



**First Choice**  
Federal Credit Union

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New Castle, Pa 16101  
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New Castle, Pa 16101  
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## The New Direction - April 2023

### A Letter from our CEO - It's My Pleasure to Serve

Nearly every case study of Customer Service and Efficiency performed in the last 10 years has been centered around Chick-fil-A. Even our own government studied their model regarding the distribution of Covid vaccines. Chick-fil-A has become synonymous with fast, friendly service for more than a decade.

You want to hear something crazy? They only have one thing on the menu... chicken.

Don't get me wrong - it's delicious. But it only comes in three forms: sandwich, nugget, or tender. You can grill it or bread it. You can get crazy and add cheese and/or bacon to a sandwich. And, if you are so inclined, make it spicy. Otherwise, add some delightful waffle fries and a sweet tea and let's get this party started!

They have bucked the trend and simplified their menu when you see the rest of the industry giants adding complexity and expanding their lines. Because why wouldn't I want avocado on my Subway Sandwich? Or nibble on a McRib? Or have a Deluxe Cheeseburger from Arby's? And all of them are now serving breakfast menus starting at 7:00am; even Taco Bell.

**Success doesn't have to be defined by doing more things. It is defined by doing the things you do well; very well.**

In an effort to keep our membership happy and engaged, we strive to add new services to stay relevant. We also want to "stay in our lane". Our goal is to offer products and services that make sense for what we do and who we are. We understand money management for consumers. We understand vehicle value. We understand home value, consumer debt, credit scores, budgets, and an awful lot about 1990s hockey. We are great at loans.

We have amazing rates and we process them quickly and efficiently. We are the Chick-fil-A of lending for Lawrence County.

Recently you may have heard in the news of a bank fail. That is a horrible situation that fills many with fear. Rest assured, all of those depositors will get their insured money back to them. I don't have a crystal ball, but it may not be the last bank to fail nor the last big company to go out of business. I will let the economists and news anchors argue about recession; I can just tell you that there may be some bleak days ahead for some companies out there. While interest rates climb and inflation does the same, many companies will have a difficult time making the adjustment.

So let's look at it a little closer to home. **How is our credit union going to do?** We are in really good shape for the future. We have been conservatively run for a long time. We make it a point to be careful in good times and bad. As such, we have been able to weather this latest storm without issue. In fact we want to be here to help as many as we can to calm their storms.

How about our Community? Well largely that will be left up to the individual and their past and present choices. But overall in Western PA we are in better shape than some areas of the United States. Specifically, where housing prices coupled with inflation could make it difficult to navigate.

If you find yourself in trouble, we encourage you to act swiftly. Seek help. Budget Counselling, consolidation, downsizing are all possible options before you are forced into actions that you would rather not take. Asking questions and being open to change can save you a lot of headaches in the future. Simple modifications now can avoid big changes later.

**success is a journey  
not a destination**



Board of Directors

- Pamela Miller *President*
- Brian DeVivo *Vice-President*
- Russ Carley *Treasurer*
- Marilyn Wehr *Secretary*
- George Fiacco
- Jenny Flannery
- Michael Vatter

Meet Our Staff

- Michael Vatter **CEO**
- William Wehr **CFO**
- Brayden Ayres
- Lillian Charles
- Maureen Dierfield
- Beth Ferguson
- Erica Holian
- Susan Canary
- Christopher Litrenta Jr
- Kathy Lorello
- Mary Lou McPheron
- Connie Million
- Carley Price
- Rebecca Rice
- Lauren Skolnik
- Charlotte Sonntag
- Sharlene Warner
- Bonnie Williams

Hours of Operation

**Monday - Friday** (All Offices)  
 9:00AM - 4:30PM  
 Drive-Thrus open at 8:30AM

**Saturday** (Neshannock Office)  
 9:00AM - 12:00PM

Proud Member of



Accounts Federally insured

This Is The Way...



I could pretend to be outraged and tell you that phones are somehow ruining society, but society has been challenged way before we got phones small enough to stick in kid’s backpacks. Besides... I think one of those kids may be my future boss.

We are ALL obsessed with our phones. There is a study that reported that American’s touch their phones nearly 300 times a day on average! This whole article has 350 words in it.

The point is, if you want to be relevant to members you need to do so in any way you can - specifically on their phones! You need to have a good app that is not only going to be able to provide accurate information, but it is also going to be able to supply features they want and need. Features like Mobile Deposit, text banking, transfers, bill pay, and so much more.

