

# Community First Communicator

## CEO's Report

Community First was founded 50 years ago — Jan. 18, 1961. This year we celebrate our golden, half-century anniversary!

Seven visionaries (Sonoma County educators Ken Johnson, Zollie Sutherland, Gordon Hansen, William Hillard, Walt Reeves, Richard Hunt and Bob Bache) each ponied up \$10 to satisfy the incorporation fee at the time to form a credit union.

“We had a hard time getting decent service or loans from the banks,” remembered Ken Johnson, as to the motivation of starting a financial cooperative owned by Members.

Five years later, when assets reached \$500,000, Sonoma County School Credit Union (our original name) hired its first paid employee, Maggie Wattles. She later served as the company's top manager from 1970 to 1986. Her daughter, Lynne Gradek, is in her 35<sup>th</sup> year of working for Members at CFCU.

In 1999, this credit union was re-chartered from a SEG (select employee group, in this case local educators) to a Community Charter — any resident, student or someone doing business in Sonoma or Mendocino counties could be a Member.

To continue growing for 50 years, you have be doing more than a couple of things right. And we are — mostly by following the the ethics and vision of our founders to provide the best value in banking services in Sonoma County!

*Todd Sheffield*

## Sebastopol Office Opens

PG&E's smart meters might not be all that popular in Sebastopol, but Community First Credit Union's "smart office" sure is. In its first month of operation, the start-up smart office accounted for half of CFCU's new checking accounts.

Like all of CFCU's branches, the new office in Sebastopol has an ATM that takes deposits without cumbersome or wasteful envelopes. By keying in a PIN, Members can deposit currency or checks and get an instant receipt. “But where this office differs,” said Todd Sheffield, CEO of Community First, “is that Members can further conduct their banking without paper via on-site iPads and an iMac. A financial concierge shows Members how to manage their accounts, transfer money between Community First and other financial institutions, pay bills, or any other transactions they may have,” Sheffield continued. It is believed that this combination of a “smart” ATM and on-site technology that users can access make this the first such “smart” branch in California.



Sebastopol Mayor Guy Wilson and Chamber Board President Majid Zeinal (center, both holding scissors) help Community First dedicate its new “smart office.” Also (from left): Mary Ann Lance, Loan Officer; Todd Sheffield, CEO; Lillard Blake, CFCU Board; Nate and Craig Boblitt of BC Properties; Teresa Ramondo, Chamber's Exec. Dir.; Russ Anger, VP of Lending; Jean Neff, CFCU Board; Annalisa Gunderson, Financial Concierge.

Since the financial melt-down in mid-2008, expansions by consumer financial institutions have been non-existent. BofA announced it will eliminate 10% of its branches nationally, and Well Fargo will shutter 74 of its California branches. “As others are cutting back, we feel the ‘smart office’ option is the smartest way to expand services and physical conveniences to Sonoma County residents, without burdening Members by raising any fees or costs,” said Jay Hufford, Vice President of Member Services at CFCU.

## New Web Site



We completely revamped our web site and flipped the switch November 30. Information is easier to find, and there's more of it — including some financial videos and a new Youth section.

The new site showcases those helping to make Sonoma County sustainable. After all, Community First has been helping to make the local economy sustainable for 50 years. “We want to champion local people who are making a positive difference to the local economy and local environment,” said David Williams, VP of Communications at CFCU.

“Every 60 to 90 days, we will wipe the pictorial slate clean and feature another project or group doing great things for their fellow Sonoma County residents,” said Williams.

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CREDIT UNION

[www.comfirstcu.org](http://www.comfirstcu.org)



## 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Member Meeting

Community First is a financial cooperative. It is owned and controlled by its Members — not shareholders. Each year we hold an annual meeting. We do our best to make the one-hour meeting fun and informative. You'll learn what your credit union is doing for you, its financial health, and what its plans are for the future.

As always, we will have food and prizes. But because it is our 50<sup>th</sup> year, we will have some once-in-a-generation surprises.

We will also elect Board and Supervisor positions from our Membership. If you want to run for an open position, kindly contact Mary Coscia, Executive Assistant, for an application (543-2663 or [mcoscia@comfirstcu.org](mailto:mcoscia@comfirstcu.org)). This year there are openings for two Board and four Supervisory positions. Applications need to be completed and postmarked no later than Tuesday, March 1. Send to: Community First Credit Union, Nominating Committee, PO Box 6004, Santa Rosa, CA 95406-0004.

**What:** 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Member Meeting

**When:** Tuesday, April 19, 7 to 8 p.m.

**Where:** Agatha Furth Center, Windsor

**Why:** We're a democracy. Vote and voice your thoughts, and meet other Members and those who serve you.

**Who:** Members and their families

## Most Loans Ever!

This past year, Community First made more home loans to local residents than in any year since 2003. In particular, October 2010 was our biggest lending month ever. In 50 years! We were proud to have provided \$6.43 million that month in home loans and nearly another \$1 million for people to buy the vehicles they needed.

Our new web site makes applying for a loan a snap. Rates are readily found via redundant links. But more important than rates, we have people who can actually get your loan done, and without bogus fees and needless mark-ups (that's the credit union advantage).

To contact an in-house CFCU mortgage loan pro:

-  Beth Rudometkin, Russian River area, 869-9063
-  Monika Besancon, North County, 431-1051
-  Phil Sanchez, Central County, 543-2615
-  Mary Ann Lance, Sebastopol, 634-5018
-  Russ Anger, Central & West County, 543-2670

## Courtesy NSF Notices End

CFCU has discontinued printing and mailing after-the-fact, hard copy notices to alert Members of non-sufficient funds in their checking accounts. Hard-copy notices are expensive to your financial cooperative, and snail mail can take days to get you the information.

A better way is to sign up for alerts on CFCU's eBranch — our FREE online banking platform. To sign up, all you need is an e-mail address.



Chuck Fernandez (left), Sr. Dir. of Catholic Charities, takes keys from CFCU's Todd Sheffield. The donated van (rescued and resuscitated by CFCU) was the culmination of efforts of this year's Leadership Santa Rosa class to support those groups doing great things for local residents.



College Avenue staffers Pat Duncan, Branch Mgr., and Amy Withington, Member Services Rep., show off some of the dozens of strollers CFCU collected in December and donated to *The Living Room* — Santa Rosa's day center for women and their children who are homeless.

## TO REACH US

**online banking / web site**  
[www.comfirstcu.org](http://www.comfirstcu.org)

**call center**  
707/546-6000 (8:30a – 5:30p, M-F)

**Member services**  
[info@comfirstcu.org](mailto:info@comfirstcu.org)

### Full-service branches

Central Santa Rosa  
501 College Avenue

West Santa Rosa  
70A Stony Point Road

### Smart offices

Sebastopol  
130 Petaluma Avenue

Guerneville  
16200 Main Street

### Loan offices

Healdsburg  
416 Healdsburg Avenue, No. 3  
Santa Rosa  
1105 North Dutton Ave., Suite A

### mailing address

PO Box 6004  
Santa Rosa, CA 95406-0004

**locate surcharge-free ATMs**  
[www.co-opnetwork.org](http://www.co-opnetwork.org)

**locate shared branches**  
[www.cuswirl.com/locations](http://www.cuswirl.com/locations)

## Important IQ Dates

Jan. 17 MLK, Jr. Day, closed  
Jan. 18 CFCU turns 50!  
Jan. 24 New Guerneville office opens  
Feb. 21 Presidents' Day, closed  
Mar. 13 Daylight Saving Time begins  
Apr. 19 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Member Meeting