

Stronger Together

Q2 2025 Impact Report

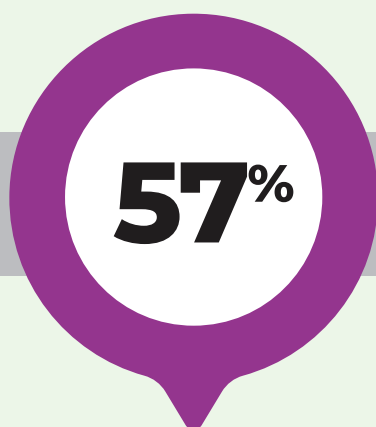


Living the Mission

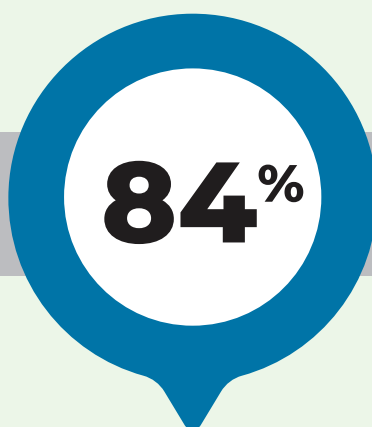


Alternatives fills a crucial role in our community, providing access to fair and affordable loans to families and businesses in low-income and marginalized communities. The statistics below demonstrate our impact through Quarter 2, 2025.

