

Possibilities

Spring 2025

ascend.org



Ascend
Federal Credit Union

Table of Contents

- 3** Matt's Message
- 4** Ascend's Financial Literacy Program Impacts Youth in Our Community
- 5** Awards Spotlight
- 6** Ascend in the Community
- 7** Spring Into a Checking Account with Benefits
- 8** Ascend is Your Local Homebuying Partner
- 10** How to Spot and Avoid Potential Scams
- 11** Summer Dreams Made Possible with a Recreational Vehicle Loan
- 13** Reality Check on Your Retirement Savings
- 14** Credit Union Advocacy
- 15** Smart Savings Tips for America Saves Week

QUICK READS

HOLIDAY CLOSURES

All Ascend branches and offices will be closed on Monday, May 26, in observance of Memorial Day and Friday, July 4, for Independence Day.

ANNUAL MEETING & ELECTION

Ascend's 74th Annual Meeting and Board Election is scheduled for 1 p.m. Saturday, March 29, 2025, and will be held in the Apollo Conference Room at Ascend's Corporate Headquarters in Tullahoma. The meeting is open to all members – so come join us!

WORK WHERE YOU BANK

For the ninth consecutive year, Ascend has been named one of the Best Credit Unions to Work For by American Banker. You can see the current list of open positions at ascend.org/careers.

VIRTUAL APPOINTMENTS

Members now have the option to meet virtually with one of our Ascend Services Specialists or Business Banking Advisors. Visit ascend.org to schedule your appointment today.



Sign into digital banking to update your contact information so Ascend can reach you regarding general communications and updates, including future issues of Possibilities.



Matt's Message

During this time of year at Ascend Federal Credit Union, we're excited about more than just warmer weather and blooming flowers — April is Financial Literacy Month, and we're highlighting the importance of a well-rounded financial education.

As a local, not-for-profit credit union, part of our mission is to provide our members and the communities we serve with access to resources to help teach real-world money management skills. Our members can meet for free with a Certified Credit Union Financial Counselor for a Financial Health Checkup no matter what financial stage you're in. They'll go over your plan, budget, and debt, and help you come up with the right strategies. Members can schedule an in-person or virtual appointment at ascend.org or by visiting any of our 28 Middle Tennessee branches. In addition, Ascend has valuable features available in our digital banking platform that give you full control of your finances, including SavvyMoney, our free credit monitoring tool.

Ascend also offers a free, no obligation Financial Education Center at ascend.org/financial-education. Our content library contains over 40 modules with educational videos, interactive lessons, and calculators to empower you along your financial journey. From budgeting tips to planning for retirement, we've got you covered.

As we transition into the spring season, I hope you will take advantage of our financial literacy resources and remember to keep an eye on our social media channels for more tips on a variety of topics. Thank you again for being a member of Ascend!

Regards,

Matt Jernigan
President & CEO

Ascend's Financial Literacy Program Impacts Youth in Our Community

Forming healthy financial habits at a young age is one of the most important things one can do for long-term fiscal health. That's why providing financial education for youth in our community has become such a big focus for us here at Ascend, where our brand promise is to educate and help all members become effective financial stewards.

Recognizing the dynamic and ever-changing nature of financial education, Ascend is proud to offer a premium online financial literacy platform, Banzai, to teachers and students across Middle Tennessee. This virtual interactive platform makes financial

education fun and engaging, teaching students to navigate adult financial dilemmas with real-life scenarios. While Banzai possesses the tools to serve as a full-course financial literacy program, it is also flexible enough to act as a supplement for local educators, in compliance with the State's personal finance education requirements.

Through this sponsorship, Ascend has provided the program to 30,000 students in 118 schools in the Middle Tennessee area, free of charge.

For more information, visit ascend.banzai.org/impact.

Dream home, meet dream home loan.

Buying a home or refinancing is easy with Ascend. And despite rising rates, our mortgage rates remain competitive. We also offer flexible terms and down payments. Start the application process at ascend.org/mortgage.



