

*Money matters to people. People matter to us.*

# MoneyMatters

## Approaches to Debt

Prioritizing, planning, and paying it off

## How to Create a Savings Plan

Work toward your goals with these tips

## Smart Ideas for Your Tax Refunds

Make the most of your well-earned cash back

## Beyond the Branch

A deeper look into career opportunities and employee culture at Visions

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**BEST-IN-STATE  
CREDIT UNIONS**

**Forbes**  
**2021**

POWERED BY STATISTA

Money matters to **people**. **People** matter to **us**.

# Smart Ideas for Your Tax Refunds

We've made it to tax season once again, and soon, you may be fortunate enough to get a tax refund. While it's exciting to receive that check from Uncle Sam, rather than leaping into a spending spree, take time to explore your options.

## Select "direct"

The world is going paperless – your tax refund should, too! Here's why electronic deposit is ideal for your return:

- Paper benefit checks and tax refunds can be delayed or intercepted in the mail
- Plastic refund cards can also be delayed, and often come with restrictions or fees
- Direct deposit is quick and secure, going straight from the Treasury into your account, where you'll have convenient access to your funds with your existing cards
- Once you've selected direct deposit for your tax refund, the Treasury should continue to send any subsequent deposits directly into that same account, saving you hassle for the whole tax year
- It's easy to set up! All you need is your Visions routing number (221375378) and your account number. If you don't know your account number, you can find it in digital banking, on your monthly statement, or by asking one of our friendly representatives

## Consider your credit

Those refunds can feel like cash in your pocket, but don't ignore your debt.

- With your refund, pay down additional principal on one of your loans or credit cards. Once you take a bite out of that principal, you'll be saving on future interest, and those savings add up over time
- Struggling to build credit? Use your refund! Give your FICO score a boost with a share secured credit card. When you speak to a representative, ask about this credit building option and use your refund as collateral when you apply. Your credit improves as you make steady payments. Plus, you can enjoy the perks of our Visions Visa cards, including rewards!

## Seek returns

Are you neglecting your savings? On page 6, we outline how to create a savings plan, but there are countless ways (and reasons) to save! Here are some smart options:

- Vacation fund or emergency savings
- Share Certificates
- High-yield savings accounts, like our Flex Money Market
- Holiday Club for year-end expenses
- Roth or traditional IRAs (Individual Retirement Accounts)

Don't forget about your investment options, either. Speak with a representative to explore additional ways to save or invest your refund.

**Hopefully you receive a hefty refund on your taxes and, if you do, remember the options available to you at Visions. Or you can go ahead and treat yourself – after all, it was a long year and you've earned it!**





## What is Visions Cares?

At Visions, we love to give – and not just money. We give of ourselves, our time, our talents, and more. *Visions Cares* was created to celebrate all our organization does to help make our communities and each other better.



Congratulations to Sofia! She was one of the winners in a coloring contest held at the Muhlenberg, PA branch. Sofia's outstanding coloring earned her a prize in her age group.



Visions provided a "pre-production party" for the Journeys performers at 13Thirty Cancer Connect! These pizza party bags united the performers and allowed them to celebrate remotely. 13Thirty is an organization based in Rochester, NY that provides programs and services that cater to adolescents and young adults with cancer.



Our New Jersey team was proud to support Visions at the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer of Bergen County Walk held at MetLife Stadium this past fall.

## Employee Volunteer Spotlight

Amy M. Member Account Specialist



"I've been working and volunteering with animal rescues and sanctuaries such as the Lehigh County Humane Society, Gress Mountain Ranch, and Hair of the Dog Rescue for the past 10 years, and more recently the Allentown Ecumenical Food Bank."

### Why do you volunteer?

"Through helping others, I learn more about myself! I also get to learn new skills and make connections with new people. By connecting with people, I become more connected to the problem, which, in turn, motivates me to be part of that problem's solution."

One notable volunteer opportunity that changed my outlook was thanks to Visions' internal campaign for hunger awareness. I decided to leave my

comfort zone by volunteering somewhere new, the Allentown Ecumenical Food Bank. The experience made me more aware of how many different causes could use a helping hand. Now, I look for opportunities to broaden my own efforts. We can all make a big impact, no matter how small it may seem."

*Visions donated \$125 to each of Amy's nonprofit organizations of choice –*

*Hair of the Dog Rescue*  
[hairofthedogrescue.org](http://hairofthedogrescue.org)

*Wildlands Conservancy*  
[wildlandspa.org](http://wildlandspa.org)



# Business News

**Did you know? Our Business Services made big moves in 2021. Here are some highlights:**

Visions held a promotion in the summer of 2021 to donate funds to local Chambers of Commerce. For new business members that opened an account with one product from our Business Services suite, Visions would donate \$250 to their local Chamber of Commerce. The promotion was intended for the first 100 new accounts, but was extended to a total of 129. Ultimately, Visions donated \$32,250 to chambers of commerce across 26 counties in three states.

**The promotion was held in tandem with a huge rollout of improvements to our Business Services suite of products. The new and improved business suite now includes:**

- **Business checking** – no minimum balance requirement and no transactions fees
- **Business debit card with ATM access, purchase security, and extended warranty protection**
- **Merchant processing** – card processing solutions with next day funds availability, contactless payment terminals, online ordering options, and 24/7 customer service
- **Visa Business Cash Rewards credit card with automatic 1% cash back on all purchases**
- **Payroll processing** – convenient direct deposit
- **Easy 24/7 digital banking solutions** – Transfer funds, make payments, and more with our secure platform
- **Commercial loans and real estate lending**
- **Investment and retirement options**
- ...and more!

