

CELEBRATING HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

/ inclusiv / Juntos 
Avanzamos™

TOGETHER WE ADVANCE



CELEBRATIONS

WELCOME NEW JUNTOS AVANZAMOS CREDIT UNIONS



**Allegiance Credit Union, Oklahoma City, OK
Amy Downs, CEO**

Allegiance Credit Union was founded in 1963 as the Federal Employees Credit Union. Almost 60 years later, Allegiance has grown to serve 25,157 members with \$312 million in assets. True to its mission, Allegiance has been recognized for its deep ties with the community and longstanding relationship with local schools in Oklahoma City. Allegiance is truly committed to financial inclusion, and has worked closely with the Mexican Consulate in Little Rock, hosting the Consulate on Wheels several times. As a new Juntos Avanzamos credit union, Allegiance offers bilingual services, ITIN lending products and accepts alternate forms of ID at account opening.



**Express Credit Union, Seattle, WA
Paul Baudin, CEO**

For over 80 years Express Credit Union has served the financial needs of everyday people in Washington State, helping generations of members build stronger financial futures. Express serves more than 3,000 members and has grown to \$16 million dollars in assets. Serving immigrant communities has been a focus of the credit union for almost a decade. Express offers immigration financing products to cover the costs of citizenship and permanent residency applications. As a result of their strong focus on the Hispanic community, they have gained the trust of community organizations and the Mexican Consulate, allowing for a community teller from the credit union to visit the consulate a few times per month.



**Equishare Credit Union, Wichita, KS
Gary Torres, CEO**

Equishare Credit Union is the oldest credit union in Wichita, Kansas. Founded in 1932, Equishare serves over 3,600 members in the counties of Sedgwick, Butler, Cowley, Harper, Harvey, Kingman, Reno and Sumner. In 2016, Equishare's Board of Directors approved an expansion of the credit union's products and services to the Hispanic community, accepting alternate forms of ID at account opening and offering ITIN lending products, including mortgages. Equishare is currently the only credit union in the Wichita area that offers loans to immigrant communities and is the first Juntos Avanzamos credit union in the state of Kansas. Equishare is the newest Juntos Avanzamos member, joining the network in September 2020.



**Harrison Federal Credit Union, Colorado Springs, CO
Nick Jensen, CEO**

Harrison Federal Credit Union is a full service credit serving over 1,500 members through two branch locations. Harrison offers a host of affordable products and services for the Hispanic community. True to its mission of financial inclusion, Harrison has established meaningful partnerships with Hispanic organizations such as the Concilio, and other community based institutions such as the RISE Coalition of Colorado Springs. Harrison offers bilingual services and asset building opportunities for ITIN holders. Harrison will be one of the first credit unions to celebrate their Juntos Avanzamos proclamation virtually on November 2, 2020.



**Northeast Family Credit Union
Manchester, CT
Joanne S Todd, CEO**

On April 19, 1938 a group of Manchester area teachers organized the Manchester Teachers Federal Credit Union, known today as the Northeast Family Federal Credit Union. As the credit union grew, so did its Hispanic membership. As of today, Northeast Family serves more than 6,000 members of which more than 1,000 are Hispanic. As a response, Northeast Family has expanded its bilingual staff, reviewed CIP policies to accept alternate forms of ID at account opening and offers ITIN loans for everyone in the Hispanic community. Community partnerships and impact are a priority for the credit union, which has partnered with the Manchester Board of Education, Windham Board of Education, Willimantic Food Coop, Access Community Action Agency, American Job Center and Eastern Workforce Investment Board, Windham No Freeze shelter, Manchester Area Conference of Churches, and Covenant Soup Kitchen.



**Cooperativa Sagrada Familia
Corozal, Puerto Rico
Eddie W. Alicea Sáez, CEO**

Cooperativa Sagrada Familia is Puerto Rico's first CDFI credit union, offering affordable and relevant financial services to 28,000 member-owners through five branches in rural and urban areas of the island. The credit union recently received a \$794,500 CDFI award to expand its community impact. Sagrada Familia is the home of a small business incubator program, an artisan workshop and the Oasis project, a community resiliency center for the 128,000 residents of the mountain cities of Corozal, Naranjito, Barranquitas and Comerio. In the event of a natural disaster, the Oasis is equipped with a drinking water well, gasoline storage unit, a soon to be completed solar powered energy system, and a kitchen with the capacity to serve one thousand rations a day.