Awards Spotlight

Ascend Voted Best Credit Union in 2024 Main Street Media Awards

Ascend was recently recognized as the Best Credit Union in the 2024 Middle Tennessee Main Street Awards. The Middle Tennessee Main Street Awards celebrates local business excellence, with over 1.6 million votes cast by community members. Winners were determined by the readers of Main Street, highlighting their favorite businesses and organizations across the region.

Earlier this year, Ascend won the Best Credit Union category in the Main Street award programs for Maury County, Sumner County, and Spring Hill. Additionally, Ascend was voted as the winner in both the Best Credit Union and Best Bank categories in the Rutherford County Main Street Awards and Best Mortgage Company in the Maury County Main Street Awards.



Vanderbilt Children's Hospital Receives Miracle Momentum Award on Behalf of Ascend

Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt was selected as a recipient of the Velera Miracle Momentum Award. This \$10,000 award, made on behalf of Ascend Federal Credit Union, was part of a nationwide initiative that received nearly 500 submissions for 68 different Children's Miracle Network Hospitals across the country.

Welcome New Select Employee Groups

EV Motors – Lebanon

Heatherwood HOA – Murfreesboro

Email bizdev@ascend.org to learn how employees and members of your organization can partner with Ascend Federal Credit Union. 

Ascend in the Community

Second Harvest Partnership

In 2024, Ascend proudly supported the fight against hunger with a sponsorship for 12 Second Harvest mobile markets across Middle Tennessee.

Second Harvest's Mobile Markets are a new initiative designed to go directly into communities most impacted by food insecurity and eliminate transportation barriers. The one-day food distributions provide people with quality food items including produce, dairy, and pantry staples. In addition to providing food assistance, Ascend also provided financial literacy training resources at the Mobile Markets, giving local families the tools they need to achieve lasting stability.

Along with our Mobile Market Sponsorship, Ascend participated in a donation campaign benefiting Second Harvest where members and employees collected more than 16,000 non-perishable items and \$3,000 for our neighbors in need. Ascend has been a longtime partner of Second Harvest, donating more than 78,000 items and contributing more than \$300,000 since 2019.

Tullahoma Chamber of Commerce

Ascend was proud to sponsor the Tullahoma Area Chamber of Commerce December Coffee event, a time for business and community leaders to come together to share food and fellowship during the holiday season. We are thankful for the Chamber's dedication to strengthening our community and proud to support their meaningful work.

River of Hope Radiothon

In December, Ascend served as the title sponsor of the River of Hope Radiothon, an annual event that raises funds for Monroe Carell Jr.

Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. Ascend President and CEO Matt Jernigan joined 107.5 The River's Morning Show Team on Dec. 13 to help fundraise for the cause.



Ascend has been a presenting sponsor of the River of Hope Radiothon for over 10 years and a longtime supporter of Vanderbilt Children's Hospital, donating more than \$400,000 since 2013.

Matt Jernigan visits 107.5 The River's morning show during their River of Hope Radiothon.

Spring Into a Checking Account with Benefits

Ascend is dedicated to putting more money back into our members' wallets. Members using our premium checking products have the opportunity to watch their money grow by earning 3.56%* APY** on balances up to

\$15,000, or through cash-back rewards on qualifying debit card purchases*** depending on which account you select. In addition, both accounts afford members access to the following benefits and discounts:



Telehealth Services

Access to 24/7 video or phone visits with U.S.-based board-certified, licensed, and credentialed doctors ready to help with urgent care or mental health for you and your family — all with zero copays.



Mobile Phone Protection

Up to \$850 of replacement or repair cost for your damaged or stolen mobile phones; \$50 deductible per claim and two claims per 12-month period per account.



Gasoline Fuel Savings

Register for the Fuel Rewards® program and save 5¢/gal on every fill-up at participating Shell stations with complimentary Gold Status.



Travel & Leisure Discounts

Money-saving discounts from thousands of local and national businesses, including theme park passes, movie tickets, and more. Members can redeem and print coupons online or access discounts from their mobile devices. Digital Access makes saving easy and convenient, giving instant savings anywhere, and anytime.

Registration required. Go to ascend.eclubonline.net or download the eClub mobile app. Additional terms and conditions may apply.

We make opening an Ascend checking account easy and convenient — visit any of our 28 Middle Tennessee locations, schedule an appointment to meet virtually with an Ascend representative, apply online at ascend.org, or call us at 800-342-3086.