Visit [visionsfcu.org/business](https://visionsfcu.org/business) or email [businessservices@visionsfcu.org](mailto:businessservices@visionsfcu.org) for details on our Business Services and to see how we can help your business thrive.



## Our Member Saved WHAT?!

Nothing makes us feel better than helping our members, which is why we're always looking for opportunities to improve your financial well-being. Sometimes it's as easy as balancing a checkbook, other times it's saving you money with a refinance. Here is a great story from our Binghamton North, NY office:

“

I had a member come into my office last week with an ACH issue. He made a credit card payment online to another financial institution, but they never received his payment. I resolved the issue and asked him about that credit card, eventually suggesting that he refinance with us to lower his interest rate and avoid dealing with the inconvenient payment every month.

When I pulled his credit and saw he had over \$20,000 in credit card and unsecured debt, the member decided to consolidate all of it into a single loan. Thanks to this loan consolidation, **the member is now saving almost \$500 per month in payments!** For this retired member, living on Social Security and a small pension, these savings make a huge difference in his budget every month.

He was very happy (as was I) that Visions was able to help him in such a big way.

”

# How to Create a Savings Plan

It's often easy to lose track of money. After all, spending is fun! On the other hand, if you want to enjoy financial freedom and avoid the stresses of financial insecurity, then savings are vital. By building your own savings plan around a particular goal, you could hone that skill and might even develop a lifelong savings habit.

## Define your goal

What do you want and when do you want it? Perhaps you're aiming for a big trip or maybe you want to purchase a new vehicle without taking out a loan. It's not only a good idea to have a goal, but you should also challenge yourself to be as specific as possible. By defining a deadline and precise benchmarks along the way, you're more likely to reach your objective.

## Set your budget

You've probably noticed by now: we use the word "budget" a lot. Your budget is your number one tool for achieving your financial goals. In the simplest terms, it means planning your expenses by tracking what funds you have coming in versus what funds you have going out.

Let's "math" for a second! Assume your monthly expenses total \$1,500. Let's also assume you're paid biweekly. If we divide the amount owed (\$1,500) by the amount of paychecks (2), you get \$750. That's how much you should be setting aside for your bills each paycheck. After that, the remaining funds can either be saved or spent, and you can determine how much you're able to save toward your goal each week, each paycheck, or each month, depending on what frequency makes sense to you.

## Track – and automate – your progress

Keep your savings somewhere you can track. Maybe open a second savings account or a share certificate for those funds and establish an automatic transfer into that account on a weekly or monthly basis. Additional savings accounts and automatic transfers are free, easy to set up, and a great way to keep an eye on those benchmarks.

*Helpful tip: You can nickname your accounts! Choosing a name that's specific and personal, for example "Island Cruise 2023" or "Dream SUV," rather than something generic like "Travel Savings," will help keep your target in sight and give you extra motivation.*

## Limit your debt

Debt could cause a roadblock on your way to your savings goals by adding to your fixed monthly costs. It's not just the payment, though, it's the interest. When you compare rates, your debt is likely costing you more money per month than your savings is earning you. As a result, the easiest way to save is to keep your debt low. For additional ideas on debt management, see our article on page 10.

Naturally, emergencies may come up that could dip into your funds, but always returning to this system will give you a great foundation for any savings goal. By following a handful of simple steps – and having a little restraint with your expenses – that dream SUV could be right around the corner!

Visit [visionsfcu.org/walletwellness](https://visionsfcu.org/walletwellness) to browse our resources or connect with a representative for additional guidance with your savings plan.





# DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT:

# CONTACT CENTER

When you think of Visions, you probably think of our frontline staff: our tellers, account specialists, even our lending staff. But there's so much going on behind the scenes, from software to security to community outreach. We want to share the great things our employees do, so let's take a deeper look at the capabilities and accomplishments of our Contact Center, assisting our members in more ways than you may realize.

Heading into a branch, members look for hundreds of services. To meet those needs, we make sure to have a trained staff of professionals daily at each office, a team that includes tellers, managers, and a diverse set of specialists. Now consider those members who can't make it into a branch. Whether temporarily out of town, living across the globe, or just at home – these members, too, deserve full, equitable access to Visions. And that's where our Contact Center comes in.

This versatile department is your one-stop shop for 90% of our products, services, and solutions. You'll notice a recurring phone number we tag onto nearly everything we put out: 800.242.2120. These digits will take you to our Contact Center for teller transactions, card services, loan applications, and more. They're trained to be experts on almost everything!

Employed locally within our Visions community, this department expanded in 2020 to meet member needs

throughout quarantine and continues to be a central part of our operations, giving friendly and knowledgeable service to members worldwide.

Unseen heroes of our credit union as we work towards accessibility and equity, the Contact Center answers calls beyond Visions' regular office hours, responds to Live Chat requests, and serves members in both English and Spanish across all 50 states and abroad. As you can imagine, this effort takes a lot of trained workers, so we are always expanding and currently hiring qualified applicants to fill teams across the credit union's three-state footprint.

Save it in your phone – **800.242.2120** – and give us a call if you need anything at all, from anywhere in the world. Our Contact Center will be happy to assist you.

**Contact Center hours: Monday through Friday  
8:30am-6:00pm, Saturday 8:30am-2:00pm EST**

Want to join our team or learn more about careers with Visions? Read our article on page 17 or visit [visionsfcu.org/careers](https://visionsfcu.org/careers) to #ClaimYourSeat.

