

Global survey results reveal startling savings trends



Eric J. Zimmerman

If you're like most Americans who plan for the day when work becomes optional, there's good news and bad news, according to a recent survey conducted by American Express.

The bad news: Americans aren't saving enough for retirement. The good news: We're doing quite well compared to our foreign counterparts.

Americans participating in the survey reported saving an average of \$387 each month—that's the highest saving rate of the 11 countries surveyed. Investors in the United Kingdom and Germany came in second and third with \$191 and \$184 per month respectively.

While the American average doesn't sound too foreboding,

more than a third of the U.S. population surveyed admitted they don't save any money at all. And, even though saving for retirement surfaced as Americans' top financial concern, nearly half of the participants confessed they aren't confident they're putting enough aside for that goal.

The American Express survey trends are supported by U.S. Commerce Department data. Those statistics show that American savings rates fell from 10.8 percent of personal income in 1981 to 3.7 percent in 1998 and 2.1 percent in the third quarter of 1999.

So with a thriving economy and the robust stock market of the recent past, what has caused the decline in savings discipline? According to Jim Cracchiolo, president of American Express Global Financial Services Group and CEO of American Express Financial Advisors, "Americans

■ Weigh how much you can afford to invest and how much risk you are willing to assume.

are living in the prosperity of the moment, sometimes forgetting to plan for the future and the ultimate dream of financial independence."

With our discretionary dollars being tugged in so many directions, it's easy to see why saving often ends up on the back burner. But does it have to?

Savings plan

If you are among the throng of Americans with concerns about your financial future and would like to infuse your savings plan, consider these suggestions:

■ **Set realistic goals.** Before investing, carefully consider your intentions and expectations. Weigh how much you can afford to invest and how much

risk you are willing to assume. Most importantly, allow a realistic time frame for reaching your goals. Dreaming about a goal like buying a retirement home in a tropical climate is a futile exercise unless you create a plan to make the dream reality.

■ **Be willing to sacrifice.** There's no reward without sacrifice. Securing your future may mean going without that long-anticipated weekend retreat or your daily mocha latte, but you'll realize the payoff in the end.

To make investing a priority, consider earmarking a certain amount from each paycheck for investing. Automatic savings plans can make it easy for you to stash a set amount away at regular intervals. Chances are, if

you never see the cash you won't even miss it.

■ **Start now.** Procrastination is the number one reason people fall short of their retirement goals. Consider this example: Assume you want \$20,000 10 years from now. At a modest 6 percent before-tax rate of return, you would need to save \$122 each month starting now, versus \$76 each month if you wait eight years. (This is a hypothetical rate. It is not meant to represent the past or future returns of any specific investment, or investment strategy, or to imply any guaranteed earnings.)

■ **Educate yourself.** Remember that when it comes to investing, knowledge is power. You can gain the knowledge you need by attending financial seminars, reading personal finance books and magazines, joining investment clubs or by simply asking for help from a friend, family member or a professional financial advisor.

The more knowledge you have about investments, the more likely you will be able to make the right decisions about funding your future goals.

Finally, keep in mind that three-fourths of Americans who participated in the American Express survey expressed an optimistic attitude about our future economic landscape. While you may or may not agree, one thing is for sure: You have the power to take control of your own financial future, and there's no better time to get started than today.

Eric J. Zimmerman is a personal financial advisor with American Express Financial Advisors Inc., IDS Life Insurance Company in Southfield. Contact him at (248) 793-6324, fax (248) 827-4130, or e-mail: eric.j.zimmerman@aexp.com.

NEWSMAKERS

Childtime Learning Centers

Farmington Hills-based Childtime Learning Centers (Nasdaq: CTIM), has announced several management appointments.

James Morgan has been named interim chief executive officer and president. He also joined the company's board of directors. He replaces Harold Lewis, who has resigned to pursue other opportunities.

Morgan has had a distinguished business career, having recently retired as CEO and president of Phillips Morris Company USA. He also served as a director of New England Restaurant Company and Conforma Clad, Inc.

