

## New Program to Assist Businesses

The Growth Opportunities Fund (GO Fund) has officially been launched. The GO Fund seeks to make equity-like investments in growing businesses in Central and Upstate New York. The Fund is targeting businesses which have demonstrated growth potential but may not have the collateral required for a small business loan. Investment from the Fund will help to leverage other types of financing and make businesses more attractive to outside investors. The GO Fund is seeking to help revitalize economically distressed regions through the infusion of its capital to help create viable businesses and promote job growth.

The GO Fund has assembled a team of experienced financial experts to help make the appropriate investments and provide assistance to the growing businesses. In addition, the Fund will rely on the resources of Alternatives' CEO and business loan department for technical and other assistance.

The GO Fund is establishing marketing materials, promoting the Fund and reviewing proposals. We hope to make our first investment early in 2001.

Jeff Lawhead, [jeff@alternatives.org](mailto:jeff@alternatives.org), 273-3582 ext.846

## Money Management Class

Has managing money always puzzled you? If you've ever wanted to learn more about money management, Money Whys, Money Wise may be for you. Our six session money management and economic literacy training course will provide you with the skills, knowledge and understanding to take control of your finances, and improve the financial well-being of you and your household. The next session will begin in early February and is open to Alternatives members and others in the community. Fees are on a sliding scale. For more information, or to sign up, contact Joe Cummins, [jcummins@alternatives.org](mailto:jcummins@alternatives.org), 273-3582 ext. 829.

## Understanding Mutual Funds

Learn how to invest in mutual funds at a Seminar with Financial Advisor Brian Laverty

### He'll talk about:

- what to look for - management, fees, performance, etc.
- SRI vs. traditional mutual funds
- load vs. no load
- asset allocation using mutual funds
- using a financial advisor

**When:** January 29 7PM

**Where:** Loan Center, 109 S. Albany St.

**Cost:** \$5 for members, registration required

Call Chris Chiambalero for more information, 273-3582, ext. 826.

## Round Off

Our Round Off recipient for January is a community service class at the Alternative Community School (ACS). The class promotes community service by young people in Ithaca, and focuses on how to learn through that service. Funds will be used to support a week long trip to the Freedom School on the Akwesasne reservation, a school dedicated to preserving Mohawk language and culture, and towards a building project at the Freedom School.

### Sign Up Now

We have many available slots for our Round Off program in 2001! The program is open to non-profit organizations who are community oriented and socially minded and have an account at Alternatives. For other requirements and information on applying, please contact Chris Chiambalero, [chris@alternatives.org](mailto:chris@alternatives.org) or 273-3582 ext. 826.

## Art Gallery

Come see Adee Schreiber's arrestingly vivid portraits in the lobby now until the end of January.

## Holiday Closings

Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Monday, January 15



# Alternative Currents

For Members of the Alternatives Federal Credit Union

301 W. State St., Ithaca, NY • 607/273-4611

January 2001

## Making a Difference With Socially Responsible Investing

### Why Invest in Alternative Energy?

What energy problem? We see protests in Europe and consumers in America paying higher gas prices, as well as potential brownouts in major US metropolitan areas. The petroleum industry in most industrialized countries wields considerable power over government officials. They support third world oppressive regimes where oil is found. In the last decade we fought a war over oil to feed our addiction. Not since the Carter administration has our country made a conscious effort to reduce our dependence on oil.

In California and Colorado where electricity is at a critical level, what solution is proposed? Build more fossil burning power plants! Southern California and Colorado have sunny days most of the year. Why not create substantial tax incentives for those households and corporations that invest in solar and alternative green energy to take the burden off the current power grid? Unfortunately, those companies in the alternative energy market don't have the capital or political clout to make the major change in the political arena that is needed.

But despite these odds, there are companies that are working towards green alternative energy through solar cell technology, fuel cells, wind power and mass transportation. And recently the stock markets have started to recognize these kinds of stocks. Unfortunately, it takes an increase in fuel prices to spawn larger support of alternative energy. If or when prices come down, I'm afraid most will become complacent again. As for those of us in the Socially Responsible Investing community, it is nice to

see non-SRI investors realizing the value of investing in alternative/green energy stocks. Our hope is through positive investment dollars going into these companies, a cleaner, sustainable energy environment can be realized. But until we have more state and federal attention paid to alternative energy, I'm afraid that these stocks will remain highly volatile as well as speculative, especially now that two oil men will be the President and Vice-President.

### Enjoying Our Collaboration

Finally, I want to say how much I've enjoyed the past year working with the members and staff at Alternatives. The atmosphere of community and friendship makes it a positive experience each day I come to Ithaca. I want to wish everyone happiness and success in the new year. Through socially responsible investing and community investments, we can and do make a positive difference in our communities and hopefully the world.

Brian Laverty,  
[brian@alternatives.org](mailto:brian@alternatives.org),  
273-3582 ext 831



## Highlights of 2000

The planning and permitting of the new building occupied much of our attention this year. Building a building sure is a complicated business! There are many people to please along the way. First, to design a building that is functional we conferred with members, board and staff. We needed to get approval from the County Planning Department, City Planning and Development Board, Ithaca Shade Tree Advisory Council and City Forester, County City Building Department, NYS Department of Transportation, NYS Fire Code, NYSEG, Department of Environmental Conservation... you get the idea. Currently, we are in the final review by our regulators, the NCUA. Watch the building progress on our web page, [www.alternatives.org](http://www.alternatives.org), by clicking on the drawing of the new building.