*Rates effective October 1, 2023, and are subject to change at any time. **Annual Percentage Yield ***10¢ cash back on debit card purchase transactions of \$5.00 or more. Payment transactions, money transfers to non-financial institutions (such as person-to-person), tax payments, and fraudulent purchase transactions are excluded.

Ascend is Your Local Homebuying Partner

Choosing a home is one of the most significant decisions a person can make. That's why it's crucial to have the right mortgage provider in your corner — someone located in your area who is looking out for your best financial interests.

Ascend has great mortgage programs that can make it easier to turn your homeownership dreams into reality, and our personalized service extends beyond closing. We choose to keep most of our mortgage servicing in-house, meaning if you have a question about your loan payment, balance, escrow, etc., our local staff is here to assist you.

The specialized mortgage programs* we have available at Ascend all require little to no down payment as well as other additional benefits, including:

First-Time Homebuyer Loan: no personal mortgage insurance (PMI) required, as little as \$500 down payment, financing up to 102% of the sales price, and no income limitations.

Local Heroes Mortgage Loan: local heroes (teachers, firefighters, police officers, EMTs, nurses, nurse practitioners, physician's assistants, and paramedics) can qualify for this loan with zero down payment and no loan origination.





Physician's Mortgage Loan: exclusive benefits for physicians, dentists, and veterinarians, including no personal mortgage insurance (PMI) and zero down payment.

For all the above loan types, only single-family homes and condominiums/townhomes are allowed. No manufactured/modular/mobile homes are permitted. Applicants with no credit score may be eligible with acceptable alternative credit. Normal closing costs apply.

With over 70 years of trusted service in Middle Tennessee, Ascend is committed to finding a mortgage solution for all of our neighbors, especially those looking to buy their first home, professionals who keep us safe, and our local educators.

Ready to take the next step towards homeownership? Contact an Ascend representative by email at mortgages@ascend.org, by phone at 931-454-1300, or start your application online at ascend.org. If you're starting to save for a future home purchase, we have you covered with tips to improve your credit score and how to manage debt.

*Restrictions apply. Contact an Ascend Mortgage Loan Officer for complete details.

Federally insured by NCUA. Equal Housing Lender. NMLS#451452. All loans are subject to credit approval. We do business in accordance with the Federal Fair Housing Laws and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act.

How to Spot and Avoid Potential Scams

At Ascend, safeguarding member information is our top priority. Scammers are continuously developing new tactics to trick individuals into revealing personal financial information. To help protect yourself from fraud, stay informed and follow these guidelines:

Ascend Representatives Will Never:

- Ask for your account number, user ID or digital banking password via email or text message.
- Request that you send money via Zelle® to make your account current or "in good standing."
- Call to verify a Zelle® transaction.

Be Cautious with Unsolicited Communications

- Never click on links from untrusted sources. Phishing emails and text messages often look convincing but can lead to fraudulent websites designed to steal your information.
- If you receive a suspicious message claiming to be from Ascend, call us at 800-342-3086 to verify its validity.
- Do not rely solely on caller ID, as scammers can spoof numbers to make their calls appear legitimate.

Stay Vigilant Against High-Pressure Tactics

- Scammers often create a sense of urgency, pressuring you to act quickly. Whether they claim your account is at risk or that you've won a prize, take a step back and verify the request.
- Take the time to verify the legitimacy of any request before providing personal information or making payments.

What to Do If You Suspect Fraud

If you believe you've been targeted by a scam or notice suspicious activity on your account, contact us immediately at 800-342-3086. Acting quickly can help prevent financial loss and keep your information secure.



If you think fraud has affected your Ascend account, please contact us immediately at **800-342-3086**.

Summer Dreams Made Possible with a Rec Loan



It's almost the perfect time of year to go outdoors for an adventure. If you're hoping to upgrade your fun with a new boat, RV, motorcycle, or jet ski, a recreational loan can help get you outside on the road, lake, or trail.

What is a recreational loan?

Recreational loans, or "rec loans," are designed to finance vehicles used recreationally, like motorhomes and RVs, boats, motorcycles, jet skis, ATVs, and others.

