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LAFCU personal finance course transforms graduates' lives, creates pathways to success

Michigan credit union's 8-month, comprehensive course helped participants pay off debt, improve credit scores

LANSING, Mich. — The profound impact of LAFCU's award-winning, comprehensive personal finance course was palpable during the graduation ceremony of its 2022-2023 cohort April 20.

Amid celebratory hugs and the tossing of graduation caps, the graduates

proudly shared with attendees what they learned and gained from the eight-month, 16-module course, which ranged from a

credit rating boost of more than 100 points to debt repayment of more than \$20K to the establishment of savings accounts for their children.



The 2023 graduates of LAFCU's Pathway to Financial Transformation course throw their caps in the air to celebrate their hard work and completion of the eight-month, comprehensive course.



Kelli Ellsworth Etchison, LAFCU chief marketing officer and chief diversity officer, gives the commencement speech to the graduates of the 2022-2023 Pathway to Financial Transformation cohort.

"I've gained so much invaluable information during this course and have already made huge strides to change certain behaviors and feel more secure and confident in my financial future," noted Belynda Williams of Eaton Rapids, Michigan.

The graduates of the 2022-2023 Pathway to Financial Transformation cohort are Elizabeth Ronning, Lansing;

Renola Wells, Waterford; Alex Morris, Waterford; Cyrene Irelan, Jackson; Belynda Williams, Eaton Rapids; Denise Clark, St. Johns; and Don DeBaptiste, Rockford.

Participants had diverse backgrounds, ranging from age to education to financial status. Yet they all shared the desire to better themselves financially. Participants Belynda Williams and Cyrene Irelan are sisters who used each other as accountability partners to complete the course and improve their financial well-



The 2022-2023 cohort donned cap and gowns and smiled proudly with (L to R) Shelia Scott, LAFCU community financial education and business development officer; Kelli Ellsworth Etchison, LAFCU chief marketing officer and chief diversity officer; and LAFCU CEO Patrick Spyke.

being. Renola Wells and Alex Morris are married and have not only made a commitment to each other as a couple but also to complete the finance course together.

“There were seven total graduates in this cohort, but it was the perfect sized class because these were the students who showed up week after week, were committed, and did the work,” said Shelia Scott, community financial education & business development officer who led the course. “Each student had their own story and goals, and we all worked together to create budgets and better habits to help them improve their financial behavior throughout the course as well as beyond the virtual classroom.”

The classes were spread over a span of eight months so that students could see the benefits of making changes in their financial behavior and habits.



Husband and wife, Renola Wells and Alex Morris of Waterford, Michigan, completed the course together and pose with one of their four children after receiving their diplomas.



Sisters, (L to R) Cyrene Irelan and Belynda Williams did the Pathways to Financial Transformation course together and celebrated with the course instructor, Shelia Scott from LAFCU, after successfully completing the program.

"During the Pathway to Financial Transformation course, these individuals were the students," said LAFCU CEO Patrick Spyke. "However, they can now go out into the community as teachers, sharing what they've learned with their own families, friends, and acquaintances. They are not only bringing about financial change in their own lives, but they're creating pathways for others to do the same."

The Pathway to Financial

Transformation personal finance course complements LAFCU's financial literacy program, which includes free classes for adults on financial topics and real-world financial education opportunities for K-12 students.

The Pathway to Financial Transformation Course is free of charge and structured like a college course, complete with a curriculum, assignments, and quizzes. LAFCU staff as well as a representative from LAFCU's financial counseling partner, GreenPath Financial Wellness, were also featured speakers and discussed ways students could achieve financial stability.

LAFCU plans to continue offering the course to help others improve their financial future. The next cohort will begin in the fall of 2023. For more information, contact Shelia Scott at 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 \$986 million in assets. It was named a Best Credit Union to Work For in 2020. 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, call 800.748.0228 or visit www.lafcu.com.

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