

SBC

UPDATE

THE FAMILY OWNED BANK FOR FAMILIES AND THEIR BUSINESSES



STATE BANK
OF COUNTRYSIDE

Stay
healthy this
winter:
Details
INSIDE

THE CORNER OFFICE

by William M. Wheeler, Chief Credit Officer and Co-President

ADIOS 2010!

2011 is finally here! Chicagoans must be pretty excited since I heard the phrase "wait until next year" said often when discussing the economy. I heard it so much I felt like it was June and I was at a Cubs game. So did the economy return to 2005 when the clock struck midnight on December 31, 2010? I hope it did for you, but I don't think we've gone back to 2005 quite yet.

Compared to 2009, 2010 was a nice rebound from the depths of the recession (some would call it a depression) we were in. I like to say that we fell off a cliff in 2008 and rode along the bottom of the ravine in 2009. In 2010 the economy stabilized with positive GDP in each of the four quarters. Unemployment is still high, however it did stabilize and decreased from a high of 10.1% in October 2009. Total non-farm payrolls actually began to increase on a monthly basis and no longer are hundreds of thousands of workers being laid off every month. Wages have still not recovered, however inflation stayed in check around 0% throughout the year. Furthermore, home sales remained flat in the Chicagoland region when compared to 2009. The median sales price has declined year over year, however the decline in sales price was noticeably slower than in 2009.

So where does that lead us in 2011? I think we take off the training wheels in that ravine we've been stuck in and slowly ride our way back to prosperity. It is true that some consumers and businesses are still struggling mightily, especially those involved in the construction industry. However there are far fewer companies in that situation than there were a few years ago. Americans have a strong will to succeed and are determined to provide a better life for their families. We will see this in 2011.

Americans also like to spend (often too much!). 2011 will mark a return to spending for many Americans as they feel more secure in their jobs. Most economists project GDP to be around 3% for 2011. That certainly will not match the Chinese economy, but it isn't that bad considering the depths we're climbing out of.

Many economists also predict that housing sales will increase 20-30% from 2010. Housing prices have re-set from their historic highs and are back to reasonable 2003 levels. It is difficult to provide a blanket statement on the future of housing in 2011 since housing is so localized, but in most Chicagoland areas, now is a fantastic time to purchase a house. Market timers might be disappointed if they wait until 2012 to purchase their dream home as there have not been many housing starts for the past few years. Those nice homes that are for sale will be sold quickly once demand increases in 2011.

Please join me in taking off the training wheels and climbing out of the 2010 ravine. There are forces like gravity trying to keep us in the ravine, but I believe we trained for this ride long enough and are ready to start our ascent.

On a "Get to know the Co-Presidents" side note, I actually fell off my bike with training wheels and broke my arm when I was 5 years old. And I was known as the athletic son!

IN THIS ISSUE

The Corner Office

IRA Contributions

Happy Returns

Keep Healthy this Winter

Using Your Debit Card

SBC Super Sleuth

FIRST
QUARTER
2011

Make Your **IRA** Contributions!

Visit State Bank of Countryside to make your 2010 and 2011 IRA contributions. From now until April 18, you can still make your 2010 IRA contributions.

State Bank of Countryside offers both Traditional and Roth IRAs. We have numerous terms and investment rates for you to choose from depending on your needs. Our Financial Counselors are highly experienced in rollovers, transfers, and distributions of IRAs.

For more information about IRAs, please contact a Financial Counselor at any of our locations.



HAPPY RETURNS: Tips for Saving Money at Tax Time

Here are some tips to keep in mind as you prepare to file your taxes this year:

Consider using tax time to pay off high-interest debt or save for the future. "Use your tax refund to pay down high-interest debt and build up your savings," said Luke W. Reynolds, Chief of the FDIC's Community Outreach Section. "For example, purchase a U.S. Savings Bond with some or all of your tax refund. You can also direct deposit your refund into as many as three different accounts and three different financial institutions."

Avoid high-interest loans offered at tax time. In particular, be aware that a "refund anticipation loan" is an expensive loan product arranged by tax preparers for people who file their returns electronically and who don't want to wait for their tax refund.

