



Article 183

April 4, 2011

Financial Education Summit Seeks to Build Wealth

By Gena Wilimitis, Volunteer Event Organizer, New Mexico Coalition for Financial Education

Too many New Mexicans are novices when it comes to handling their money, making them easy pickings for predatory lending companies, expensive check-cashing services and other scams that can easily be avoided.

The fifth annual Summit on Financial Education is set for 8 a.m.-3 p.m. April 15 at the Hotel Albuquerque, 800 Rio Grande Blvd. N.W. The free conference aims to increase the financial knowledge of New Mexicans so that they can make sound decisions about their money and avoid fraud and questionable investments.

The conference features a variety of workshops and seminars that address wealth – how to get it, how to keep it and how to grow it. Seminars cover retirement planning, college-savings planning, careers, unemployment options, loan modification and debt elimination.

While most sessions are designed for individual and family investors, several provide information for business owners. Professionals who work in the financial-services industry will be able to share information and develop cooperative efforts.

Similar to previous years, the summit targets new investors, workers nearing retirement, college students, employers and seniors. Some of this year's conference topics include "Credit Reports and Credit Scores"; "Eliminating Debt Forever"; "Hands-on Banking"; and "Legal Self Defense." Another seminar, "Personal Finance and Budgeting," will be presented twice, once in English and once in Spanish.

The focus of the conference is to train people to protect themselves and their savings from predatory lenders, identity thieves, investment scammers and others who prey on the unwary or unsophisticated, particularly in times of economic change.

Albuquerque Mayor Richard Berry will kick off the event. Don Blandin, president and CEO of the Investor Protection Trust and Investor Protection Institute, is the keynote speaker.

The trust is a nonprofit organization that provides independent information to consumers so they can make informed investment decisions. Founded in 1993, IPT works both nationwide and on a grassroots level. Blandin will discuss the results of a new program that aims to prevent elder financial fraud.

Attorney General Gary King and State Treasurer James Lewis are also expected to speak.

Organized by the New Mexico Coalition for Financial Education, the summit is sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City and the University of New Mexico. The coalition is a volunteer association made up of leaders in the state's financial industry. Its members include government agencies, educational institutions and individuals.

The summit includes breakfast and lunch. Participants must register by April 10 and space is limited to the first 500 registrants; it has filled in previous years. For more information and a detailed schedule, visit www.nmfined.org. To register, call 505-307-8283 or e-mail genazoe@msn.com.

Finance New Mexico is an initiative of the New Mexico Small Business Investment Corporation (NMSBIC) and its partners to assist individuals and businesses in obtaining skills and funding-resources for their business or idea. To learn more, go to www.FinanceNewMexico.org.