PAHO/WHO FCU, Washington D.C
Miguel Boluda, Jr., CEO

For more than 70 years, the PAHO/WHO Federal Credit Union has served the employees, contractors, and immediate family members of the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization. Many of their members come from the many Spanish-speaking countries of the Americas, and a good percentage of those are immigrants to the US. PAHO/WHO is a bilingual institution, with a 100% Hispanic Board of Directors and policies and procedures that allow the credit union to offer a variety of products and services for members from dozens of countries. The credit union has supported various initiatives that support immigrant and underserved communities in the D.C area.



Star of Texas Credit Union, Austin, TX
Stephanie Sievers, CEO

Star of Texas Credit Union serves over 3,000 members in the city of Austin, Texas. Since 1952, Star of Texas has provided a safe and sound financial alternative for low-income members. The credit union provides a variety of financial products and services to the Hispanic community, including ITIN lending alternatives, bilingual services and financial counseling. An active supporter of the Hispanic community, the credit union has collaborated with Univisión and El Mundo to support community events. All Star of Texas employees are required to become certified financial counselors within six months of employment to offer quality services to members at every interaction.



USC Credit Union, Los Angeles, CA
Gary Pérez, CEO

Founded 45 years ago, USC Credit Union is a full service financial institution headquartered in Los Angeles, California. Offering a plethora of deposit and lending products, coupled with insurance, investment services and Internet banking, USC Credit Union has grown to over \$650 million in assets with nearly 76,000 members. The credit union's reach and influence extends well beyond the boundaries of the university campus. Service to the communities surrounding the University is central to the credit union's mission. In recent years, USC launched a community expansion project to serve the largely Hispanic neighborhoods around their branches, accepting alternate forms of ID at account opening, providing free tax preparation services, and offering ITIN lending products.



**Interested in becoming
a Juntos Avanzamos
credit union?**

**Contact Rene Vargas Martinez
to learn more at
RVargasMartinez@Inclusiv.org**

CEO PROFILE

A CONVERSATION WITH JEFF IVEY, CEO, RIVER CITY FCU



Jeff Ivey is the President and CEO of River City FCU, a CDFI and Juntos designated credit union based in San Antonio, Texas serving over 12,000 member-owners with more than \$120 million in assets. River City is one of the first credit unions to have received the Juntos Avanzamos designation. River City has been able to successfully leverage their designation to establish partnerships, offer relevant products and services and become an engine of economic growth for Hispanics in San Antonio. We recently interviewed Jeff Ivey to learn more about River City's Hispanic outreach initiatives, PPP lending and COVID Relief.

What motivates you to do what you do? What are you most passionate about in serving Latinos in your role as CEO of River City?

My motivation comes from the belief that everyone has a right to safe, affordable financial products, including those that may have made mistakes in the past. Too often, the financial industry uses a "strike one and you're out" philosophy, which only serves to force people into predatory situations.

San Antonio has a vibrant and growing Latino population. We are often the first major city in Texas immigrants encounter, and many ultimately stay here. It's our job to do all we can to help their transition to living in the US and understanding how our financial system works. Immigrants that come here in search of a better life are among the bravest people I've ever met.

You have been a fierce advocate for credit unions assuming a more assertive role in the development and financial well-being of their communities, transcending traditional roles assigned to financial institutions. Why?

Credit unions were formed to serve their members and their communities. Period. Too often, I think our industry is looking past those in their markets that are struggling and in need, seeking larger markets and growing assets.



We are here to serve. If not us, who? Big banks? We have to remember why we were formed and that the philosophy "people before profits" is an important one. Yes, we have to be profitable and financially sound to serve our members and provide them with a return, but we can't base every strategic decision on maximizing profits.

What does Juntos Avanzamos mean to River City FCU?

It means we are here for everyone, that we have the products and services designed specifically to help those in need, and that by working with our communities, we can help strengthen them financially. Together, we advance - we can't do it alone. We need to be listening to our members and communities so that our strategic plans are consistent with their needs. Otherwise, we aren't effectively serving.

I think this designation is especially important in San Antonio. It's more than having bilingual staff. It shows we have the understanding and experience that will make us a valuable partner for our members in the Latino community.

River City has established several programs to help Hispanic and economically vulnerable communities in San Antonio prosper, establishing partnerships with community organizations. Could you talk a bit about them, their impact, and what led you to develop them?