Ascend offers great rates and flexible terms for both new and used recreational vehicles. Qualified members can get a rate as low as 7.64%¹ APR² for new recreational vehicles, and a rate as low as 8.14%¹ APR² for used recreational vehicles. Ascend also offers terms up to 144 months to find a loan that fits you and your budget.

It's important to do research and choose a loan that best fits your needs. Ascend has a free monthly payment calculator at ascend.org/rec-loans that

is available to help determine how much you'll pay depending on your rate and term length.

Where do you start?

It's beneficial to get pre-approved for a recreational loan before you start shopping. That way, you know how much you can afford going into the buying process.

At Ascend, you can get pre-approved for a recreational loan instantly. Apply today by visiting ascend.org/rec-loans, calling 800-342-3086, or stopping by one of our 28 Middle Tennessee branches.

Don't let the perfect weather pass you by this year. Get approved for a recreational loan and have a great outdoor adventure.

¹ Rates effective as of March 20, 2025. Rates subject to change at any time.

² Annual percentage rate.

Federally insured by the NCUA. All loans are subject to credit approval. We do business in accordance with the Equal Credit Opportunity Act.

Together We Can Help You Pursue Your Financial Goals



Retirement Services

- Planning assistance, whether you're just getting started, ready to retire or retired now
- Rollover services
- Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs)
 - Traditional IRAs
 - Roth IRAs
 - Rollover IRAs
- Business retirement accounts
 - 401(k) plans
 - Simplified Employee Pensions (SEPs)
 - Savings Incentive Match Plans (SIMPLEs)

Insurance Services

- Life
- Long-term care

Financial Management

- Setting goals
- Creating a savings and investment plan
- Seeking to protect your financial security
- Building your nest egg
- Managing wealth
- Creating an income from your assets

Educational Planning & Funding

- Planning assistance
- Educational savings accounts
 - 529 savings plans
 - Coverdell education savings accounts



Randall W. Harris, ChFC® CFP®	VP, Wealth Management	931-454-1307
Lee Baker	Associate Financial Advisor	931-454-2925
Stephen Yun	Financial Advisor	931-454-2915
Josh Wells, CRPC®	Associate Financial Advisor	931-461-8779
Kristy Harris, CRPC®	Associate Financial Advisor	931-461-8749

Reality Check on Your Retirement Savings

Are you a young professional and thinking about life after your career? There's no better time than now to ensure you have enough money saved for a long retirement, and millennials have the advantage of time. Here are some easy tips to help you start those preparations now:

Make a Plan – In retirement, you may no longer be drawing a salary, although many retirees take up some form of self-employment that brings in an income. It's up to you whether earnings will be a part of your retirement plan. If not, your retirement savings should be robust enough to supplement your Social Security without sacrificing your lifestyle. You can check your projected Social Security payments on the Social Security Administration's website.

To get a reasonably accurate figure on how long your savings should last, calculate the amount of savings you'll need to live on each year in retirement. If your savings won't meet your needs

after just a few years, you may need to adjust your savings strategies.

Be Consistent – The important point to remember about retirement savings is that consistency is key. A good savings target is 15% of your income, but no matter how much you're setting aside, set a goal and stick to it.

Adjust as You Go – Your retirement finances are not set in stone; you have options at any age. Don't put it off — the sooner you understand your financial alternatives, the sooner you can take positive action to protect your golden years.

This material is for general information only and is not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual. There is no assurance that the views or strategies discussed are suitable for all investors or will yield positive outcomes. Investing involves risks including possible loss of principal. This material was prepared by LPL Financial, LLC.