Alternatives garnered national attention when we were selected to be one of 12 grassroots organizations depicting civic engagement for a Pew Charitable Trust documentary project, *Indivisible: Stories of American Communities*. Learn more at [www.indivisible.org](http://www.indivisible.org), and visit the free postcard exhibit in Center Ithaca until January 15.

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Mortgage rates ..... ext. 850  
Dollars for Dreams ..... ext. 808  
Brian Laverty, Financial Advisor ..... ext. 831

Alternatives CU@Home on web page:  
[www.alternatives.org](http://www.alternatives.org)  
e-mail: [afcua@alternatives.org](mailto:afcua@alternatives.org)

**VISA, lost or stolen**  
(800)991-4961

**Hours:**  
Mon-Thurs 9-3 Fri 9-6, Sat 9-12  
Alternatives Loan Center Hours: Mon-Fri. 9-5  
DiD Hours Fri 3:30-5:30; Sat 9:30- 11:30

### Board of Directors:

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Karen Jamarusty, Leslyn McBean

### Supervisory Committee

PO Box 715, Ithaca 14851  
[supervisory@alternatives.org](mailto:supervisory@alternatives.org)

### Staff e-mail:

Any staff can be reached by e-mail:  
[firstname@alternatives.org](mailto:firstname@alternatives.org)

### Staff direct dial:

(607)273-3582, ext:

Robin Booth ..... 847  
Jacquelyn Brashear ..... 804  
Ron Campbell ..... 825  
Amy Capalongo ..... 813  
Carol Chernikoff ..... 812  
Chris Chiambalero ..... 826  
Meredith Smith Converse ..... 844  
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Anita Peebles ..... 857  
Melissa Pollack ..... 820  
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Gerry Ruggiero ..... 853  
Deirdre Silverman ..... 816  
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**1-877-273-AFCU**

toll-free for our out-of-town members

Your savings federally insured to \$100,000

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## Member Service Department

This year was a challenging one for the member service department. The tight labor market made it difficult to hire and retain staff. As a result, our members suffered through some long waits in the lobby. We worked hard during these times to continue providing excellent service. We developed a list of off-site banking options to *Get Out of Line*. We also changed the structure of our department by creating two positions to handle detailed research questions and inquiries.

Training continues to be a focus for the member service staff. We often work with other departments to gain a thorough understanding of the wide range of products and programs at the Credit Union.

You've probably noticed some new faces on the telling line. We've hired great additions to the crew this year: Robin Booth, Irene Kapiris, Jenni Cunningham, and Anita Peebles. Abigail MacBain worked with us over the summer and will return during the holidays.

Congratulations to Kathleen Cooke, who was promoted to Senior Member Service Specialist and to Amy Capalongo, who was promoted to Member Service Specialist.

Melissa Pollack, [melissa@alternatives.org](mailto:melissa@alternatives.org), 273-3582 ext. 820

## Loan Department

2000 saw a change in the structure of the loan department. The separate consumer, business and mortgage loan departments were integrated under the capable direction of Carol Chernikoff, Director of Lending.

The department accomplished a number of their goals in 2000:

Training for Director of Lending. Carol attended Business Loan training and Risk Based Lending training

Back-up in the Loan Department: Each department wrote and presented "frequently asked questions" so everyone would have deeper knowledge and be able to assist members when the "expert" is not available. Cross training will continue in 2001.

Work more cohesively as a department: Regular monthly loan department meetings were instituted for cross training, discussing concerns, staffing requests, etc.

Cross department training: Loan staff have presented trainings to other departments in the Credit Union as well as in whole staff meetings

Gathering statistics and tracking the results of our lending: All new accounts are now coded with information that can provide data needed for funders. Monthly department reports are generated with additional information.

We are in the process of formulating our goals for 2001. They will include new program development, cross selling opportunities, outsourcing some tasks, additional clerical staff and more staff training.

Carol Chernikoff, [carol@alternatives.org](mailto:carol@alternatives.org), 273-3582 ext. 812

## Consumer Lending

The year 2000 was an exciting year for the Consumer Loan Department. Late in 1999 we introduced Opportunity Lending. 2000 was our first full year of a new way to do loans. Opportunity Lending makes credit available to as many members as possible with interest rates reflecting each borrower's specific credit standing. We are able to reward members who have an excellent payment history with rates that most often are lower than other institutions. We can provide loans to members who may have had some credit problems in the past, or no credit history, with rates that are far better than what they may receive from other lenders. It's gratifying to be able to assist more members than ever.

In 2000 we saw an increase in use of our web site to apply for loans. Members have found using the internet quick and convenient. We have been able to give members the status or answer of their loan request within 24 hours.