Visions Federal Credit Union is an equal opportunity employer whose goal is to achieve a positive work atmosphere while encouraging a healthy work/life balance.

M/F Disabled and Vet EEO/AA Employer.

# ***BITCOIN, THE BLOCKCHAIN, YOUR WALLET,*** **AND YOU**

**We've all heard it: blockchain, Bitcoin, cryptocurrency...it sounds like something out of a sci-fi movie. But it doesn't have to be confusing.**

As with anything new, awareness is key. So, let's start with some quick facts on how to better understand what cryptocurrency is and how it works.

- First things first: nothing is tangible. You can't hold it, but you can store it in a wallet (more on that later)
- Cryptocurrency is 100% digital, electronic, and isn't tied to any government or organization. The users of cryptocurrency are in control
- Individuals can purchase cryptocurrency through dedicated exchanges which charge a fee based on the size of your transaction. To hold your purchased cryptocurrency, a digital "wallet" is created as an app. This wallet won't ever see the inside of your purse or pants pocket, though. Like cryptocurrency itself, it's all digital
- The value of cryptocurrency can change rapidly and there is no central authority that maintains its value

## **What to know about blockchains**

A blockchain is a database that stores information differently from the way a typical database does. It collects information in sets, or "blocks." When the blocks are filled, they're connected – or "chained" – to the previous blocks and can't be changed. The transactions and verification process use mathematical algorithms, which makes them more secure. All of this information is then duplicated and stored electronically across several computers. This system makes it nearly impossible to change or hack. So, when you purchase crypto, your coin ownership records are stored electronically. Hence, "digital wallet."

## **Bitcoin today and how it's used**

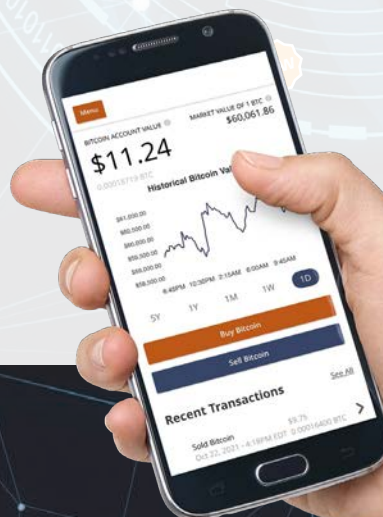
Today, there are thousands of types of cryptocurrencies being traded, but it all started with Bitcoin, which has become a catch-all term for cryptocurrency in general. And, with all of these currencies popping up and becoming legitimized, some merchants and retailers have even started accepting it as a payment type.

## **Bitcoin at Visions**

We're planning to launch a Bitcoin service within digital banking in the coming months. That means you can easily buy and sell Bitcoin directly from your account. No need to use a separate app, just log in to online or mobile banking and start transacting!

Keep a lookout for this new feature and visit [visionsfcu.org/digitalassets](https://visionsfcu.org/digitalassets) for more information. We'll also have helpful tips integrated into the digital banking tool to help you make more sense of it all.

*Bitcoin trading fees apply. Bitcoin is not federally insured by NCUA.*



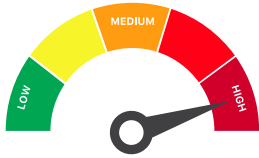


# KNOW YOUR LIMITS

## CHOOSING A CREDIT CARD LIMIT

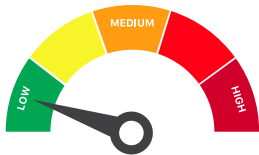
While many financial institutions may assign you a credit card limit when you apply, at Visions, we give you a range of options based on your credit score and application. Keep in mind these useful tips as you make your decision:

### Too High



Increasing your card limit also raises your capacity for credit, a factor that could impact your FICO score favorably. However, this only holds true if that card is used responsibly. The biggest risk with a high limit is your potential to spend it all. For example, emergencies might encourage you to dip too far into your credit and leave you struggling to pay off the debt. Similarly, if you happen to be an impulsive spender, you could end up with buyer's remorse as you max out your card and watch the interest accrue on those purchases. Avoid these traps by choosing an appropriate limit – appropriate for both your income and your lifestyle.

### Too Low



To avoid having a limit that is too low, reflect on your spending habits and your ability to make payments on your card. Two factors that could negatively affect your FICO score are (1) consistently accruing over 20-30% of your credit limit and (2) opening too many new lines of credit in a short period of time. If your card has a low limit, you might be tempted to max it out too frequently or to open additional cards. Instead, if you recognize these habits, or need to adjust a current card for any reason, you could speak with a representative and apply for a new limit on your existing card.

### Just Right



Only time will tell if your card has a good limit for you and your lifestyle, but spending responsibly is the key. Therefore, choose a limit that aligns with these responsible spending habits:

- Spend only as much as you can confidently pay off within a month
- Never max out your credit cards unless you are dealing with an emergency
- Keep your balance below 30% of the card's limit (for example: with a \$5,000 limit, avoid spending more than \$1,500 at any given time)
- Avoid paying high interest, which means choosing an option with low rates and paying off your card's balance as early as possible

There's no need to have a love/hate relationship with credit cards. They're flexible funds, they come with perks and rewards, and if you treat them right, they'll serve you well – your FICO score might benefit from it, too! Simply avoid the traps, choose an appropriate limit, and you'll be on the right track.

For helpful advice on dealing with debt, see page 10. Visit [visionsfcu.org](http://visionsfcu.org) for additional articles and tips and remember you can check your FICO score in digital banking for free whenever you'd like.

