

## Denver Business Journal Q&A

- Pre-COVID, new hires were required to volunteer at the Community Food Share, why was that important for Premier Members Credit Union? How has the spirit of that continued during COVID?

Prior to COVID, new hires at Premier Members took part in community outreach at Community Food Share each month. Credit Unions believe in “People helping people”, and we believe that it’s important to our employees to give back to their community, so we give them that opportunity right away. It’s helpful to new hires to better understand what is important to Premier Members and what we stand for in our communities. Since Community Food Share is an important partner of ours, it’s fitting to do that engagement at the time of onboarding to show our company’s commitment to them.

During COVID, all onboarding was done online, so we had to take a break from this level of community engagement, however, we hope to again have in-person onboarding again and start doing community engagement during the onboarding process.

- What are some of the ways Premier Members Credit Union employees give back to the community in 2022?

So far in 2022, Premier Members donated \$50,000 to the Marshall Fire relief efforts. In addition, we partnered with Impact on Education to help with a backpack drive and delivered “comfort kits” that included donated items such as blankets, books, yoga or meditative books, journals, pens, colored pencils, and gift cards for the Boulder Book Store and Target. Premier Members not only donated the journals and colored pencils but helped fill the backpacks and deliver them to all of the schools for students who were impacted by the wildfires.



We're also offering community engagement opportunities in person at Community Food Share, A Precious Child, JA Finance Park and Junior Achievement/I Have a Dream Economics for Success Classes, as well as virtually at Intercambio, helping refugees practice speaking English.



- Can you share a little about the Community Impact Report and why it's important?

The Community Impact Report shares everything that Premier Members Credit Union has done in our communities for all things Community Relations. It both tells a story and provides real data to quantify our impact. It's important to not just talk about the good things you're doing as an organization, but to support those communications with metrics so you can have a baseline improve your community engagement. While the old saying holds true, "not everything measured is important, not everything important can be measured," having some combination of storytelling and data can help you identify better ways to engage in the community.

One of the pillars at Premier Members Credit Union is Premier Gives. Founded in 2012, Premier Gives provides the community with funds and employee community outreach hours to support the initiatives of education, financial literacy, and basic needs. Premier Gives provides more than \$300,000 annually in community support from employee and credit union sponsorships and donations, and grants \$35,500 annually in youth scholarships.

The credit union offers monthly Premier Gives projects to our workforce through a variety of outreach opportunities. These projects help strengthen the communities we serve by addressing basic needs such as clothing, shelter, and hunger.

As part of the Premier Gives strategy, we leverage our relationship with Mile High United Way (MHUW), and provide our communities with a trifecta of employee outreach opportunities, corporate funding, and employee giving. Through United Way, the credit union encourages employees to make financial contributions to nonprofits of their choice by providing a 50% corporate match. In 2021, the Premier Members' United Way giving campaign raised more than \$65,000.

Along with United Way, Premier Gives focuses on nonprofits that fulfill community basic needs. While the credit union scaled-back its in-person community outreach opportunities due to COVID-19 again in 2021, it provided both in-person and virtual opportunities for participation by our staff and found creative and impactful ways to continue to support its nonprofit partners.

In addition to the pandemic, the Boulder area was also impacted by a tragic, mass shooting in a local grocery store. In response to this unexpected and shocking event, Premier Members launched its 2021 Crisis Fund, to support the Community Foundation Boulder County's Crisis Fund. These support dollars went directly to those affected by the shooting. Premier Members challenged its members to a \$50,000 match; and the credit union also facilitated the raising of \$43,000 from members and Premier Members' vendors, for a grand total of \$93,000 in donations.

Every year, Premier Members Credit Union recognizes high school seniors with proven academic, community involvement, and extracurricular activities, by providing higher-education scholarships. The credit union rewards scholarships to individuals, local education foundations, and nonprofits within our communities.

In 2021, Premier Gives awarded scholarships to seven high school students. Through the scholarships, Premier Gives recognized a teen mom through Hope House of Colorado, helping her achieve tuition to a two-year college, and created educational opportunities for three homeless youth in Castle Rock, through the Premier Members' Hide in Plain Sight Scholarship.

Premier Members provides financial literacy education to students, primarily at four Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) high schools: Boulder, Centaurus, Fairview, and Monarch—through business classes, DECA, and Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA). The credit union also sponsors student branches in each of these schools. The student branches are overseen by branch managers, and run by paid student interns, who also earn business credits. These initiatives assist in teaching important money management skills to students before graduation. The student branches help youth gain valuable work experience as branch employees. In 2021, the student branches were closed, due to COVID-19 restrictions. The student interns employed by Premier Members worked in their local branches.

In addition to school districts, key relationships with education-based nonprofit organizations help Premier Members invest in the community's youth. The credit union leverages its relationships with the FBLA and DECA school clubs to reach additional BVSD students. Premier Members also partners with Impact on Education (BVSD's foundation), Parent Engagement Network (PEN), and the Westminster Public Schools Foundation. It also partners with TLC Learning Center in Longmont, and the credit union sponsors various school-based clubs. Premier Members Credit Union's Loan Interest for Education (LIFE) program partners with BVSD schools by sharing interest earnings from loans opened by members, and designated to a school. New in 2021, the credit union became the title sponsor of BVSD's School Food Project's 2021-22 school lunch calendar. 25,000 calendars are printed annually, with the majority going to every K-8 household; and the remainder distributed to high school students and faculty. Calendars are available in both English and Spanish.

Additionally, Premier Members provides annual financial literacy instruction to K-12 students through schools and community outreach. We provided 85 classroom presentations for over 500 students and sponsored the Junior Achievement Finance Park.

Premier Members sponsors branch and enterprise events to connect with communities and increase branch awareness. Through community engagement, we focus on building relationships and adding memberships. In 2021, our total financial community outreach support was \$462,607.

- Why is it important for businesses to encourage employees to give back to the community?

Most employees want to work for a company that allows them time to give back and engage with the community they serve. Having a deeper connection to the community also brings a stronger connection to the company, giving employees a better sense of purpose beyond the daily tasks needed to carry out their "job". Premier Members pays for employees to do community outreach each year, and employees are encouraged to present volunteerism opportunities that they truly care about. This program is really about connecting our staff with the community directly beyond the daily transactions.

- What advice would you give to other corporations looking to improve employee volunteerism and involvement in the community?

Community involvement should start during the recruiting process, so interested candidates will understand the commitment you have to community outreach, and the opportunities they will have as an employee. When onboarding, give new hires the chance to participate in community engagement activities with other new hires, it creates a bond amongst coworkers for the first time. Finally, encourage all your employees to present new ideas and organizations to support in these efforts. There are literally thousands of organizations that can use volunteer hours, you want everyone to have a voice in who you choose to support.