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**LAFCU's personal finance course transforms financial futures across generations**

*Michigan credit union's comprehensive course empowers participants to conquer debt, elevate credit scores*

LANSING, Mich. — The transformative, life-changing power of LAFCU's comprehensive personal finance course was evident during the graduation ceremony of its Pathway to Financial Transformation 2023-2024 cohort at the Alfreda Schmidt Southside Community Center.

Graduates, amid an audience of family, friends and LAFCU staff, in bright blue caps and gowns, proudly shared and joyfully recounted



Graduate Noelle Gray tosses her cap during the 2023-2024 LAFCU Pathway to Financial Transformation graduation ceremony to celebrate completing the eight-month course and making considerable strides in her financial well-being.



The 2023-2024 cohort donned caps and gowns and smiled proudly with (L to R) Kelli Ellsworth Etchison, LAFCU chief marketing officer and chief diversity officer and Shelia Scott, LAFCU community financial education and business development officer.

their remarkable journeys and accomplishments during the eight-month, 16-module course. Each student had a unique story and different reason for signing up and completing the course, yet they shared a common aspiration to enhance their financial well-being and improve the financial futures of their loved ones.

"I moved from Mexico in 2011, intending to stay just five years, but our circumstances changed," said Maria Espinosa, a graduate of the course. "The culture of retirement and savings differs greatly between Mexico and the United States. In Mexico, living paycheck to paycheck is the only way of life - no designated savings or long-term thinking. The Pathway course has helped me understand the importance of planning for retirement. Despite enjoying my work as a chemist, I had never seriously considered

retirement plans until now. It's a cultural shift I'm adapting to, and I'm so grateful to Shelia and LAFCU for helping me navigate this next phase of life."

The Pathway to Financial Transformation course was specifically designed to span eight months to show students the tangible benefits of making changes in their financial behavior and habits.



Shar McFadden poses with her husband and five children after successfully completing the eight-month, LAFCU Pathway to Financial Transformation course. McFadden substantially lowered her debt and established savings accounts for her children.

its other educational programs that cater to both adults and K-12 students. The personal finance course is free of charge and structured like a college course with a comprehensive curriculum that discusses everything from saving and budgeting to credit scores to retirement and barriers that prevent equal access to financial resources. LAFCU staff and a representative from LAFCU's financial counseling partner, GreenPath Financial Wellness, also serve as featured speakers to discuss ways students can achieve financial stability.

"I truly believe that this course is one of the best things we as a credit union do annually," said LAFCU CEO Patrick Spyke. "We're able to ensure those in our community have the tools and skills to

"Each student shows up with their own story and financial history," said Shelia Scott, community financial education & business development officer who led the course. "We don't judge anyone – we meet them where they're at on their financial journey. Together, we navigate each set of circumstances and personal goals. We aim to cultivate healthier financial habits and foster continuous improvement and set each participant up for success both in the short and long term."

At the graduation ceremony, Cyrene Irelan and Belynda Williams, sisters and graduates of the 2022-2023 cohort, delivered the commencement address. They shared their personal insights, invaluable information and lessons learned and newfound confidence stemming from their transformed behaviors and more secure financial futures.

The Pathway to Financial Transformation course is the cornerstone of LAFCU's financial literacy initiatives and complements



Brianna Petway celebrates with the course instructor, Shelia Scott from LAFCU, after successfully completing the program.



Maria Espinosa celebrates her hard work and completion of LAFCU's eight-month, comprehensive personal financial course with her husband and son.

course again in fall 2024. For more information, contact Shelia Scott at [SScott@lafcu.com](mailto:SScott@lafcu.com). Participation is open to LAFCU members and nonmembers.

### **About LAFCU**

Chartered in 1936, LAFCU is a not-for-profit financial cooperative open for membership to anyone who lives, works, worships or attends school in Michigan and to businesses and other entities located in Michigan. The credit union serves more than 74,000 members and holds over \$1 billion in assets. LAFCU offers a comprehensive range of financial products and services as well as an expanding complement of financial technology solutions. Members enjoy benefits such as low fees, low-interest rates on loans, high yields on savings, discounts, knowledgeable employees and nationwide access to fee-free ATMs. A recipient of the national Dora Maxwell Social Responsibility Community Service Award for credit unions, LAFCU enriches the communities it serves by supporting many organizations and causes. To learn more about LAFCU, visit [www.lafcu.com](http://www.lafcu.com).

make smart financial decisions and not only set them up for success but ensure their children and children's children can benefit from the lessons learned and information gained in this course.”

With an unwavering dedication to fostering a brighter financial future for all, LAFCU remains committed to extending the reach and broadening the accessibility of its innovative and transformative personal finance course. The Michigan credit union will offer the Pathway to Financial Transformation

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