In addition, Leonard Tytkla has become interim CFO. Most recently, Tytkla was chief financial officer of Polar Ice Entertainment, Inc., but has been associated with Childtime for

several years as a director and consultant.

Finally, Debe Ludwig will become the interim CEO.

As the nation's second largest publicly traded child care provider, Childtime currently employs over 6,000 professional educators and child care providers that serve more than 30,000 children and their parents in 23 states and the District of Columbia.

Move Now and Receive 10% Off Move

Call 248-735-MOVE for details
43000 9 Mile Rd.
Novi, MI 48375

Must mention coupon at time of reservation
Not valid with any other discount
Offer expires 03/31/01



TWO MEN AND A TRUCK.
"Movers Who Care."

www.twomen.com

We have more readers than ever.

This is great if you are in business because the fact that we have 20,000 more readers than one year ago means more potential customers for you. According to a recent independent survey by The Media Audit, 460,000 adults read one of our 16 local Observer & Eccentric Newspapers every week.

What makes this even more compelling is that during the same period, readership in the Sunday Detroit News and Free Press dropped by 114,000 readers and daily readership in the combined News and Free Press fell by 95,000. Readership of the Sunday Oakland Press declined by 18,000.

Seems like we're the only newspapers with readership figures that are going in the right direction. So, if you'd rather have your sales go in the same direction, call us at one of the numbers below.



THE Observer & Eccentric
NEWSPAPERS

Part of HomeTown Communications Network™

HomeTown News... it's all about you!

Source: The Media Audit, 2000, Metro Detroit Market Area
The Media Audit is accredited by the Media Rating Council, Inc.

1007300

LASIK OPEN HOUSE

(Laser Vision Correction)

At This Open House, You'll Learn About...

- Recent advances in laser vision correction.
- How to select a surgeon and a facility.
- Why so many athletes, public safety officers and students are having this exciting surgery.

JOIN US AT OUR OPEN HOUSE
REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED
FARMINGTON HILLS
Wednesday, March 7th
10:00 - 3:30 p.m.
34109 W. 12 Mile Rd., #177
Farmington Hills, MI 48334

CONTACT AT:

Associated Eye Specialists

24430 Ford Road, Farmington Hills
34405 W. 12 Mile Rd., #177, Farmington Hills
www.associatedeye.com

Mazin Yaldo, M.D. is board certified in ophthalmology and has 10 years experience in vision correction surgery. At the seminar you will meet some of Dr. Yaldo's patients.

To assure a seat at this exciting event call,
313-278-2829

Famous sports personalities will be scheduled to appear & one of our LASIK patients!

APPEARING THIS SUMMER

DAY CAMP

SESSIONS BEGIN JUNE 18TH

(248) 661-3630



DAY CAMP
4150 Lonsdale Road
(between Lone Pine & Long Lake Roads)
West Bloomfield 48322



First Impressions
32500 West Thirteen Mile
(between Orchard Lake & Farmington Roads)
Farmington Hills 48334
5780 Drake Road
(between Walnut Lake & Maple Roads)
West Bloomfield 48322

MARCH MALL MADNESS

The Circle of Life Rainforest
Sunday, March 4 • 2 p.m.
The Winter Family Series wraps up with ecology and furry friends from the tropical rainforest making an exciting visit!

2nd Annual "Celebrate the Arts"
Monday, March 5-24
Aspiring and professional artists from throughout the community come together through the performance and creative exhibitions. Contact the Mall Office for a schedule of events.

The Great Cookie Caper
Sunday, March 11 • 2 p.m.
Metro area girl Scouts kick off the cookie season with cookie contests, games & prizes.

Everyone Welcome!

Spring Crafts Show • March 10-18
Gold Wing Motorcycle Show • March 24-26
Sports Card Collectible & Coin Show • March 30-April 1

LIVONIA MALL
Your Destination Under One Roof

Down Mile & Middlebelt Roads • (248) 476-1160
Open Mon-Sat 10 a.m.-9 p.m. • Sun 11 a.m.-5 p.m.