El Paso is home to a huge number of predatory financial firms. They prey on the financially vulnerable and the underserved. Immigrants arriving here that don't understand our financial system see these places everywhere and realize that they're easy to deal with - and don't realize that their hard-earned money is going to exorbitant fees and obscenely high interest rates. They are also intimidated by mainstream financial providers.

Working with community partners including the Mexican Consulate and the YWCA, we designed a suite of products designed for those who haven't had accounts in the past and have yet to build credit. These deposit and loan products are designed to bring people into the credit union, save people money by not pay excessive fees or interest, and begin to establish financial stability. A person without a basic checking account can be spending \$60-\$80 a month in fees and believe that's how our system works. Education is a huge part of this effort. Breaking generational poverty can start with finding a financial institution willing to take the time and effort to help you understand how things work. We see that as a major responsibility.

How has CDFI certification helped River City expand access to financial services in San Antonio? Why should credit unions work to adopt CDCU and CDFI values?

By our very definition, every credit union should be a CDFI. Community development - that's a huge part of why we exist. Working with individuals in need, and helping them stabilize their financial picture, is what we should all be striving for. Credit unions could dramatically reduce poverty by helping individuals and families buy homes, finance reliable vehicles, and save for their children's education. We can help provide those opportunities across the country.

Having the CDFI certification has helped us develop products and also serves to remind us of why we're here - to serve our communities, and to focus on their needs. Nonprofit partners have sought us out specifically because we have the CDFI designation - it tells everyone where our priorities lie.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected communities of color throughout the United States. San Antonio recently experienced a spike in cases, with the economic consequences it entails. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the communities you serve? What role has River City played during this crisis?

River City was an approved SBA lender that had never booked an SBA loan prior to the pandemic. We decided to commit ourselves 100% to the Paycheck Protection Program, because we knew that businesses in financially underserved communities, many of whom are owned by African-Americans, would be left out of this process as the financial industry focused on larger loans. The pandemic continued to show that communities of color are still left behind and struggle to obtain capital. Redlining still exists in our country as banks and some credit unions have abandoned low-income areas, leaving them to the predatory shops. That in itself is a stain on our industry.

We processed over 500 PPP loans for \$12 million, with an average loan size around \$24,000 this past spring. We helped retain over 1,900 jobs in some of the poorest sections of our city, where job losses would have been devastating.

What's it been like to move from a much larger credit union serving a very different FOM to working at a community development credit union?

The transition was not difficult. For me, there were no cons - only positives. Unfortunately, some larger credit unions operate more like banks, focusing squarely on ROA and other financial ratios that members frankly don't understand or care about. As I said before, we have to be successful to be a financially sound institution and to provide a solid return for our members, but that has to be balanced by our mission of serving those that are financially vulnerable. Being at a smaller credit union has given me the opportunity to put into action strategies and causes that are important to me, that are designed to truly help those in need.

We don't want to be the biggest credit union in San Antonio. That's not our goal. We want to have the biggest impact for our members, period. We want the reputation of being the credit union that is truly for everyone. Inclusion for all - everyone has a basic right to safe and affordable financial products. That's not just something a tweet or a social media post would mention - we truly believe that, and seek to live up to being diverse, equitable, and inclusive for everyone in our community.

OUR STORIES

POINT WEST CREDIT UNION



Point West Credit Union is a CDFI and Juntos Avanzamos credit union at the forefront of service to Hispanic and immigrant communities on the West Coast. Founded in 1932 as a credit union for employees of Multnomah County, Point West has grown into a diverse, multicultural financial institution serving more than 11,000 members with \$99 million in assets. Headquartered in the city of Portland, Oregon, Point West has expanded and transformed traditional concepts around membership and services to immigrant communities.

At Point West, members are citizens of the credit union community. Promotional banners call upon prospective members to become “citizens” and engage with the credit union in a comprehensive manner. Membership is promoted as an affiliation that goes beyond a transactional or traditional membership relationship. If members are citizens of the credit union, their nationality, sex, race, sexual orientation or ethnicity doesn't matter - they will always be treated with dignity and respect as citizens with rights and responsibilities.

The shift in the way Point West views and promotes membership came about in late 2016. The environment for Hispanics and immigrants was rapidly changing in the United States as a result of the presidential election, causing uncertainty and fear in Hispanic communities.

“The shift in messaging was born out of the resulting shift in policies and environment that came with the change in administrations in Washington. People were worried and came in asking to withdraw their funds, fearing they would be confiscated by the government,” said Steve Pagenstecher, COO at Point West. “It was at the Inclusiv conference in Dallas that we finalized our “Declaration of Beliefs” statement to send a message to our members and community that Point West was a safe space for the underserved, specifically for immigrants and the Hispanic community.”