# APPROACHES TO DEBT

## Prioritizing, planning, and paying it off

There is no “one size fits all” solution in the world of finances. People find success with different approaches to debt. Whether you’re looking for tips to get debt-free or have found yourself overwhelmed by loan payments and don’t know where to begin, here are a few steps to guide you towards a personalized strategy.

### Research and organize

**In the same way that decluttering your home begins with a huge pile of clothing, you can start to declutter your “pile” of debt by gathering all your details in one place. Analyze it side-by-side and determine which items you need to get rid of first.**

- When dealing with debt, it helps to know the details. Collect as much information as you can for each item. Store credit cards, past-due utility bills, IRS debt, personal loans – you name it! For each one, know the total amount you owe, interest, APR (annual percentage rate), due dates, and minimum payments.
- Some items might take priority for obvious reasons, like medical bills and taxes. Perhaps you’ll find debts that don’t have due dates or payment plans yet, so you might need to contact their collections department to get the ball rolling.
- If you’ve lost track of your debt and need help finding details, pulling a full credit report may help you track down information. If so, you can visit [annualcreditreport.com](https://annualcreditreport.com) to get a free credit report once per year.

### Plan your payments

**Find a strategy that works for you or invent one that suits your needs. Popular strategies to consider include the “avalanche” method, the “snowball” method, and loan consolidation.**

#### Avalanche method

When a loan has a high APR, it costs you more money each month, because a larger portion of that minimum payment is going towards interest rather than principal. As a result, paying down debt with the highest APR first will save you more money. Think of the chunk of snow at the top of an avalanche breaking off and falling away, taking other pieces of the mountain with it. By breaking off that big chunk, there’s a ripple effect: you can waste less money on interest and use those savings to accelerate future payments.

#### Snowball method

You pay off a little loan and how does it feel? It feels great! Don’t stop there, though. Apply the amount you were paying for that loan onto the next smallest loan and it’s easier to pay off. This is how your little snowball gains momentum to pay off your debt. Each payoff is a boost to your financial morale and compounds to become larger payments for your larger debt. This method doesn’t have the savings incentive of the avalanche method, but it does carry the incentive of motivation, building your sense of accomplishment as you reach each milestone.

#### Consolidation

Instead of paying on a bunch of loans, spread over a bunch of institutions, make one smaller loan payment, and pay less interest. We regularly see success stories of members consolidating their debt to save hundreds of dollars every month





and enjoy the ease of automatic payments. For one member's experience with loan consolidation, check out "Our Member Saved WHAT?!" on page 5.

## Pay down your principal

**Your principal balance determines how much you pay on interest. Less principal means less interest. Find ways to cut down your debt by periodically making extra payments. These funds could come from:**

- Income that isn't allocated in your budget, such as a bonus or inheritance
- Unspent budget, such as food and entertainment expenses
- Tax refunds or government benefits
- Side job or temporary employment

## Reasons to be careful

- Don't drain your savings. If you're taking all your savings and putting it on your credit cards and loans, what happens when an emergency comes up? Without any savings in place, you might put these expenses back on your credit cards and continue the cycle of debt.
- Don't let fees and penalties expand your debt. Know which loans have additional charges or threaten lawsuits, then plan ahead to avoid these setbacks. To be proactive, contact those lenders and determine a payment plan as soon as possible.

**It's common to want a quick solution to a problem, but when it comes to paying off debt, generally, solutions take time. Step-by-step you will get there. If you need help along the way, reach out to our Wellness team for a one-on-one consultation with professionals you can trust, or meet with a representative to see if debt consolidation may be a good fit for you.**

Need help?



If you're ready to make a debt-free life a priority, simply fill out the online form to get started.

A real, live person will get in touch to talk about your particular situation and offer solutions.

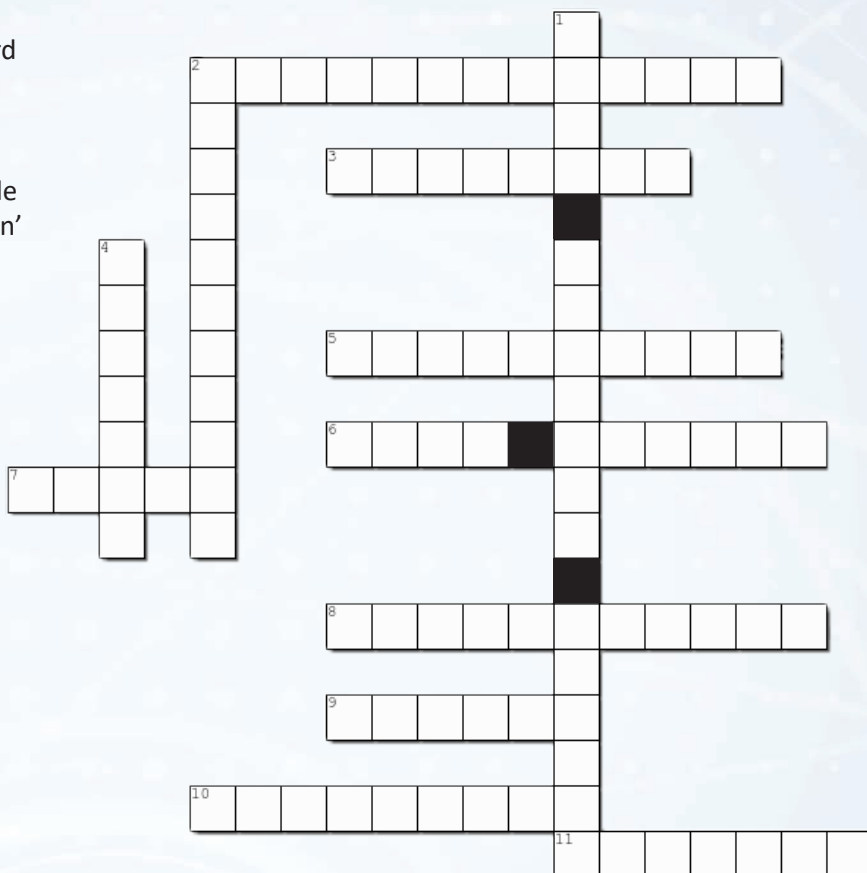
Visions cares, so we make the conversation easy.