"Refund anticipation loans are costly and often unnecessary because taxpayers can expect to have their tax refund direct deposited into their bank account within about 10 days of when the return was electronically filed with the IRS," explained Joyce Thomas, an FDIC financial educator in the Community Outreach Section.

"The funds spent on fees and interest for any sort of refund advance could be better used, including saving for a goal or paying down debt," added Reynolds.



"Use your tax refund to pay down high-interest debt and build up your savings."

Be on guard against tax-related frauds. Examples include scam e-mails falsely claiming to come from the IRS and intended to trick taxpayers into revealing personal information. Other scams involve unscrupulous tax preparers who promise larger refunds than competitors and make fraudulent errors that expose victims to costly fees and penalties. For more information about current scams, visit www.irs.gov.

Check out programs offering free tax help. The IRS-coordinated Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program and the Tax Counseling for the Elderly service offer free tax-preparation assistance for low-income, disabled, elderly, and non-English speaking taxpayers.

Another IRS program is "Free File," which allows taxpayers who earn \$58,000 or less (for returns to be filed during 2011) to use a tax-preparation software program to prepare and file their federal taxes for free through the IRS Web site. Taxpayers who exceed the income threshold can still manually complete their forms and "e-file" them through the IRS Web site.

Ask if you may qualify for unusual tax breaks. "These may vary from year to year, but taxpayers in special situations – perhaps those who started a small business, were unemployed, or lost property because of a natural disaster – should check with the IRS for special considerations that may apply to them," Reynolds said.

For more help or information, visit www.irs.gov or consult a tax advisor.

Source: *FDIC Consumer News*



Keep Yourself Healthy this Winter

Spend less money on doctor visits and medicine by staying healthy this winter. Attention to housecleaning and self-care can keep a family healthy all season long. Here are some tips you can use to keep yourself and your family healthy this winter:

- Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Wash your hands with soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds.
- Make sure you eat plenty of leafy green vegetables and fruits that are packed with vitamin C to help keep your immune system strong.
- Keep your home dust free. Dust, dust mites, and pet dander collect in greater concentrations when a house is closed up for weeks at a time. Throw-rugs and bedding don't get cleaned as often so be sure to vacuum frequently.
- Air out your home when the weather permits. Stale air is unhealthy so pick a sunny day and open a few windows to let fresh, revitalizing air indoors.
- Sprinkle cat litter or sand on icy patches on your driveway and sidewalk.
- Take breaks often while shoveling the snow to give your heart time to rest. Take it easy by using a smaller shovel and lifting lighter loads.

DO YOU USE YOUR DEBIT CARD to Book a Hotel or Rental Car?

Have you ever had your debit card declined, even though you knew you had money in your bank account? If this happened shortly after you stayed in a hotel or rented a car, the problem could have been card "blocking."

Blocking or placing a "hold," is used by hotels and rental car companies to make sure you don't overdraw your bank account before checking out of a hotel or returning a rental car, leaving the merchant unpaid. Blocking is sometimes also used by restaurants for anticipated sizeable bills (such as large groups at dinner or a party), by companies cleaning your home, and other businesses to ensure funds will be available to complete payment.

Here's how it works: Suppose you use your debit card when you check into a \$100-a-night hotel for five nights. At least \$500 would likely be blocked. In addition, hotels and rental car companies often add anticipated charges for "incidentals" like food, beverages or gasoline to the blocked

amount. These incidental amounts can vary widely among merchants.

When you use your **SBC Advantage Debit Card** to check into a hotel or rent a car, a hold is put on your account for the amount of the authorization. This takes the funds out of your accessible and current balances so you will not have access to those funds. State Bank of Countryside holds the amount for 5 days unless the purchase comes through that matches the authorization before that time. We remove the hold once the transaction posts to your account. If we do not receive the matching purchase, we remove the hold after 5 days. The merchant has up to 30 days to submit the purchase to us. Depending on the balance in your bank account, blocking could lead to charges for insufficient funds while the block remains in place. If you try to use the card for more than your accessible balance, it will be declined.