Three years later, a pandemic and wildfires are raging in Oregon. Consistent with its focus on citizenship, Point West is providing relief to all members, with an emphasis on vulnerable individuals and businesses that have not

received any aid from federal and state governments. In addition to fee waivers, loan payment extensions, and championing a small business grant program, Point West launched a COVID-19 Emergency Loan program. The program was a collaboration between Meyer Memorial Trust, the Northwest Credit Union Foundation, Consolidated Community Credit Union and Trailhead Credit Union.

The program was launched in early April, making \$2,500 loans at 0% interest available to low-income communities in Portland. Demand for the program was high. All available funds were expended in 30 days, underscoring the need for economic relief in Hispanic and immigrant communities. Sixty-two loans were funded by Point West, of which 60% went to non-citizen immigrant families.

As the economy continues to struggle, the commitment and vision of credit unions such as Point West will be integral to holding the fabric of communities together, giving our most vulnerable members and “citizens” a fighting chance.



POINT WEST MEMBER, DARYL, AND
COMMUNITY ADVOCATE, MARY

A W A R D S

INCLUSIV RESILIENCE FUND

The Inclusiv Resilience Fund was launched in June 2020 to help minority-owned and operated credit unions with assets of under \$100 million provide financial relief to consumers and small businesses affected by COVID-19. In total, \$665,000 in philanthropic grants up to \$25,000

were approved in the first funding round for coronavirus financial relief, including fee waivers; emergency low-interest loans; technology enhancements; marketing; financial coaching and counseling; and business planning. Five Juntos Avanzamos designated credit unions received Inclusiv Resilience Fund awards.

DC CREDIT UNION, WASHINGTON, DC CARLA DECKER, CEO



The DC Federal Credit Union is a community development financial institution, serving over 11,000 members with affordable financial transactions and education. An estimated 21.6% of the people in its service area live below the federal poverty level. During the early part of the pandemic, DCFCU provided 26 emergency loans; 1686 fee waivers (for skip payment and shared branching), payment forbearance for 6 loans, opened 209 accounts remotely, and provided 129 individuals with financial counseling. With additional financial resources, DC FCU will use grant proceeds to invest in strategic planning, digital banking channels, marketing for remote services, and staff training. The credit union anticipates offering 50 more emergency loans, 4000 fee waivers, payment forbearance for 25 loans, 500 financial counseling sessions.

GUADALUPE CENTERS FCU, KANSAS CITY, MO ISMAEL GALLEGOS, CEO



Guadalupe Centers is one of the nation's first social service agencies for Latinos and has grown to be the heart of the Latino community within Kansas City. An estimated 20.1% of the people in Guadalupe Centers' service area live below the federal poverty level, and the credit union is CDFI certified. Between March and June, Guadalupe Centers FCU has provided seven fee waivers, 66 approvals for payment forbearance, 75 financial counseling sessions, and six small dollar loans. Guadalupe Centers FCU plans to use grant funds to continue providing debt relief in the form of forbearance, small dollar loans, ATM cards for 1500 members, and equipment and supplies for employees (e.g., laptops, cell phone, masks, plexiglass).

COOPERATIVA DE AHORRO Y CRÉDITO JESÚS OBRERO, GUAYNABO, PUERTO RICO AURELIO ARROYO, CEO



Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito Jesús Obrero is CDFI and a financial cooperative that serves the rural communities of the cities of San Juan and Guaynabo. Jesús Obrero is a pioneer, being one of the first four Puerto Rico financial cooperatives to receive technical assistance grant funding from the CDFI Fund in 2018. They are also the first Juntos Avanzamos and Pathways credit union in Puerto Rico. A member of the Inclusiv Center for Resiliency and Affordable Renewable Energy, Jesús Obrero was the first financial cooperative to offer solar lending to individuals and businesses in the island.

Jesús Obrero has been active during the COVID - 19 pandemic, disbursing over 100 PPP loans to small businesses in Puerto Rico, approving 79 emergency loans, forgiving 894 fees and offering 4,735 loan payment extensions. Jesús Obrero also expanded its online services during the pandemic, developing a 100% online account opening system, which has expanded their growth. Jesús Obrero applied to the Inclusiv Resilience Fund for funding to create a 100% online services division, continue their pandemic relief efforts and expand their loan offerings.

