

Alternatives Federal Credit Union Members Quarterly



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Upcoming events

January

- 10** Business CENTS: Coffee Talk
- 23** Instagram with Samantha Abrams, Emmy's Organics

February

- 14** Business CENTS: Coffee Talk
- 21** Becoming a Business Owner
- 28** Becoming a Business Owner

March

- 2** Showing up for the sale with Erica Marx
- 14** Business CENTS: Coffee Talk
- 16** Creating an email marketing campaign with True Creative

Details and how to participate are online at alternatives.org.

Holiday closings

- New Year's Day: Monday, January 1
- Martin Luther King Day: Monday, January 15
- President's Day: Monday, February 19

Artist of the Month

January

Frank Leahy

February

Jamileh Mohseni

March

Barbara Perrone

A special thank you to our last quarter Artists of the Month:

Leonora Erica Morris
Marina Gershon
Isaac Sharp
Donna Acquavella
Kim Ritter
Grace Rychwalski
Jennifer Sullivan
Allison R. Watkins

01 Good things happen



By: Eric Levine

We are proud to have successfully delivered our mission to serve the underserved in 2017. Alternatives continues our commitment to economic justice while providing the local community with tools and a helping hand to climb out of the cycle of poverty. As **Kenneth McLaurin**, a volunteer board member stated: “Be Broke Better” on the way to financial sustainability.

Alternatives is small but mighty. In addition to matching or surpassing most financial products and technology of other financial institutions, we remain the only local financial institution with significant Community Programs. On a non-profit basis, we consistently provide the community with free financial and credit counseling, financial education and coaching, technical assistance for small businesses, and asset building programs with grant-matched savings. Our volunteer [Free Tax Preparation Program](#) returns millions of dollars to the local economy while saving income qualified taxpayers significant fees. Our [Student Credit Union](#) teaches kids the value of a savings habit and offers high-interest savings accounts for college.

We make a difference in the community with non-predatory lending programs. It's important to us to spend time with our borrowers, help with their credit reports and provide education on how to improve their credit scores and loan applications. Our philosophy is “we don't say ‘no,’ we say ‘when.” While we do have risk-based pricing, we do not decide a loan based on credit score. We have innovative loan offerings, but we do not grant loans which people

can't afford. We are grateful to serve borrowers who other lenders may not work with.

The support of our members makes our continued success and services possible. We strive to maintain an income-diverse membership, and treat our less wealthy members with the same respect as members of means. Our members support us with deposits, card transactions, and borrowing. While the local community has choices of where to bank and borrow, we hope that they choose Alternatives. To continue our growth, we rely on the local community to choose us to provide exceptional financial services, and because people vote with their wallets to support the local economy, and fight systemic income inequality. Thank you for being part of the solution.

02 Mobility+

By: Asif Chaudry
EMV Chip Cards

Alternatives enters 2018 having reached a major milestone—completion of the EMV Chip Card conversion. Featuring improved security and our new look and feel, we took steps two years ago to replace all of our old magnetic stripe cards with the new chip cards. With an emphasis on the security of the chip, we kept the stripe knowing that some merchants have not updated their equipment. Please remember that the merchant can always manually punch in the card number to process your purchase.

Fraud protection

Your protection is always a priority! Soon Alternatives will be rolling out a new texting service to update our fraud phone call service. Look for an initial enrollment text in January and sign up! After that our 24/7/365 fraud service will reach out to you by text to verify questionable charges rather than attempting a robocall. So please make sure that you have an updated mobile phone number on file with us, either by calling, stopping in or updating your Profile tab on [Online Access!](#)

03 Building a strong foundation

By: Carol Chernikoff

Alternatives has been offering home loans for almost 40 years: from purchase mortgages to refinancing, from home equity lines of credit to solar home equity loans. Everyone's situation is different and we work closely to understand our members' needs. Building strong relationships and providing solutions is our top priority.