To help avoid the aggravation that blocking can cause, follow these tips:

- When you check into a hotel or

rent a car - or if a restaurant or other business asks for your card in advance of service - ask if the company is "blocking," how much will be blocked, how the amount is determined, and how long the block remains in place.

- Pay hotel, rental car, or other "blocked" bills with the same debit card you used at the beginning of the transaction. Ask the clerk when the prior block will be removed.
- Use a credit card to reserve your hotel or rental car and then pay your final bill with your **SBC Advantage Debit Card**. This way the hold will be placed on your credit card instead of your debit card.
- If you pay with a different card, by cash or by check, remind the clerk you're using a different form of payment and ask them to remove the prior block promptly.

For additional information about card blocking, please contact a Financial Counselor at **708-485-3100**.



SUPER SLEUTH

NAVIGATING SBC'S WEBSITE

Your Financial Resource

I was deciding whether or not to buy a car so I used the buy vs lease financial calculator on State Bank of Countryside's website. It was very helpful! Not only was I able to come to the decision that was right for me, I also found the other financial calculators on the website to be equally as valuable. I decided to call State Bank of Countryside to ask about the other features of their website. Here is what I found out:

SSS – I love the financial calculators on State Bank of Countryside's website! Can you tell me more about your website and its features?

SBC – Our website, www.statebankofcountryside.com, is your financial resource for all of the Bank's products and services. It is very user-friendly and easy to navigate. To find specific information, just pick your category of interest – Personal, Business, Services or About Us - and click on that tab. It will bring you to the product page for that category and you can further refine your search from there, or you can use the website's Search function.

SSS – How do I use the Search function?

SBC – The Search function is located at the top of every page of our website. Simply type in a phrase, such as "checking accounts," and click on the magnifying glass icon. The results page will give you links and descriptions to all the pages on our website that fit your search description.

SSS – That is a very useful tool. I notice you have "Quick Links" near the bottom of every page. Can you tell me about that?

SBC – Quick Links are links to popular services, such as reordering checks, reporting a lost or stolen debit card, financial calculators and our community calendar which lists community events occurring in your area.

SSS – That sounds great. What other tools do you have on your website?

SBC – We have a variety of forms you may download from our website; such as construction payout waivers, personal financial statements, and land trust forms.

We also have a switch kit which is a tool you can use to help switch your banking relationship to State Bank of Countryside. Using the Search function will help you quickly find the form that you need.

SSS – I am planning on enrolling in SBC Internet Banking. How do I start the process?

SBC – It is very easy. To start the SBC Internet Banking enrollment process, just click on the New User button located on our homepage. You can also log in to SBC Internet Banking directly from the homepage as well as view SBC Internet Banking demos.

SSS – Am I able to open an account online?

SBC – Absolutely! We offer two methods of account opening online. The first one is used when you open either our free Best Ever or Simply Better Checking accounts online. You may fully complete the application process, and make your opening deposit, all with the click of the mouse.

SSS – What is the other method?

SBC – The other method allows you to begin the account opening process online and complete it at the SBC location of your choosing. The account application process is much faster since we already have your information. This type of application is available for all of our personal and business checking and money market accounts.

SSS – That's very convenient. Do you have other websites as well?

SBC – Yes, we have a website for our SBC Kids Club where kids can play games and learn fun facts about money and saving. It is www.sbckidsclub.com. We also have a website dedicated to our Best Ever Checking product which explains the product details and benefits, that web address is www.besteverchecking.com.

SSS – I'll have to check them out! Thanks for all of the information.



STATE BANK
OF COUNTRYSIDE

www.statebankofcountryside.com

Countryside Headquarters
6734 Joliet Road
(708) 485-3100

Darien Office
7380 S. Route 83
(630) 655-3113

Chicago Office
3323 N. Clark Street
(773) 755-2500

Burbank Office
6053 W. 79th Street
(708) 599-9860

Orland Park Office
16250 S. LaGrange Road
(708) 873-1485

Homer Glen Office
15980 S. Parker Road
(708) 301-5800



Member FDIC

SBCU1/11INS