**NUEVA ESPERANZA COMMUNITY CREDIT UNION, TOLEDO, OH
SUE CUEVAS, CEO**



Nueva Esperanza Community Credit Union is the first state chartered Latino credit union in the state of Ohio and the third in the nation. An estimated 23.3% of the people in the credit union's service area live below the federal poverty level. The credit union offers financial inclusion services to its members such as financial education, financial counseling, and first-time homebuyer programs. During the early part of the pandemic, Nueva Esperanza made two emergency loans totaling \$20,000, 56 fee waivers, payment forbearance for 56 loans, and 65 financial counseling sessions. Nueva Esperanza plans to use grant funds to invest in technology upgrades such as software that will allow remote operation, digital services, and a mobile app. The credit union will also use remaining resources for community outreach for financial counseling and loan forgiveness.

**STAR OF TEXAS CREDIT UNION, AUSTIN, TX
STEPHANIE SIEVERS, CEO**



Star of Texas Credit Union serves Texas Workforce Commission employees, relatives of any current member, and anyone who lives, works, worships or attends school within Travis County. In the past three months, the Star of Texas Credit Union has approved 60 fee waivers; 1 PPP loan totaling \$44,717; 46 requests for payment forbearance; 20 remote account openings; and 35 transportation and mortgage loans for members with Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITINs). The credit union will continue offering fee waivers and payment forbearance throughout the Fall. Star of Texas Credit Union would like to use a grant from the Resilience Fund to acquire laptops for remote work as well as technology upgrades for the internet and phone systems used by the credit union.



NUEVA ESPERANZA'S NEW LOCATION IN SOUTH TOLEDO
PHOTO COURTESY OF TOLEDO BLADE

CELEBRATING PUERTO RICO'S NEW CDFI'S

In September, financial cooperatives in Puerto Rico celebrated a whopping \$5.8 million dollars in awards from the Department of the Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI Fund). Twenty-nine financial cooperatives received \$125,000 each in technical assistance awards to increase their capacity to serve their communities. Three Inclusiv members, two of which are Juntos Avanzamos designated, received awards totaling \$2.2 million dollars to expand their affordable lending and resiliency building initiatives in their communities.

Cooperativa La Sagrada Familia, Jesús Obrero and CamuyCoop celebrated their financial assistance awards and the direct impact they will have on their communities. "For us, access to CDFI funding means that our most vulnerable communities will receive help. In a critical moment for Puerto Rico, the cooperative movement is doing all it can to look for alternatives that benefit the people" said Eddie Alicea, President & CEO of Cooperativa Sagrada Familia.

Inclusiv has been leading efforts to strengthen the financial cooperative system in Puerto Rico, to amplify its critical role in helping communities recover from natural disasters that have impacted and continue to impact the island through the Puerto Rico CDFI Initiative. The initiative promotes the adoption of the CDFI business model in the island through convenings, peer-to-peer exchanges, and technical assistance.

"This new grant funding provides an opportunity for us to expand our initiatives in support of our communities, particularly those that help our low-income members have a better quality of life" said Michele Franqui President & CEO of CamuyCoop, a rural cooperative with 14,000 members with headquarters in the municipality of Camuy. "One of the uses of this grant will be to expand our solar lending programs to make them even more affordable for our members", said Franqui.



Since the launch of Inclusiv's Puerto Rico initiative in 2018, 64 Puerto Rico-based financial cooperatives have become part of the Inclusiv network, 12 financial cooperatives have become CDFI certified, and more than 30 financial cooperatives have received almost \$10 million dollars in technical and financial assistance grants from the CDFI Fund. Financial cooperatives plan to use the funds to expand their solar energy lending, financial counseling, and first time homeowner initiatives.

"With this funding, financial cooperatives will be able to create and expand initiatives to improve the capacity of their members and the community to respond to natural disasters:" said Aurelio Arroyo, CEO of Cooperativa Jesús Obrero.

To learn more about the Puerto Rico CDFI Initiative and the work Inclusiv is doing to promote Puerto Rico's economic revitalization through financial cooperatives, visit inclusiv.org/initiatives/puerto-rico/.

"WITH THIS FUNDING, FINANCIAL COOPERATIVES WILL BE ABLE TO CREATE AND EXPAND INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE THE CAPACITY OF THEIR MEMBERS AND THE COMMUNITY TO RESPOND TO NATURAL DISASTERS."