The mortgage team at Alternatives recognizes that the path to home ownership is not always a straight line. We take a personalized approach in educating and assisting our members, regardless of their financial situation. We meet people where they're at, whether they're in the process of building or re-building credit, saving towards a down payment, or are ready to purchase.

Alternatives offers various products to meet borrower needs, including [fixed and adjustable rate mortgages](#) for first time purchases or refinances, as well as [home equity lines of credit](#) and home equity loans. Our team works closely with our in-house [financial counselors](#) and [First Home Club](#) staff to connect eligible borrowers with programs that further support responsible, affordable and well-informed home ownership.

Our focus is to be transparent, approachable and supportive throughout each stage of the home buying process. We value the opportunity to help community members achieve greater financial freedom through [financial education](#), asset-development, and home ownership.

We look forward to working with you! Get in touch and let us know how we can help!

Amy Chapman
achapman@alternatives.org

Phil Shay
pshay@alternatives.org

Barbara Nellenback
bnellenback@alternatives.org

04 SkipPayment

By: Tammy Drost

Would you like to have a choice on where to use some of your cash for two months of the year? We thought so, that's why we are offering [SkipPayment](#) on certain credit union loans. Have more than one eligible loan? [SkipPayment](#) on each.

There is no form to request it, just ask any teller next time you're at the branch or submit your request by phone. We'll do the rest! Visit [alternatives.org](#) to see if your loan qualifies.

05 It's great for business

By: Kathleen Clark

With our busy business members in mind, [Business CENTS](#) has expanded offerings to include video conferencing consultations. As a business owner, we know every day includes too many things on your to-do list. We wanted to make it easy for you to take advantage of [free one-on-one consultations](#) with a CENTS advisor without having to find the time to come into the branch. To schedule a phone, in person, or video consultation, please visit [alternatives.org](#).

[Business CENTS](#) is searching for member businesses interested in being featured in 2018 as a [Business of the Month](#)! Participating as a [Business of the Month](#) is a fantastic free promotional opportunity to highlight your business on our website and social media channels as well as a designated tabling spot in our lobby with time available to interact with interested prospects.

Stephen Singer, Member-Owner of [SRS Unlimited Imagemaker](#) and previous [Business of the Month](#) participant states, "As [Business of the Month](#) and owner of [SRS Unlimited Imagemaker](#), I was able to reach out to Alternatives members who were previously unaware of my services. Over 100 Alternatives members showed interest in winning a 1st or 2nd prize by filling out a raffle. It is also a great form of networking—this

personal touch can *mean a lot to people.*"

To find out more and reserve a month, please contact [Kathleen Clark](#) at kclark@alternatives.org.

06 Supporting business

By: Kathleen Clark

Alternatives is proud to announce our official partnership with [Business Leaders of Colors \(BLoC\), LLC](#). Locally formed, BLoC provides business and professional support to communities of color by marketing member businesses, offering training and providing administrative support and networking opportunities.

Alternatives will primarily support this partnership through our [Business CENTS Program](#). We are committed to BLoC's mission to develop and strengthen the entrepreneurial efforts of people of colors through our on-going partnership. [Kathleen Clark](#), Business Development Manager, said, "We recognize the need for a concentrated effort to support aspiring and existing business owners in our communities of colors, and we are grateful to BLoC for their efforts. We look forward to a long relationship and being able to provide necessary resources and assistance needed by BLoC members to succeed in business development, management, and growth." BLoC members will receive special benefits with Alternatives such as event sponsorship and fee discounts to [Business CENTS workshops and classes](#).

Gladys Brangman, Managing Member, [Business Leaders of Colors](#), stated, "Getting this support from Alternatives is a huge win for BLoC because our missions are aligned as we both desire to build wealth and create economic opportunity for underserved people and communities. One of BLoC's goals is to help businesses of colors thrive and supporting one another, is a great place to start". To learn more about BLoC and join as a member, please visit [businessleadersofcolors.com](#)

07 Giving Tuesday



By: Grace Rychwalski

On November 28, 2017, [Alternatives Impact](#) participated in [Giving Tuesday](#), a day dedicated to giving back to non-profits and other charitable causes. The [Giving Tuesday](#) movement was launched as a response to the post-Thanksgiving shopping rush of Black Friday and Cyber Monday and encourages shoppers to direct their money where it can make a difference, whether in their community or internationally.