***Securities and advisory services are offered through LPL Financial (LPL), a registered investment advisor and broker-dealer (member FINRA/SIPC).** Insurance products are offered through LPL or its licensed affiliates. Ascend Federal Credit Union and Ascend Retirement and Investment Services are not registered as a broker-dealer or investment advisor. Registered representatives of LPL offer products and services using Ascend Retirement and Investment Services, and may also be employees of Ascend Federal Credit Union. These products and services are being offered through LPL or its affiliates, which are separate entities from, and not affiliates of, Ascend Federal Credit Union or Ascend Retirement and Investment Services. Securities and insurance offered through LPL or its affiliates are:

Not Insured by NCUA or Any Other Government Agency	Not Credit Union Guaranteed	Not Credit Union Deposits or Obligations	May Lose Value
--	-----------------------------	--	----------------

Ascend Federal Credit Union ("Financial Institution") provides referrals to financial professionals of LPL Financial LLC ("LPL") pursuant to an agreement that allows LPL to pay the Financial Institution for these referrals. This creates an incentive for the Financial Institution to make these referrals, resulting in a conflict of interest. The Financial Institution is not a current client of LPL for advisory services. Please visit www.lpl.com/disclosures/is-lpl-relationship-disclosure.html for more detailed information.

Credit Union Advocacy

We're Advocating for Our Members' Best Interests



One of the biggest ways credit unions differentiate themselves from other financial institutions is that we're member-owned and member-focused. That means we are constantly looking for ways to improve the lives of our members and advocating for their best financial interests.

Ascend is an active supporter of the Tennessee Credit Union League and America's Credit Unions Bipartisan Political Action Committee, two organizations which help keep policy issues in front of our legislators. Currently, Ascend is working with these partners to advocate in favor of several key issues facing the credit union industry, including:

- Fair access to public deposits:** In Tennessee, public entities such as state and local governments are restricted from depositing funds into financial institutions where they have ownership. Credit unions are member-owned, meaning they are not allowed to accept deposits from these public entities. Reforming the state's public deposit laws to allow credit

unions to be an option would put public deposits back into local financial institutions where they can do the most good for our local communities.

- Retaining credit unions' tax-exempt status:** Credit unions are tax-exempt financial institutions because of their not-for-profit, cooperative structure. This tax exemption allows credit unions to repurpose those funds into affordable solutions for our members, including those in underprivileged areas that other larger, for-profit financial institutions don't service.

Currently, there are more than 2.5 million credit union members in Tennessee who rely on credit unions like Ascend to advocate on their behalf. We will remain dedicated to our members and securing their bright financial future.

Want to get involved or learn more about the credit union movement? Find informational resources and more on America's Credit Unions' website at americascreditunions.org.

Smart Savings Tips for America Saves Week

At Ascend, we believe small steps can lead to big savings! In honor of America Saves Week (April 7-11), we're sharing actionable tips to help you build a stronger financial future.

Set Clear Goals

Start with a purpose. Whether it's creating an emergency fund, saving for a vacation, or preparing for retirement, having a specific goal can motivate you to stay on track.

Automate Your Savings

Consistency is key to growing your savings. Set up automatic transfers and direct deposit in our digital banking platform to make saving effortless. You can also split your direct deposit so you're depositing funds into a high-yield account.

Track Your Spending

Understanding where your money goes can help you identify areas to cut back. As an Ascend member, you have access to free budget worksheets and digital banking tools at ascend.org/worksheets that make it easy to monitor your expenses and reallocate funds toward your savings goals.

Take Advantage of High-Yield Accounts

Maximize your money's potential by exploring high-yield accounts or certificates offered by Ascend. These options help your savings grow faster.

Celebrate Small Wins

Every milestone counts! Recognize your progress, no matter how big or small, to stay motivated and focused on your goals.

America Saves Week is the perfect time to reassess your financial habits and make positive changes. Ascend is here to support your journey with tools, resources, and expert advice. Let's work together to make saving a priority in 2025 and beyond!

Federally insured by the NCUA.



The best place to bank isn't a bank.

ascend.org
800-342-3086
memberservice@ascend.org
STAR: 800-342-8663


Ascend[®]
Federal Credit Union
P.O. Box 1210
Tullahoma, TN 37388



We do business in accordance with the Federal Fair Housing Laws and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act.
All loans subject to credit approval.

Ascend Federal Credit Union and the Flying-A logo are registered trademarks of Ascend Federal Credit Union.
© 2025 Ascend Federal Credit Union. Federally insured by NCUA. All Rights Reserved.

Don't Miss Important Ascend Communications

Have your contact information up to date for Ascend to reach you regarding general communications and updates, including future issues of Possibilities.