- AURELIO ARROYO, CEO, COOPERATIVA JESÚS OBRERO

OUR STORIES

ILLIANA CREDIT UNION



On June 18, 2020, the Supreme Court blocked the Trump administration's attempt to end the DACA Program (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). The landmark decision ended years of uncertainty for the over 700,000 young Americans that participate in the program and granted them temporary protection from deportation. It also allowed them to continue to work and make a living legally in the United States. Many DACA recipients work at credit unions, leagues, and other industry related organizations. Many more live or work in our FOMs.

We recently interviewed Alondra Sierra and Iris Pérez, two DACA recipients currently working at Illiana Financial an Inclusiv/Juntos Avanzamos credit union headquartered in Calumet City, Illinois.

Alondra Sierra Nuñez came to the United States in the early 90's when she was just three years old. She enrolled in school and learned English, quickly becoming her family's translator in visits to the bank. Alondra graduated high school with honors but, like many other hard working immigrants, her status became an obstacle. "I graduated high school with high honors and won a scholarship to Purdue University. I enrolled and once they found out my immigration status I was not able to receive any more help for tuition nor did I qualify for their scholarships," said Alondra.

Participation in the DACA program changed Alondra's life, opened new opportunities for her and gave her life a stability she had never experienced before. "Before DACA I was working at McDonalds. I bought a car with my savings because very few places would finance a vehicle without a valid social security number or a driver's license. DACA really did change my life along with my family's." Alondra now works as a Loan Officer at Illiana, helping members achieve their dream of homeownership. "I love my line of work because I love helping our members. A house is a big part of the American Dream and it feels amazing to help them achieve it."



IRIS PEREZ

Iris Pérez has been part of the Illiana Financial team for three years. Before DACA, Iris was a high school student in East Chicago, dreaming about her future but without a path to get there. DACA was a life changer for Iris, providing a stable framework upon which to build her future. "I was able to get my driver's license as well as a job. I began working immediately without the fear of being told, 'We cannot hire you' because I did not have a valid social security number. DACA gave me and my family great hope that maybe we will be able to be someone after all. I now have a five year old son, and I am able to provide for him and give him better opportunities in life. I always choose to keep moving forward regardless of anything that gets in my way, DACA created the bridge we needed to be successful and accomplish the "American Dream" the Latino way, breaking down any barriers in our path."

Iris is proud to work at Illiana Financial and of the work the credit union does to help the Hispanic community achieve their financial dreams. "Working at IFCU has been a great experience these past three years. It is a great feeling to be able to work for a company that not only has many opportunities for its employees, but also its members regardless of their background or ethnicity," said Iris.

Illiana Financial has intentionally worked towards building a diverse workforce that reflects the communities the credit union serves. "Iris and Alondra are perfect examples of how our diverse workforce at Illiana has allowed us to serve a large segment of our community that had previously been neglected," said Jim Henmueller, CEO of Illiana Financial Credit Union. As DACA recipients, Iris and Alondra symbolize the success stories that are possible when people are given opportunities to shine. We are both fortunate and grateful to have them as members of our Illiana family."



ILLIANA CREDIT UNION CELEBRATES THEIR JUNTOS AVANZAMOS DESIGNATION

"AS DACA RECIPIENTS, IRIS AND ALONDRA SYMBOLIZE THE SUCCESS STORIES THAT ARE POSSIBLE WHEN PEOPLE ARE GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES TO SHINE. WE ARE BOTH FORTUNATE AND GRATEFUL TO HAVE THEM AS MEMBERS OF OUR ILLIANA FAMILY."

- JIM HENMUELLER, CEO, ILLIANA FINANCIAL CREDIT UNION

FINANCIAL INCLUSION BROOKLYN CO-OP FCU



This past spring, New York City faced one of the most difficult challenges in its history. The COVID - 19 pandemic swept through the city, affecting thousands of residents, upending life as we know it. The effects on the city were dramatic. Small businesses closed their doors, commercial corridors became deserted and subway cars were empty. As economic activity came to a standstill, communities and low-income individuals struggled to come to terms with the economic fallout.

As many local bank branches closed, community development credit unions knew that they had a responsibility to stay open and deploy their resources to help. One of those CDCU's was Brooklyn Cooperative. A CDFI and Juntos Avanzamos credit union, Brooklyn Co-op serves 7,396 members in the communities of central and eastern Brooklyn. "Most local bank branches also closed, 'immediately and indefinitely', as stated on the signs on their doors. Yet we knew we had to remain open," said Samira Rajan, President and CEO of Brooklyn Co-op. "Members needed financial services, especially the higher proportion of our Black and Brown communities that still had to work as essential workers."