Percent of our loans that went to low-income households and communities



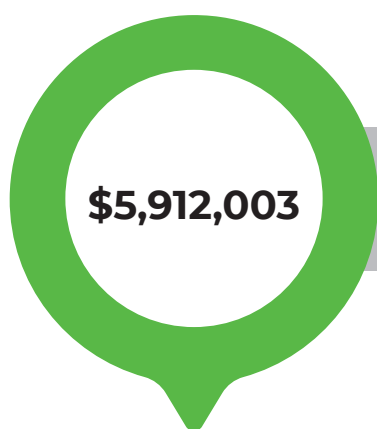
Business Loans



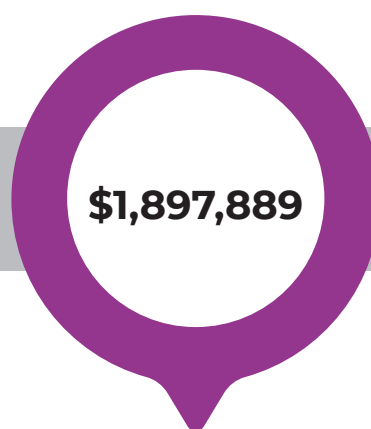
Consumer/Auto Loans



Mortgage Loans



Total loans made to women, people with disabilities and the BIPOC community

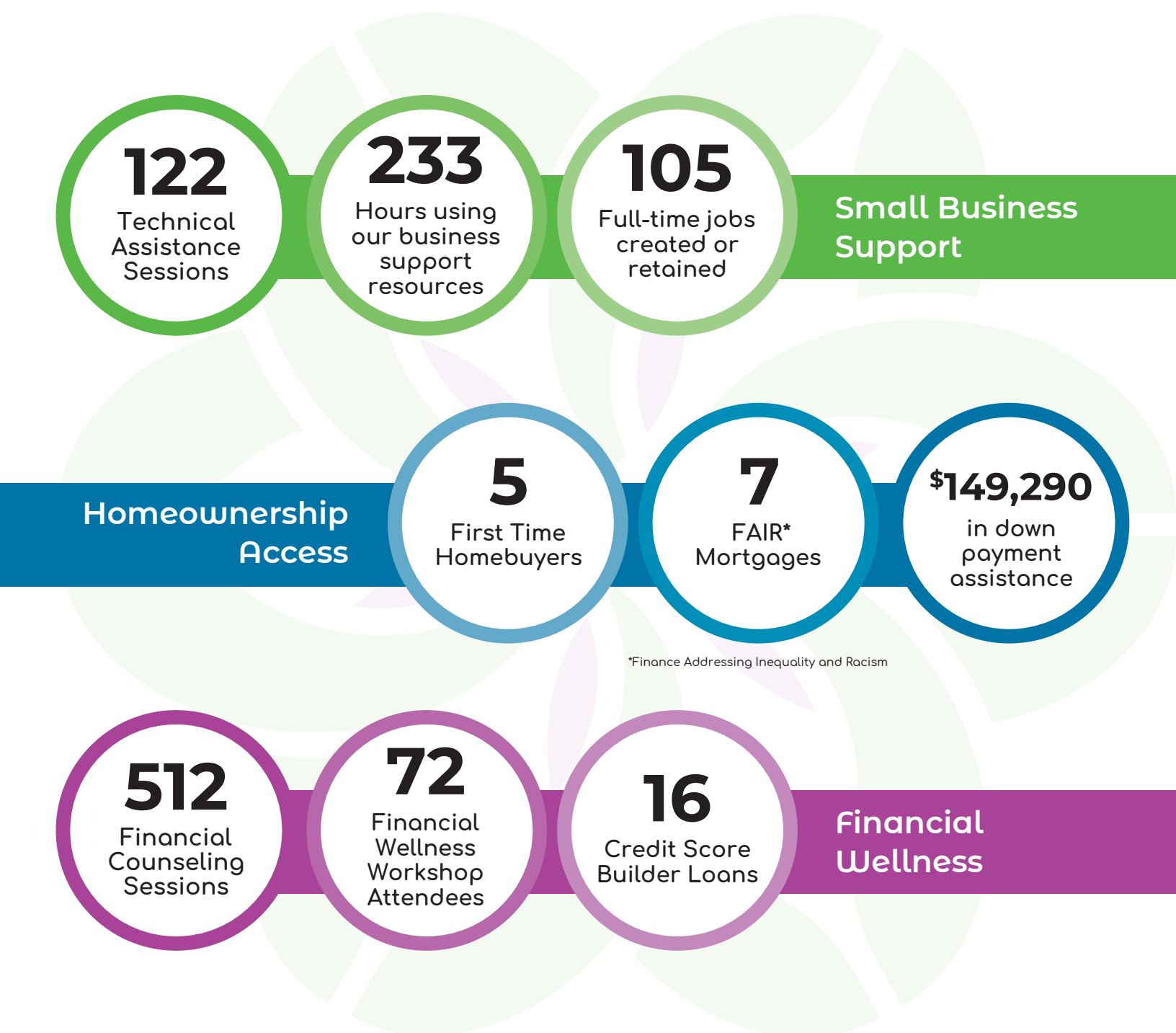


Consumer loans made to borrowers with challenged credit

Living the Mission



Progress Report: Small Business Support, Homeownership Access and Financial Wellness through Quarter 2, 2025



Community Outreach



Women Build • Habitat for Humanity • May 5

Women Build aims to provide women with an opportunity to help families build strength, stability and independence, all while empowering themselves and one another by learning new skills and building Habitat homes. Since 2010, Women Build program has been offering hands-on learning and training opportunities, events, fundraisers and countless on-site build days to help hundreds of female volunteers transform our community and make a lasting difference in the lives of our Habitat homeowners.



Alternatives was proud to send a strong team to Habitat's 2025 Women Build Event



Your Body, Your Choice with ► Planned Parenthood • June 11

Our Member Relations Specialist Rachel Casano joined Planned Parenthood at the Tompkins County Public Library's Pride series to share our Gender-Affirming Care Loan, a resource designed to ease the financial challenges of accessing vital medical services.



Rachel (far left) with Planned Parenthood Staff

Community Outreach



Women's Empowerment Conference • May 21

Alternatives' Business Lending team attended the Women's Empowerment Conference, which aims to uplift women in the southern tier of New York and the northern tier of Pennsylvania by offering workshops, discussions, and networking opportunities focused on personal, professional, and financial growth. The conference recognizes and celebrates women's leadership and strives to create a supportive environment where they can thrive.



Margaret D'Agostino and Youngmi Schickel

Chemung County Habitat for Humanity Ramp Program • June 17

Through this program, community volunteers build accessibility ramps so neighbors can safely return home and live more independently. One recent project supported by Alternatives staff made a life-changing difference for an older couple. The husband had been recovering in a nursing home for nearly a year because their home's stairs made it impossible for him to return.



Alternatives volunteers: Jorge Cuevas, Brendan Wilbur, Jim Perkins, Kim Demchak and Lior Rozen





Board Profile

Veronica Johnson



Recognizing its high quality of life, many people move to Ithaca as a leap of faith. Maybe they come from a rural outpost, or a nondescript town, or an economically depressed city lacking the cultural and social amenities of Ithaca. Maybe they come from a big city where daily life is difficult to manage, stressful, sometimes seemingly unsafe, and the cost of living onerous.