We are currently upgrading our Credit Card app so that it, too, becomes a highly functional and more effective app for you.

We are going to be able to communicate with our members more effectively via text utilizing a system we acquired that will help to solve member’s issues immediately or route

service questions right to a staff member. Soon you will be able to send personalized texts to a number and get individual results back like your balance; the last checks that have cleared with amounts and dates; or your last deposit in your checking account with the amount and date.

We already have general key words set up for you to text words like **ROUTING NUMBER** or **LOCATIONS** to **724-652-8393** and get those answers immediately (caps are not required).

If you have more specific questions, you can text **724-856-0997** and one of our representatives will answer you.

Additionally, if you are working on a loan with a representative, they each have their own private text lines so you can reach them directly. This makes it easier to gather information and share with you.

Let us be 1 or 2 or 3 of those 300 times a day :)



Have a **Loan Question?**

Call when you can.

**Text** when you can't

**to 724 - 856 - 0997**

# SAVE THE DATE

We are so happy to invite our membership to join us to exercise their right to vote for the Leadership of this credit union during our 2023 Annual Meeting

Reporting on the business and a review of the year of 2022 along with a look to what is ahead for 2023 and beyond will be conducted before the election of our Board of Directors.

**When:** Saturday, May 20th - 10:00am

**Where:** Our Union Office at  
2209 W State Street  
New Castle, PA 16101

Donuts, juice, and Coffee will be served. To celebrate our membership, all those in attendance will have the opportunity to win some great prizes for choosing to spend a Saturday morning with us.

There will be no cost to attend the meeting, but due to seating and door prize purchasing, RSVPs will need to be in no later than May 5th. You can simply let us know by stopping in the office or giving us a call.

**We hope to see you there!**

## One of the Best Things We Do

The Credit Union Movement has always believed strongly in providing Financial Literacy to young adults. When I rejoined the credit union in 2017, I had the great fortune of working with Kathleen Fey. Kathleen was the Director of CrossState Foundations who introduced me to a great program that was near to her heart known as Reality Fairs. The goal of this program was to go into high schools and teach financial basics to students by putting them through a unique budgeting experience.

Students were assigned a career with a starting salary. They must then navigate from booth-to-booth making selections in such critical categories as housing, transportation, food, furniture, insurance, nightlife, and so many more. At the end, they visit a financial counselor to add up their expenditures and see if they were able to maintain a budget for that month.

Over the years, I have been able to modify this program to expand the teaching component to have a more classic lecture style that first introduces the students to **Credit** in general. The students learn how they look to a potential creditor so they first can obtain a loan. Next, we look at the dangers of only paying the minimum payments and how much they will pay back when interest compounds. Finally, we look at how they can raise their score if they have had credit missteps along their financial journey.



We follow up this discussion of credit with one of **Student Debt** and the long-term impact it can have on their finances. Our final discussion topic is about **Savings** and developing the discipline of saving early in life. We illustrate the importance of compounding interest and we share the “secret” of how they can all become a Millionaire.

When possible we give the students the ability to choose their own career path and university, trade, or training of their choice. This gives the students a more personalized experience and helps them to truly embrace the process. During the years of social distancing, we even developed an interactive Google Sheet to allow the students to participate in the Reality Fair “virtually” so they could have the budgeting experience another way.

We will tailor the program to whatever the school allows us for time, but we do our best to bring this critical information to the students.

It is just a beginning. The real goal is to begin a dialogue that starts in the schools, but continues in the homes. Parents, guardians, and grandparents are such a wealth of knowledge and experience. We just want to start the discussion before LIFE becomes a potential cruel teacher. We want to help these kids out on the right financial foot and arm them with knowledge.

We have been very fortunate to take this program this year to students at New Wilmington, Neshannock, and Butler County Community College to-date.

### It Won't Be Long Now

I think that we are all "victims of the moment" to some extent. Things that are happening to us today seem to be the biggest problems we will ever face. I know that as I look at my problems now... they seem to be big, daunting, overwhelming— you pick the adjective that best describes it for you.

What are you dealing with? The economy? Loss of loved ones? Relationships? Work issues? Lack of work? Health concerns? Aging parents? Loss of parents? Missing your parents?

Don't you sometimes want to ring that teenage neck of yours for worrying about what jeans were "cool enough" back then? Don't you just want to go back to when you didn't have the "real problems" of today - and you could almost be comforted by the trivial problems of back then.