For Brooklyn Co-op, staying open was not enough. As an SBA 7(a) lender in NYC, Brooklyn Co-op hit the ground running after the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) was approved. Within 3 days of the passage of the Cares Act, Brooklyn Co-op began to receive a flood of inquiries.

"Given the economic devastation we saw around us, we knew we had to move fast. In a single day,

we altered existing practices in order to meet the demand," said Rajan. The credit union was the only 7(a) lender in Brooklyn willing to accept PPP applications from new borrowers, substantially increasing the number of small businesses that looked towards Brooklyn Co-op for help.

During the process, Brooklyn Co-op engaged constantly with its Hispanic small businesses, members and partners to make them aware of changes in the process and promote the PPP program. "We made a concerted effort to ensure that all materials and information circulated about the PPP program to our members was available in both Spanish and English. This included all e-blasts, popups on our banking login as well as our website. All of Brooklyn Co-op's lending team are bilingual Spanish speakers and interacted directly with applicants throughout the process," said Rajan.

Brooklyn Co-op's lending went above what they expected when PPP launched. The credit union served as a veritable lifeline for hundreds of small businesses in Brooklyn, demonstrating its commitment to the financial stability of the communities it serves, and qualifying the credit union as a financial first responder.

Rajan notes, "In the first 10 days of the SBA PPP program we received over 300 applications. We deployed \$6 million in 140 PPP loans over a six week period. For context, the full year of 2018 saw a total of \$6 million disbursed!"



THE NOEL POINTER FOUNDATION RECEIVED A PPP LOAN THROUGH BROOKLYN CO-OP FCU

PARTNERS

MEET DIANA DYKSTRA, PRES/CEO, CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA CREDIT UNION LEAGUES



Diana Dykstra is President and CEO of the California and Nevada Credit Union Leagues, the largest credit union organization in the country. Diana is a veteran with more than 40 years of experience in the credit union industry. A champion of financial inclusion, Diana has received many prestigious credit union industry awards for her achievements, including the James D. Likens Alumni Recognition Award, the California League's Distinguished Service Award, the Phil Greer Lifetime Achievement Award from CUNA Lending Council, the American Association of Credit Union Leagues' highest honor, the Eagle Award, and most recently, the National Credit Union Foundation's 2019 Herb Wegner Memorial Award.

Under Diana's leadership, the Leagues have expanded their financial inclusion initiatives and supported their member credit unions through numerous natural disasters.

Talk to us a bit about the services the California and Nevada Leagues provide to their members.

The California and Nevada Credit Union Leagues (Leagues) are the premier trade associations for credit unions in California and Nevada. For more than 87 years the Leagues have played an important role in ensuring the sustained health of its member credit unions. The Leagues are committed to helping credit unions change people's lives through its core values of:

- Members First
- Advocate
- Excellence
- Listen, Learn, Innovate
- One Team

The Leagues' breadth of services focuses on advocacy in Sacramento, Carson City, and Washington, D.C., as well as education and training, compliance services, and products and services designed to provide benefits to all of its member credit unions.



DIANA DYKSTRA IS PRES/CEO OF THE
CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA
CREDIT UNION LEAGUES

The public health and economic consequences of the COVID - 19 pandemic have been particularly felt in California and Nevada. What has been the response from your member credit unions to meet the financial needs of their communities during the pandemic?

Almost from the start of the pandemic crisis, credit unions in California and Nevada got to work to help their members deal with the impact of not only a public health crisis but also the economic fallout. Credit unions in both states have provided mortgage loan payment forbearance (totaling more than \$5.2 billion), loan payment deferrals for personal and auto loans as well as business loans (totaling more than \$11.8 billion) to their members.

In California, credit unions have helped more than 575,000 members while more than 9,000 members have been helped by Nevada credit unions. Collectively they have waived more than 2.5 million fees and approved more than \$78 million in emergency loans.

When the federal government launched its Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan program, many credit unions in both states set to work to

help small businesses in their communities. California credit unions helped facilitate more than \$727 million in PPP loans while more than \$560 million in PPP funding were distributed to Nevada businesses.

In addition, many credit unions pivoted to providing online financial education programs and workshops to help those negatively impacted from the pandemic, including suffering from a job loss or furlough. Several provided assistance to local food banks as well as community organizations (both through donations and volunteer hours) and offered support for frontline workers in the form of meals and donated protective equipment.

