more productive in morning, afternoon, or evening classes. I also realized how imperative it is to have specific times in your schedule for rest or study blocks. Another experience that stood out to me in my first semester was the wide range of student organizations. At my college, there is an overwhelming number of clubs that are available to join, which was a huge transition for me from high school. Learning about a completely new city and using public transportation for the first time was also a huge shift for me this year.

JP: What has surprised you most during your first year of college?

Alyssa: One thing that surprised me during my first year of college was the amount of responsibility that I "suddenly" gained. High school was extremely structured, and due to clubs or activities, even my weekends used to be planned out. I realized that without someone structuring my time for me, I had to use my free time wisely. This did not always mean catching up with friends. Sometimes this meant doing laundry in the morning before class or spending a chunk of my day at the library. Overall, my first year taught me that independence is not just staying away from home but learning to manage personal and academic responsibility.

Photo: Alyssa Harris, 2025 Judith A. Lowe Scholarship Winner

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JP: How has the financial literacy education you received from your family and Gateway Metro helped you during your freshman year at college?

Alyssa: The financial literacy education that I received from my family, and Gateway Metro helped me to be successful during my first year of college. I continued to regularly check my bank account to stay aware of how much money was in my account. This is a common practice to prevent people from accidentally going into overdraft, and I believe that it is a good habit for all college students to have. I also created spending budgets for each month of the school year. This included money that I allotted to myself to buy groceries for my dorm, as well as outings with friends. I could also account for occasional splurges like DoorDash if necessary. I also made sure to balance my spending with saving a certain percentage of my paychecks from my on-campus research stipend.

JP: How has receiving the Judith A. Lowe Memorial Scholarship impacted your college experience or helped you stay focused on your goals?

Alyssa: Receiving the Judith A. Lowe Memorial Scholarship has impacted my college experience by reminding me how important it is to learn financial literacy at a young age. Though college was one large step in increasing my independence, I realized this year that understanding money and sticking to my savings goals can help me to gain independence as I grow older. For example, the next step in my independence is moving out of the dorms for my junior year and living in an apartment. This will be a shift to more financial independence, where I must use the financial literacy skills that I have learned to make smart money choices. Receiving this scholarship has taught me to think more intentionally about saving, spending, and budgeting. I know that if I continue to make good financial decisions now, I can set myself up for a more successful future. Earning the Judith A. Lowe Memorial Scholarship has aided me in achieving my academic goals, as well as giving me the tools to prepare for greater independence.

JP: What are your plans for the summer and your sophomore year at college?

Alyssa: This summer, I am continuing to work at the St. Louis Zoo as a Face Painter and continuing to do research for the MU4GOLD research program at Marquette University. In my sophomore year, I will continue to pursue a Psychology major and a Studio Art minor. I also will be a peer mentor in the fall at my university, with a focus on welcoming incoming students and making sure that they feel confident in their freshman year.

JP: What would you say to students who may feel nervous about leaving home or starting college?

Alyssa: I would encourage students that are nervous about leaving home or starting college not to limit themselves. They should strive to explore the area that they are moving to, get to know their college resources well, and talk to multiple groups of people in the first semester. This can help them to become more acclimated to their new college experiences.

JP: What have you learned as parents while supporting Alyssa through her first year away at college?

Kristen & Daniel: We learned to give Alyssa space to grow into an independent adult. The transition was initially difficult as parents because Alyssa is attending college out of state. Throughout the first year Alyssa learned to navigate campus, ride public transportation, participate in activities and maintain academic performance.

JP: What surprised you most during Alyssa's transition from high school to college and young adulthood?

Kristen & Daniel: The ease of navigating campus life and embracing a new city. Alyssa learned how to find places such as the art museum, public market and vintage festivals. She learned how to navigate to Lake Michigan with friends. Alyssa was proactive in making decisions independently without calling her parents for tips. She found her own way pretty quickly.

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JP: Since Alyssa is attending college out of state, what insights can you share with other Gateway Metro families about how you supported her academically, emotionally, financially and practically?

Kristen & Daniel: I think communication is a big factor in overall support for Alyssa. Dedicating time each week to discuss campus life, challenging classes or even new things she learned was very important to our family. At times there were hilarious stories of bus rides to art school or conversations about how the freezing temperatures closed her campus. I think behind each story there is an opportunity to show support by listening; there is also the opportunity to send occasional gifts to her dorm for items that she needed (we definitely sent snow boots, hand warmers and even dorm décor for Halloween and Christmas).

JP: Is there anything else you would like to share?

Kristen & Daniel: It is difficult seeing your child enter college because it is a new transition for a family. After the tears are wiped away, after the initial drop off, the transition becomes easier once you see all of the awesome things your child is learning – both academically and personally. When your child arrives home from breaks you will notice their independence and you will be proud. Be ready to embrace it and be supportive from the sidelines.

Alyssa, proud GMFCU member since 2007 & Kristen and Daniel, proud GMFCU members since 2002

Many thanks to our members for sharing their Gateway Metro experience in What You Have to Say. Their words and deeds add to the growth of the Gateway Metro culture and community. If you would like your story to be considered, please contact us at marketing@gmcu.org.

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Apply with our merging partner today! Click here to apply online at West Community Credit Union

*APR=Annual Percentage Rate. Rate quoted as low as on 36-month term. Rates, terms, and conditions may vary based on creditworthiness, qualifications, and collateral conditions and are subject to change. Estimated payment per $1,000 borrowed at 4.49% APR for 36 months is $29.74. All loans subject to approval.

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Save to Win - $200 Winner!

Make August a fresh start for your savings with a Save to Win account!

Whether you're building on the progress you've made this year or setting new financial goals for the months ahead, this account helps your money work harder for you. You'll not only keep your savings secure, but also get the chance to win extra cash, all with no risk.

Start the season strong and see where your savings can take you. Check out all the details here goGMFCU.org

Congratulations to our June & Quarter 2 Winners!

*Must be eligible for membership with GMFCU. Must be a current member of GMFCU and open a Save to Win account to participate.

Youth Savings: The Right Way to Start

Kick off the school year with smart savings habits that set kids and teens up for success!

Our Youth Savings options are designed for all ages, helping young members stay engaged, curious, and financially confident year-round. With a variety of savings opportunities, kids can learn how to set goals, track progress, and build strong money management skills in a fun and hands-on way.

Make this school season a time for growth, both in the classroom and with their financial future. Check out all of our youth savings programs here gogmfcu.org/accounts

* Must be eligible for membership with GMFCU. Must be a current member of GMFCU.

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