



## The Value of Partnership

There are many ways that one could define the 'value' of a credit union; however, I think that there are many facets of which not only make credit union's unique but also valuable to the members and communities they serve. In the 1850's a German named Schulze-Delitzsch established a cooperative that would provide a means for aspiring entrepreneurs to pool their money and make loans to each other. A 150 years later, thousands of these, "people's banks" now known as credit unions can be found around the world, with a primary philosophy of "People helping people".

Though the primary purpose of a credit union is to provide members a place to save their money and earn higher dividend rates while also helping members to borrow money at lower interest rates, they also pay special attention to the care and wellbeing of their members through high quality service. Today, credit unions are much more than a financial institution, they serve as key pillars within their communities as organizations that invest in the development of building foundations and ensuring the strength of our financial future through education.

I have been fortunate to be a part of this movement to build the future and that is where I will begin to define what I feel is the 'value' of a credit union. My journey in the credit union began the day I was born, but more recently 4 years ago when I was given the opportunity of a lifetime. Opportunity is defined as a set of circumstances that makes it possible to do something. My opportunity came when one man, our school principal, believed that his students would benefit from having a career readiness program in his school and a community business woman structured her credit union's business plan around focusing on the development of today's youth – tomorrow's leaders. Together, these two amazing people opened the door to my future by finding the value in partnership. They began defining the value that credit unions bring to their members outside of the day to day banking. They saw the importance of implementing a hands-on Credit Union School Branch Program that would afford beneficial life skills to the students whom were fortunate enough to become involved.

The Credit Union School Branch Program is an extension of the credit union philosophy of people helping people. ONE Federal Credit Union has made a commitment to develop youth programs and to train young people for good career opportunities. In today's world, there is a need to rejuvenate its work force and pump new blood into it. This program has allowed ONE Federal credit union to help meet the social, moral and economic needs of our students and

community. Students of all ages, kindergarten to graduation can participate in learning the fundamentals of the financial industry all while attending school.

As one of the students selected to participate in the Credit Union School Branch Program, I have been taught the basics of teller operations and member service to acquire the same skills required by the professional staff at ONE. This training has provided me with a sense of pride and improved my self-confidence and self-esteem.

Over the four years of my involvement I have found that all students who have become involved in the program either as a student volunteer or student member, benefit from the business training and practical experience no matter what grade. The Credit Union School Branch Program is a benefit to both college and non-college bound students, it helps students help themselves become more independent and establish decision making skills.

What many people do not realize is the overall investment that ONE and other credit union's make to provide this 'real world' experience to schools. Credit Union School Branch Programs are a no cost program to school districts and are 100% funded and operated by the sponsoring credit union, again pointing out the value that credit union's bring to the community at large.

When our sponsoring credit union, ONE Federal Credit Union, rebranded a little over a year ago, they made a promise to all of its members. They committed to building lifelong relationships with its members along with working to make every day better for all they serve. Each day ONE has made it a point to make each person that walks through their door feel a sense of belonging. In conclusion, the 'value' of a credit union is simple, they truly are "people helping people."