Get started today at [visionsfcu.org/debtfree](https://visionsfcu.org/debtfree).



# Read, Solve, WIN!

Complete this crossword puzzle, submit your answers at [visionsfcu.org/puzzle](https://visionsfcu.org/puzzle), and you could be eligible to win one of five Dunkin' gift cards!\*



## Across

2. Our Member Saved What?! He saved almost \$500 per month by using this debt strategy.
3. Last year's Business Services campaign donated funds to many \_\_\_\_\_ of commerce.
5. Your state of residence could determine your estate plan based on intestate \_\_\_\_\_.
6. We have a new digital menu option, View My \_\_\_\_\_. (two words)
7. It's a good practice to keep your credit card balance under 30% of your \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The best way to avoid identity theft is by protecting your sensitive \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Your \_\_\_\_\_ is your number one tool for achieving your financial goals.
10. By paying off your debt with the highest APR first, you'll be following the \_\_\_\_\_ method.
11. Visions' \_\_\_\_\_ number is 221375378.

## Down

1. What is our organization's mission for our members, communities, and employees? (three words)
2. Since 2004, VIS has grown to include 13 Financial \_\_\_\_\_ in three states.
4. Online guides and interactive demonstrations will be available on our new Digital \_\_\_\_\_.

## CONGRATS, Q4 WINNERS!

Timothy B. Whitney Point, NY    Bernita B. Owego, NY    Jack F. North Haledon, NJ    Roberta T. Johnson City, NY    Thomas U. Mohrsville, PA

*Thank you to all our members who participated.*

\*Visions Federal Credit Union membership required. Visions membership requires a \$1 minimum deposit; certain restrictions apply, ask for membership eligibility details. Must be 18 years or older. Answers must be submitted at [visionsfcu.org/puzzle](https://visionsfcu.org/puzzle) by 1/31/22; no alternate methods of entry apply. Limit (1) entry per person. Winners will be chosen at random; odds of winning based on total number of entries. Winners may only win one prize. Winners will be notified by mail by 2/26/22. Winners consent to have Visions Federal Credit Union use their first name, last initial, city, and state in social media posts or future advertising and promotional materials. Promotion sponsored solely by Visions Federal Credit Union.

## We need You!

Visions is looking for qualified members to serve on various volunteer committees – including our Board of Directors. As a volunteer, you can help shape the future of your credit union while using your skills to contribute to its mission.

Any member age 21 or older – with the exception of Visions employees and their immediate families – is eligible. A background in finance or the financial services industry would be helpful, but is not required. All inquiries are held in strict confidence and applicants are subject to a credit check.

For complete details and to apply online, visit [visionsfcu.org/volunteer](https://visionsfcu.org/volunteer). You may also contact Edward Butler at 800.242.2120, ext. 10618, or complete a volunteer application at your local office and drop it off to his attention.

We have an exciting history built on the efforts of volunteers, strong leaders, and dynamic staff. With your continued involvement, we look forward to many more successful years of serving you and your fellow members.





# IDENTITY THEFT

Are you protecting your information?

At Visions Federal Credit Union, we are always making sure our members and their accounts are protected against the latest threats. This year, we're continuing our focus on identity theft. Many people have a basic understanding of what this threat looks like. However, knowing the appropriate actions to protect your information can help ensure it won't get into the wrong hands.

**Here are some statements for you to explore how well your information is protected. Write T (true) or F (false) for each prompt.**

- I shred all unwanted documents. \_\_\_\_
- I change my PINs and passwords often. \_\_\_\_
- I monitor my credit report on a regular basis. \_\_\_\_
- I have a lock on my mailbox. \_\_\_\_
- I don't store sensitive information (like Social Security cards and birth certificates) in my purse or wallet. \_\_\_\_
- I shield keypads and keep an eye on my surroundings when entering my PIN or passwords. \_\_\_\_
- I never write down usernames and passwords where someone else can access them. \_\_\_\_
- I use a secure password saver on my computer to store usernames and passwords. \_\_\_\_
- I am cautious about sharing my Social Security number and other personal information. \_\_\_\_
- I never share personal information with unknown callers. \_\_\_\_
- I don't click on links in unsolicited emails. \_\_\_\_
- I limit what information is shared on social networking sites. \_\_\_\_
- I don't access personal online accounts (social media, banking, etc.) on work computers or public devices. \_\_\_\_
- I don't trust people on social media sites who I have not personally met. \_\_\_\_
- I make sure my electronic devices are up to date with the latest software and security features. \_\_\_\_

## How did you do?

By answering T (true) to all of the tips above, your information is more likely to stay safe. If you have questions about this list or are concerned your information might be compromised, stop by your local office or call us at 800.242.2120. Don't forget we offer free identity theft protection through IDnotify™ by Experian® in digital banking. Additional security tips are available online at [visionsfcu.org/security](https://visionsfcu.org/security).