Ithaca offers positive options, though not without challenges. Its housing and job markets are tough. This is where the leap of faith comes in. People sometimes move here even without a set place to live or work.

Veronica Johnson, for her part, was fairly set. She moved to Ithaca not with mere faith, but with the solid foundation of a job as a lawyer at Cornell, goals for next steps in her career, and a plan for home ownership with her husband and two children.

Veronica and her family came to Ithaca in 2012. Looking for a “frugal, not fancy” home outside the city, they bought a house in Lansing. In 2015, Veronica left Cornell for that next step in her career: co-founding the Civil Advocacy Project, a non-profit legal services organization that aids budding entrepreneurs in creating their own businesses.

Veronica said that although many Ithacans are underemployed or even “excluded from the regular economy,” she found a widespread sense of “optimism, with lots of ideas of how to help the world improve” and “a vibrant community spirit” that made Ithaca fertile ground for entrepreneurship. In a sense, Veronica’s work is to help others do what she has done: create meaningful, sustaining work for themselves in order to enjoy the many benefits of life in Ithaca.

Veronica discovered Alternatives to be a major resource for her work, and a philosophical ally in serving people and businesses in low-to-moderate income and marginalized communities (aimed at these communities, Veronica’s business services are low-cost or free). She joined Alternatives’ board.

Veronica found a kinship with Alternatives in dedication to an economic development model that encourages small business ownership, to “shift control from distant corporations,” she said, and promote community, local identity, individual empowerment, and economic opportunities among diverse populations.

The Civil Advocacy Project, like Alternatives, gives practical support to personal goals and progressive ideals. “Ideas can take a long time to develop,” Veronica said. “The emphasis is on getting started. Do the first thing, then find help for the next thing. Seize the moment.”



Business Profile

Maimouna's Cuisine



Bill and Maimouna Phelan's love story spans decades, continents, and a LOT of recipes. Having met in Niger in the 1990s, the pair quickly recognized a shared passion for the cuisine of Senegal and other spots in the West African region, and that of Ethiopia. Now, through **Maimouna's Cuisine**, the Phelans are bringing those flavors to upstate New York.

The business is currently operating as a meal preparation and catering business out of the kitchen of the First Baptist Church in Ithaca. Customers can view a menu that changes weekly on the business' website and place their orders. They then go to the church and pick up their food at a designated time.

For those who might be unfamiliar with the cuisine, Bill and Mai suggest you give it a try. They're aiming to have a meatless option of each menu item, as well as some flexibility on the spiciness of the dishes they prepare. A popular dish for Maimouna's is the Senegalese yassa, which can be made with braised chicken or vegetables, and features caramelized onions and is served on rice. Roasted plantains and sauteed brussels sprouts round out a solid order. Chicken mafe is another menu MVP. The popular West African chicken stew is made with chicken, peanut butter, tomatoes, and various spices and aromatics. It is thick and creamy, and is typically served with couscous—but West African couscous is made of alternative grains including rice, millet, sorghum, and others, making some varieties gluten-free. And if all of this is making your mouth water, you'll want to grab one of Maimouna's house-made beverages, including a refreshing ginger drink.

Maimouna's has just gotten off the ground this year and done so with some help from the team at Alternatives. They began by attending the "Starting Your Own Business" workshop. From there, they got help with LLC filing as well as some legal advice on other aspects of their plans. They also got help developing their logo and a marketing plan, including how to maximize the benefits of social media for their burgeoning business.

(continued)



The pair are working on finalizing a business plan they need to apply for some additional capital that will help the business, which is a bit of an adjustment for Mai in particular. Coming from a culture where paying in cash is the primary way to conduct business, borrowing has taken some getting used to, to say the least.

But on the upside, Mai says they were heartened by the feedback her food has gotten when it was featured at GreenStar Food & Co-op, where she currently works on an occasional basis.

"I participated in the cooking, bringing West African food to the hot bar," she explains. "And they were happy for that."

Bill, ever the supportive spouse, says Mai is downplaying the success and that her food actually led to significant increases in sales.

"She doesn't want me to brag, but when she checked in with them, people were coming in to ask for more," he says.

When it comes to authentic West African flavors, Maimouna's Cuisine really delivers!

www.maimounascuisine.com





Our Mission

To help build and protect wealth for people with diverse identities who have been historically marginalized by the financial industry, especially those with low wealth or identifying as Black, indigenous, or people of color.



Alternatives

FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

alternatives.org



A Community Development Financial Institution