To celebrate [Giving Tuesday](#) here at Alternatives, our staff set up a table in the lobby where members could donate toward Impact, take [#UNselfies](#) (selfless selfies), and share why and how they give in their daily lives. Our lobby wall soon became lined with "[Giving Stories](#)," including one particularly heartfelt message from a member business owner who benefitted from our [Business CENTS Program](#). She wrote that she donated "because you helped me 16 years ago!"

[Impact](#) is proud of the amount of community engagement our [Giving Tuesday](#) campaign received, both in our lobby and online. We were able to raise additional money to support our Community Programs, and it opened doors for education and conversation about the great work we do here.

With one [Giving Tuesday](#) under our belt, we're excited for what's to come next year! And if you just can't wait for a special occasion to donate to Impact, rest assured that you can give a gift of any size throughout the year. Simply return the slip on the back of this Members Quarterly, go online to [alternatives.org](#), or talk to a Member Experience Associate the next time you're visiting the branch!



07 It's your money, why not keep it?

Finger Lakes Region, New York ★



Get Connected. Get Answers.

By: Brian Zapf

Are you paying high fees to file your taxes? Are you sure you're getting all the credits you deserve? Why pay when you can get it done for free? From January 17 - April 14, Alternatives Federal Credit Union offers free tax preparation for those who qualify. If your income is less than \$54,000, you could be eligible for free tax preparation!

Alternatives' Free Tax Prep Program

serves low and middle-income community members as an IRS-sponsored Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

site. Trained volunteers prepare federal and state income tax returns and counsel clients to make sure they claim all the tax benefits they are eligible for, including the Earned Income Tax Credit.

To be sure that returns are filed properly, volunteers are trained on tax laws and must pass an IRS test to be certified volunteer tax preparers. A visit to our tax site is nothing like your typical encounter with an accountant or paid tax preparer. Children are encouraged to come and enjoy the play area. Tax preparers and clients engage in friendly banter. The tax preparers are volunteers who genuinely care about the taxpayer's life and financial situation. It's not just taxes, "it's the people, volunteers, and clients, that make it interesting and rewarding," said one volunteer.

Hours

Tuesdays: 10:00 am -1:00 pm
Tuesday - Thursday: 3:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Saturday: 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Additional satellite sites are in Groton, Dryden, Newfield, Caroline, and Danby. Visit alternatives.org or call Tompkins/Cortland Information and Referral Services at **2-1-1** or **1 (877) 211-8667** for more information or to schedule an appointment.

Alternatives Free Tax Preparation Program offers:

- Free electronic filing or tax preparation service
- Faster refunds
- Accurate returns
- Electronic filing of Federal and State Returns at the same time
- Tax Savers Certificate – ask about this special offering rate
- Free credit report review
- Information about home buying programs, savings programs, affordable health care and insurance, food stamps, low-cost loans and much more.

Call **2-1-1** beginning January 10 for appointments starting January 17.

Support economic justice with a gift today.

Ways to donate:

- By mail to 125 N. Fulton St. Ithaca, NY 14850
- In-person at the N. Fulton St. Branch
- Online at alternatives.org/Impact

Name _____

Email _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone () _____ - _____

I want to become a Sustaining Supporter by making a monthly gift of:

\$25 \$15 \$5

or give a one-time gift of:

\$500 \$250 \$100 Other: \$ _____

Check (payable to Alternatives Impact)
or Credit Card (Visa/Mastercard/Discover)

Account # _____

Exp. date _____ Signature _____



For more information about how you or your business can support Alternatives Impact, contact:

[Liz Hudson](mailto:Liz.Hudson@alternatives.org)

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(607) 216-3452