# Do I Need an Estate Plan?

Even if you don't create an estate plan, your state has a contingency – but you may not like it!

If you don't create an estate plan, your state will.

The law of **intestate succession** is your state's default estate plan for those who fail to plan ahead. In the event of your death, a court will distribute your property according to the laws of your state. Generally, the property will be passed to a surviving spouse or other bloodline relatives. Unfortunately, you might disinherit an unmarried partner, friends, and charities by leaving your succession to the state.

## Your peace of mind is always on our mind.

We're proud of the way we help our members plan ahead, even through unique circumstances. As trustee or co-trustee, we'll administer your trust according to your terms, communicate often with beneficiaries, collect, appraise, and distribute assets, file taxes, and more.

## We help those who...



Want to preserve family harmony



Have a loved one with special needs



Have children from a former marriage



Have no relatives or only distant ones



Want to plan ahead for incapacity

If you would like us to help review your documents and assets – and see how they currently fit into your own estate plan – give us a call or email us to schedule a meeting.

**Sharon Burghardt, CTFA/Senior Trust Officer**

**800.242.2120, ext. 10684**

**[sburghardt@visionsfcu.org](mailto:sburghardt@visionsfcu.org)**

**Laura Maerkl, Trust Administrator**

**800.242.2120, ext. 10805**

**[Lmaerkl@visionsfcu.org](mailto:Lmaerkl@visionsfcu.org)**

## SCHOLARSHIP TIME

Online applications are available **now through March 31** for the Visions Cares and Visions Salutes Scholarships.

Apply online at **[visionsfcu.org/scholarships](https://visionsfcu.org/scholarships)**



# CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES

The methods of Congress often seem shrouded in mystery. For instance, you may hear of legislation that is “in committee” or “in mark up,” but just what committees are part of Congress and what do they do? Well, their role is so significant that Visions employs an Advocacy team to monitor specific committees on behalf of all credit unions and the members we serve.

By dividing various tasks among committees, each wing of Congress – both the Senate and the House of Representatives – can more effectively handle the high volume and intricacy of their work. These committees have both Democratic and Republican members that weigh in on all aspects of legislation.

Our Advocacy team regularly monitors the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee and the House Financial Services Committee. While reviewing prospective bills, these committees hear testimony from experts and practitioners on how the legislation may impact their business, community, or consumers. That’s when our Advocacy team will weigh in, too, and once our concerns are identified, we’ll often use the Advocacy portal on the Visions website to publicize such matters. Anyone can access this important resource, where you can submit letters to legislators voicing our shared concerns.

After passing the committees, legislation will then go to the floor for a vote

before it moves to the other side of Congress for their review. By monitoring the committees and taking time to assess legislation, we’re able to reach our representatives before they vote – with ample time to adapt legislation before it reaches the President’s desk to become law. At times, it all seems complicated, but these parliamentary procedures are vital to keep citizens like us in the loop and voices like yours heard.

Visit our portal at **[visionsfcu.org/advocacy](https://visionsfcu.org/advocacy)** to see what your credit union is monitoring today.

— VISIONS —  
**Voice**

## January 28th is Data Privacy Day – Are You Protected?

Data Privacy Day is an international effort to empower individuals and encourage businesses to respect privacy, safeguard data, and enable trust.

Do you know how your data is being shared? Talk with your family and friends about ways to stay safer online. Own your online presence and share with care.

**Personal information is like money.**

**Value it. Protect it.**

Use the resources at **[staysafeonline.org](https://staysafeonline.org)** to protect yourself and your data.

# VISIONS

## INVESTMENT SERVICES

A brief history of our essential partnership

It seems like yesterday that we announced the new service: financial consultations. That was April of 2004, and we only had one certified consultant on the team, working exclusively in New York State. Since then, a lot has changed, but our focus has always remained the same: offer a convenient financial partnership to better serve our members with quality products and services.

Fast forward. By 2012, we had five Financial Consultants and a support staff of two. Then in 2015, in addition to adding the O'Connor Group and several support staff, we expanded into New Jersey with two Financial Consultants to assist our communities there. Within the last three years, VIS (Visions Investment Services) has reached all regions of our three-state footprint, including Pennsylvania, and has brought in even more new staff and consultants. Today our team totals 13 Financial Consultants, nine licensed branch employees, and eight back-office support staff.

Not only does our team have the appropriate licensure and a key partnership with LPL Financial, but our team also includes Financial Consultants with additional designations, such as:

- CFP® (Certified Financial Planner™)
- AIF® (Accredited Investment Fiduciary®)
- CMFC® (Chartered Mutual Fund Counselor)
- AAMS® (Accredited Asset Management Specialist)
- CSRIC® (Chartered SRI Counselor™)

An important part of the Visions Investment Services mission is to tackle many specialized services for our clients. Visit us at [visionsfcu.org/investmentservices](http://visionsfcu.org/investmentservices) for more information or call our team at 800.242.2120, ext. 10469, for assistance with the following:

- Lifetime income planning
- Retirement planning
- College planning
- Strategic money management
- Tax management\*
- Second opinion portfolio reviews
- Social Security planning
- ...and more!