Ronda Porras, [ronda@alternatives.org](mailto:ronda@alternatives.org), 273-3582 ext. 815

## Mortgage Lending

The year 2000 saw several changes in the Mortgage Department. In February, Diana Leigh became the Director of Mortgage Lending, and Meredith Smith-Converse joined our team as a mortgage loan officer.

Some of the highlights of 2000 include:

Began offering the option of waiving escrow accounts for taxes and insurance

Gave more members Home Equity loans

Began focusing more energy on marketing efforts. Because overall mortgage numbers are down, we're doing more outreach, developing surveys, and working on incentive programs

Our home loan programs are excellent and our rates competitive. Please remember to recommend us to friends.

Diana Leigh, [diana@alternatives.org](mailto:diana@alternatives.org), 273-3582 ext.814

## Business Lending

The fear of the Y2K bug behind us, our first year of the new century was busy and productive. We assisted over 50 members grow or start their own business. Approximately 30% of these loans were made under our new partnership with the U. S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

In March, Alternatives signed on with the SBA as a Microloan Intermediary Lender. Under this program, we are loaned money by the SBA and re-loan it to you, our member businesses, up to a maximum of \$25,000. Funds are also granted to Alternatives to provide businesses with training and technical assistance, through CEO, a vital component to the success of many of our member businesses. It is a win/win program for all of us.

John Halleron, [john@alternatives.org](mailto:john@alternatives.org), 273-3582 ext. 841

## Community Development

2000 has been a year of consolidating previous gains in the Community Development Department. Our three programs—Dollars for Dreams Youth Credit Union, Individual Development Accounts, and Community Enterprise Opportunities—are working more closely together on education and services to participants. The full-time VISTA volunteers provided by the Corporation for National Service have helped implement program services and brought energy and excitement to our department.

In external funding, we received designation as a Microloan Intermediary from the Small Business Administration, to provide small business loans and post-loan technical assistance in a six-county area. The Park Foundation provided a major grant for our IDA Program. We also received major support in the form of low-interest deposits from banks around the country, as part of the Bank Enterprise Award Program of the U.S. Treasury Department. The CEO program was chosen to participate in a national demonstration, sponsored by the Aspen Institute, to test the effectiveness of microenterprise delivery models. We anticipate increased foundation support in 2001, to complement our state and federal funding.

Deirdre Silverman, [deirdre@alternatives.org](mailto:deirdre@alternatives.org), 273-3582 ext. 816

## CEO

The year 2000 brought about new faces in the CEO department with three new staff people: Pat Woods, Program Director; Tracie Dissinger, Technical Assistant Specialist; and Sarah Sullivan, CEO VISTA. The CEO Program continues to flourish with the expansion of the Entrepreneurial Training Course into Cortland County. Between Tompkins and Cortland Counties, the course was offered four times this year with 89 enrollees.

In addition to the popular classes, the CEO staff provided intensive one-to-one work to entrepreneurs, as well as seminars and roundtable meetings. New this year, the staff experimented with work groups where small groups of CEO participants gather to work on certain sections of their business plans in a peer group setting.

Towards the end of the year, the CEO department sent out a survey to give participants a chance to let us know about their businesses as well as what they would like to see from CEO in the future. If you have not received a survey, please contact us at Alternatives to update your contact information. We look forward to hearing from all of you.

Pat Woods, [patrick@alternatives.org](mailto:patrick@alternatives.org), 273-3582 ext. 852

## IDAs

Our Individual Development Accounts program will celebrate its 3rd year anniversary in February of 2001. In this time, more than 100 area residents have saved a combined total of \$83,190.11 in Individual Development Accounts. Using IDA savings and matching funds, three people have made essential home repairs, four have expanded their businesses, five IDA participants (two of whom are youth) are currently attending college and eight families have purchased homes. We currently have 81 participants and we're growing. In January, Alternatives will be

partnering with Challenge Industries to provide IDAs to their entrepreneurial clients. We're also offering IDAs to women and minorities who've graduated or are currently participating in the Community Enterprise Opportunities program. We will continue to seek out partnerships with other community organizations to provide IDAs.

Michelle Menter, [michelle@alternatives.org](mailto:michelle@alternatives.org), 273-3582 ext. 848

## Dollars for Dreams Youth Credit Union Program



Lisa Smith and Matt Caproth

The DfD year was marked with great transition as it saw a majority of its veteran youth staff graduate, as well as the introduction of a new coordinator during the last quarter. Despite these staffing challenges, our accomplishments for the year are as follows:

We maintained the DfD branches at Alternatives, ACS, and Boynton Middle School, ending the year with 737 accounts and a total of \$304,000

DfDer Lisa Smith won the Youth Volunteer of the Year award from the New York State Credit Union League

Anne Koplinka-Loehr represented DfD at the NFCDCU (National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions) Annual Conference in Denver, Colorado

We sponsored a children's story and foreign coin activity at the Kid's Bookfest at Boynton Middle School

DfD participated in Credit Unions Care for Kids, collecting toys and donating them to the Red Cross Shelter

We initiated a financial literacy curriculum

We look forward to the new year for positive growth and development.

Joe Cummins, [joe@alternatives.org](mailto:joe@alternatives.org), 273-3582 ext. 829