What roles have the Leagues played in supporting credit unions and their work during the pandemic?

Credit unions have always been about people helping all people, but especially people of modest means and low-and moderate incomes, providing financial services with lower loan rates and higher savings rates. In CA & NV there are many, many underserved as well as many, many unbanked, including Hispanics and immigrants of different nationalities.

In that credit unions are member-owned cooperatives, they are best suited to offer financial services to underserved and unbanked communities and provide one-on-one member service along with financial education to help build relationships and trust.

We cannot improve the financial fragility in these underserved communities without credit unions stepping up by providing much needed affordable access to financial services as well as education. It is the mission of credit unions since we were established to serve those of modest means, and we must always find ways to improve the financial well-being of the communities we serve.

Why should credit unions aspire to serve the underserved, particularly Hispanics and immigrants?

The Leagues have continued to play a vital role for credit unions during the pandemic. Daily communications and updates are being sent out to members with information on the government programs such as SBA's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and the many regulatory changes that have occurred frequently. A special COVID-19 resource page was set up on the Leagues' website, which not only includes the most up-to-date information on the crisis but also has provided answers to questions credit unions have had regarding branch closures and re-openings, remote employee options, loan deferrals, fraud information, regulatory changes, and many other topics.

In addition, the advocacy team worked tirelessly to ensure governors, legislators, political leaders, and regulators knew of issues credit unions were facing. They also are fighting against proposed legislation that would do irreparable harm to credit unions all the while continuing to tout the great work that credit unions always do—working with members to provide the help they needed.

Do you consider DEI to be a part of the strategy to respond to a crisis such as COVID-19? Do you think that Juntos Avanzamos could be an effective platform for CUs to show their commitment to DEI?

The Leagues definitely recognize the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), not only during a crisis, but as an ongoing principle.

Humandei, the Leagues' human capital solutions partner, encompasses DEI in all its work with credit unions. Its mission is to help credit unions take action to build inclusive workplaces that leverage human capital to its highest potential. Credit unions that obtain the Juntos Avanzamos designation certainly demonstrate the importance of and commitment to DEI.

The California and Nevada Credit Union Leagues have been a supporter and allies of Inclusiv/Juntos Avanzamos. What led you to support the program and promote it to your affiliated credit unions?

Juntos Avanzamos – Together We Advance – encompasses what credit unions are about – cooperatively, helping to advance the well being of its members. Hispanics and immigrants have long been underserved in the banking community. The Leagues recognized early on that the Juntos Avanzamos program was a great way to help credit unions reach the Hispanic community. And at the same time, is a viable beneficial business strategy.

Is there an opportunity to widen the advocacy base for credit unions by connecting with Latino elected officials both at the state and Federal level?

The Leagues' advocacy team continues to build relationships with legislators at all levels throughout both California and Nevada. But certainly, the team champions the opportunity to connect more with our two states' Latino elected officials. Educating elected officials about credit unions and the great work they do for members is a key task for our team. This includes educating them about the Juntos Avanzamos designation, the special services Juntos Avanzamos credit unions provide to their Hispanic members, and that between our two states we have more than 130 Juntos Avanzamos-designated locations to serve the Hispanic community, representing more than \$12 billion in assets and serving more than 900,000 members.

ABOUT US

At Inclusiv, we believe that financial inclusion is a fundamental right. We dedicate ourselves to closing the gaps and removing barriers to financial opportunities for people living in distressed and underserved communities through investments in and technology solutions for member credit unions, building financial capability, and programs promoting financial inclusion. Founded in 1974, Inclusiv is headquartered in New York, NY, with offices in Madison, WI and Atlanta, GA.



Inclusiv was instrumental in establishing the CDFI Fund in 1994, is a permanent member of the national CDFI Coalition and is a certified CDFI intermediary. Today CDFI certification is an essential credential for credit unions with a focus on financial inclusion. Inclusiv is the credit union industry's best resource for learning more about certification and technical and financial assistance grants.



Juntos Avanzamos (Together We Advance) designated credit unions provide Hispanic consumers safe, affordable and relevant financial services. They employ bilingual, culturally-competent staff, accept alternative forms of ID, and treat all members with dignity and respect regardless of immigration status.

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JOIN US

Join us October 28th for the only conference devoted to inclusive economies and the community development credit union movement. The Inclusiv Annual Conference is the premier event for anyone interested in financial inclusion.



More about sessions, speakers, and registration at
<https://www.inclusiv.org/about-us/2020-inclusiv-virtual-conference/>