\*LPL Financial does not provide tax or legal advice

Securities and advisory services are offered through LPL Financial (LPL), a registered investment advisor and broker/dealer. (Member FINRA/SIPC). Insurance products offered through LPL Financial or its licensed affiliates. Visions Federal Credit Union (VFCU) and Visions Investment Services **are not** registered as a broker/dealer or investment advisor. Registered representatives of LPL offer products and services using the name Visions Investment Services, and may also be employees of VFCU. These products and services are being offered through LPL or its affiliates, which are separate entities from and not affiliates of VFCU or Visions Investment Services. Securities and insurance offered through LPL and its affiliates are:

**VISIONS**  
INVESTMENT SERVICES

Have questions or want to make an appointment? Give us a call at 800.242.2120, ext. 10469.

Not Insured by NCUA or Any Federal Government Agency

Not Credit Union Guaranteed

Not Credit Union Deposit or Obligations

May Lose Value

LPL Tracking #1-05213864

## Congratulations to our Youth Month winners!

In celebration of Youth Month, we hosted a prize drawing for ages 19 and under who opened a new account during the month of August. Eligible members were entered for a chance to win one of our back-to-school prizes: (6) backpacks, (4) noise-canceling headphones, or the (2) grand prizes of a new laptop. Pictured here is one of our grand prize winners – congratulations, Rocco!





# Beyond the Branch

## A deeper look into career opportunities and employee culture at Visions

You may have noticed, Visions is growing. After all, it's no secret. Starting with just \$40 and a dream in 1966, a tiny credit union with only eight members in Endicott, NY has grown into what Visions is today, including over 230,000 members (and counting!) spanning three states. As our membership and footprint have expanded, so has our staff. In addition to our branch offices, we now have over twenty-five internal departments – doing so much more than savings and loans. Consider joining the Visions team and grow with us!

### Our company

A lot of people assume that credit unions are just like banks. Sure, our tellers and branch employees are always busy providing important banking services for our members, but they're only the tip of the iceberg! First of all, credit unions are not for profit, run by a board of volunteers, which puts Visions' focus on the people, not on revenue or private stockholders. Our mission is to "Make Visions Matter" – to our members, in our communities, and in the lives of our employees.

### Our benefits

If you're considering a position with Visions, you might be asking, "What's in it for me?" Well, there's plenty! Our Human Resources team has put together a generous package of benefits, many of which are available for all levels of employment.

- Comprehensive medical, dental, and eyecare packages
- Life, disability, and supplemental options
- Employer-matched 401(k) plan, Roth and Traditional IRA options – even a pension!
- Ample opportunities for growth and upward mobility
- College tuition assistance and student loan reimbursements
- ...and more!

### Our jobs

With opportunities for full-time, part-time, 30-hour part-time plus, internships, and seasonal employment, there's more to Visions than meets the eye. Beyond the branch, hundreds of Visions employees work to improve our communities or offer helpful resources to members. Working in Financial Wellness, for example, we employ educators and advisors who facilitate group presentations and one-on-one counseling. Through Visions Cares, our charitable initiative, we have Community Development Liaisons who help to coordinate events and fundraisers. In other departments, we have programmers and technicians improving our systems, financial consultants assisting members with investments, plus administrators, receptionists, maintenance staff, and dozens of other essential positions making an impact (like our Contact Center – see our department spotlight on page 7).

### Our culture

To overlook our employee culture would be a shame because we offer a great work environment, too! Our staff is supportive and involved, regularly participating in company-wide events, community giveback, and volunteerism (see our Visions Cares highlights on page 4). Visions demonstrates appreciation for employees through internal programs designed to promote staff involvement and overall job satisfaction. When employees take initiative, they can be thanked by coworkers and supervisors through our recognition program with prizes such as gift cards and merchandise. Employee health and well-being are emphasized through ongoing wellness campaigns that feature games, tips, and incentives to achieve fitness and overall health goals. Visions also encourages transparency and innovation across all departments through accessible opportunities like Job Shadow and our Employee Innovation Board. As a result of these initiatives and more, employees feel seen, heard, and valued for the work they do.

### Your invitation

Apply for a position today and invest in a career that will invest in you! Interested in applying but unsure which job at Visions is the right fit? No problem. Apply for "general interest" and our Talent Team can help. Visit [visionsfcu.org/careers](https://visionsfcu.org/careers) to find open listings or more information about benefits and company culture.

## #ClaimYourSeat





# NEED TO Know

## Add Visions to Your Contacts!

When you add **800.242.2120** to your cell phone contacts you'll have quick access to give us a call. And, we'll show up on your Caller ID if we ever need to reach you. Win-Win!

## IMPORTANT NOTICE: NON-VISIONS ATM FEE REBATE HAS ENDED

*The temporary COVID fee relief of having non-Visions ATM fees rebated ended on January 1, 2022.*

### What is a non-Visions ATM fee?

- A fee charged by another institution to use their ATM.  
EXAMPLE: Withdrawing money from your Visions account at a Chase ATM
- This is not a fee charged by Visions

### What can you do to avoid non-Visions ATM fees?

- Use a Visions ATM! Find one near you at [visionsfcu.org/locations](https://visionsfcu.org/locations)
- Use a CO-OP branded ATM – over 30,000 nationwide! Find one near you at [co-opcreditunions.org](https://co-opcreditunions.org)

### How can you still have non-Visions ATM fees rebated?

- Open, or convert, your existing checking to a Flex Checking Plus. Monthly ATM fee rebates are one of the many benefits
- Learn more at [visionsfcu.org/checking](https://visionsfcu.org/checking) or ask for details



## SAVE THE DATE Special Events

*You're Invited!*

**Visions Annual Meeting**  
Saturday, March 12

Visit [visionsfcu.org/events](https://visionsfcu.org/events) for a current list of upcoming events, seminars, and activities.