Well guess what? Back then, they were real problems for me. I mean no, not the problems that I am dealing with today, but they still upset me. And when I would go to my Grandmother, she would say something close to "It Won't Be Long Now."



Putting things in perspective is so hard. Because in the moment is how we feel them; how we process them; how we have to live with them. And yet, when we take a longer view of our lives, we may find that our problems may just be trapped in the moment like we are.

I have been that person to have the door slammed shut and to feel that was the only way out; until I noticed there was a window I never knew existed!

Not all problems pass. Especially if we don't do anything about them. Our problems don't magically go away, they often take determination, time, effort, and sometimes even pain. But, "it won't be long".

I have these two kids, pictured here at 4 months and 4. Now they are 8 and 12. It won't be long until they are grown and they have their own issues. My hope is to give them the best perspective on where they are and the hope that in any situation "it won't be long" until it is over.

### Loan & Savings Rates

Loan Rates in APR\*, Savings APY\*\*  
Effective 4/1/23

#### Rates start as low as...

**Personal:**  
Up to \$4,000 6.74%  
Up to \$10,000 9.99%

**Share Secured:** 2.74%

**Untitled Autos:**  
Up to +40 Mo. 3.24%  
41-52 Mo. 3.74%  
53-64 Mo. 4.24%  
65-76 Mo. 4.49%  
77-88 Mo. 5.24%

**Used Autos: 2023-2021**  
Up to 40 Mo. 3.49%  
41-52 Mo. 4.37%  
53-64 Mo. 4.74%  
65-76 Mo. 4.99%  
77-88 Mo. 5.74%

**Used Autos: 2020-2019**  
Up to 52 Mo. 4.49%  
53-64 Mo. 4.99%  
65-76 Mo. 5.49%

**Used Autos: 2018-2017**  
Up to 52 Mo. 4.99%  
53-64 Mo. 5.49%  
65-76 Mo. 5.99%

**Used Autos: 2016-2011**  
Up to 48 Mo. 7.74%  
Up to 60 Mo. 8.49%

**Home Equity: (1st Position)**  
1-5 years 4.74% Fixed  
6-9 Years 5.49% Fixed  
10-14 Years 6.24% Fixed  
15 years 6.99% Fixed

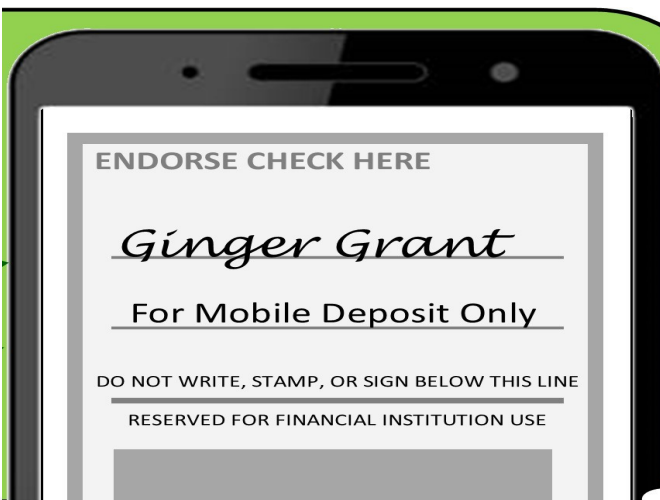
**(2nd Position)**  
1-5 years 5.24% Fixed  
6-9 Years 5.99% Fixed  
10-14 Years 6.74% Fixed  
15 years 7.49% Fixed

Members pay costs

\*\* Rates impacted by credit score.

**ALL RATES REFLECT A 0.25% DISCOUNT FOR AUTO PAY**

### Sign your check like this



#### VISA Cards - No Annual Fees

Platinum - 12.90% Fixed  
Rewards - 15.90% Fixed

**Share Accounts** 0.100%

**Loan Collateral** 0.100%

**IRA Accounts** 0.750%

Unless tied to a CD

#### Club Accounts

Christmas Club 0.200%

Vacation Club 0.200%

**Escrow Accounts** 0.100%

Interest paid on share accounts  
with a balance > \$100.

Inquire about rates for Motorcycles, ATVs,  
RVs, Watercraft, and Other Titled Vehicles.

Anyone who lives, works, volunteers, or attends church or school in Lawrence County is eligible to become a member and take full advantage of belonging.