## DIGITAL APPOINTMENT BOOKING EXPANDED!

Digital Appointment Booking now supports more locations and services than ever before. Now you can schedule time with a representative to talk about mortgages, loans, even opening new accounts or shares! Best of all, it's all done at a time that works for you, whether it's in person, over the phone, or even virtually through a video call.

Schedule an appointment today at [visionsfcu.org/digital-appointment-booking](https://visionsfcu.org/digital-appointment-booking)

## Coming Soon: Enhancements to Phone Access Teller (P.A.T.)

We're making our P.A.T. system even better with Smart Teller. This update will allow you to perform more transactions, even easier. You'll be able to enjoy voice recognition services, meaning you can leave those codes behind.

And, as always, you can call in any time at **800.843.2892** or **607.757.9411**.



## OFFICE CLOSINGS

### Mark Your Calendars

Monday, January 17	:	Monday, February 21
<b>Martin Luther King Day</b>	:	<b>Presidents' Day</b>
All Offices Closed	:	All Offices Closed

## Prefer a Digital Copy?

All member households will receive a mailed copy of MoneyMatters at the beginning of each quarter. If your household prefers to reference this financial magazine online, please complete the unsubscribe form at [visionsfcu.org/moneymatters](https://visionsfcu.org/moneymatters) or call our Contact Center at 800.242.2120.

## DIRECTORY

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Tyrone E. Muse

### Executive Vice President

Edward J. Butler

### Senior Vice Presidents

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Cynthia A. Schroeder, CIO  
Steve Wayman, CDBPO  
Tracey E. Wheeler, CMEO

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Lisa Darling  
Darla Huff  
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Richard Muller  
Thomas P. Novak  
Jenna Rosenberg  
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### Associate Vice Presidents

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Mark Bowman  
Maggie Coyne  
Joel Deeter  
Mandy L. DeHate  
Lindsey Fiala  
Derek Garcia  
Sylvan Haferkamp  
Charles McKinney  
Betty McQuay,  
Chief Audit Executive  
Ada Myteberi  
Sherri L. Steenwyk  
Rebecca Trick  
Mark Whitney

### Board of Directors

Alan G. Hertel, Chairperson  
Christopher H. Marion,  
Vice Chairperson  
Michael A. Mullen, Treasurer  
Kelly A. Roche, Secretary  
George S. Bobinski, Jr.  
James J. Lewis  
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Denise B. Stoughton  
Me'Shae Brooks-Rolling,  
Associate Director

### Supervisory Committee

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Stephanie Jerzak  
Fermin Romero  
Gordon E. Thompson

*All loan types referenced in this publication are subject to Visions Federal Credit Union's standardized policies including, but not limited to, lending, membership, and creditworthiness. Please contact a credit union representative for more information regarding application requests.*

## Introducing Digital Academy

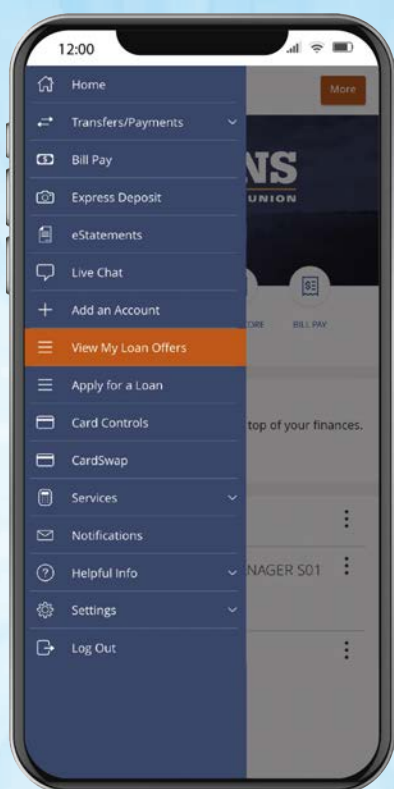
Using Bill Pay for the first time? Watch our demo. Applying online for a credit card? We now have a virtual guide for that. Whenever you use digital banking, we want you to feel supported and informed. That's why we're empowering you with answers and solutions 24/7 with our new online guide – Digital Academy!

We're compiling self-guided and interactive demonstrations in our Digital Academy to assist you with our most frequently asked questions. Check it out at [academy.visionsfcu.org](https://academy.visionsfcu.org). It's a new database, so watch for even more lessons coming soon!



Federally insured  
by NCUA.





## Pre-approved loan offers in digital banking!

We've made it easier than ever to get the funds you need, when you need them. With the new loan offer menu in digital banking, you can find pre-approvals or offers to apply for:

- Personal loans
- Auto, RV, and boat loans
- Readi Reserve overdraft protection
- Fixed rate home equity loans
- Home equity lines of credit
- Visa Platinum cards
- Elite Visa Signature cards
- ...and more!

Just click the *View My Loan Offers* tile from the navigation of online or mobile banking to see what we can offer you. Talk about easy!

Visions membership required with \$1 minimum deposit – certain restrictions apply; check with a representative for membership eligibility details. Rates and terms available on new loans only. Certain relationship criteria are required to receive rates – ask for details. Loan rates and offers are based on creditworthiness; loan offers may vary or be unavailable depending on product and creditworthiness. Annual Percentage Rates may vary based on product; some products may have fixed or adjustable Annual Percentage Rates. Federally insured by NCUA. Equal Housing Lender.