

# Possibilities

Winter 2025

[ascend.org](https://ascend.org)



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**Ascend**<sup>®</sup>  
Federal Credit Union



From the  
**President & CEO,  
Matt Jernigan**

## QUICK READS

### HOLIDAY CLOSURES

All Ascend branches and offices will be closed on Wednesday, Jan. 1 for New Year's Day and Monday, Jan. 20 for Martin Luther King Jr. 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.

### ANNUAL REPORT

A downloadable copy of the 2024 Annual Report will be available at [ascend.org](https://ascend.org) in mid-March. Copies of the report will also be available at all Ascend branch locations.

### IRS REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Ascend will be sending tax documentation to members in early 2025 as required by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for tax year 2024. Please check the forms you receive carefully and notify the credit union if you have any questions.

### UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

Be sure to have your contact information up to date for us to reach you regarding updates for promotions, services, and general communications. Please also ensure your beneficiary information is current.

As we kick off 2025, you may be starting to save for something big, like a new car or a house. At Ascend, we want to make sure you're maximizing those savings so you're ready to buy that dream car or forever home when the time comes.

To help our members reach their savings goals, we were excited to launch two new certificate accounts in 2024: the 3-Month Share Certificate and Home Purchase Share Certificate. Both are great options for those looking to get the most out of their savings. Our 3-Month Share Certificate account offers a high rate of return with the flexibility of a shorter term than other certificates. The Home Purchase Share Certificate account is designed specifically for those saving for a home. It has a 36-month variable rate term and valuable benefits like flexible deposits, a closing cost discount, and penalty-free withdrawals if the funds are used toward a home purchase.

In addition to our certificate accounts that are designed to help you save, Ascend offers many tools and resources to help you progress through your financial journey. We offer free one-on-one financial health checkups with our in-house, certified financial counselors. You can schedule an appointment at your nearest branch or choose a virtual visit through [ascend.org](https://ascend.org). We also have a convenient digital banking platform, free printable personal finance worksheets, and online educational courses to teach you more about being a good steward of your money.

Thank you for being a valued Ascend member, and I wish you a prosperous and joyful 2025.

Regards,

Matt Jernigan  
President & CEO



# Introducing the Ascend Home Purchase Share Certificate

**A secure way to save for your next home.**

At Ascend, we understand that saving for a down payment can feel like a daunting task. That's why we're excited to introduce our new Home Purchase Share Certificate — a flexible and secure way to boost your savings for your future home purchase.



## Why a Home Purchase Share Certificate?

Certificate accounts, which function the same way as Certificate of Deposit (CD) accounts at other financial institutions, offer higher interest than most savings accounts, so you are guaranteed a return on your money without the risk of investing in the stock market. Unlike traditional certificates, the Ascend Home Purchase Certificate allows you to make deposits at any time, helping you reach your savings goals faster.

### Key benefits include:

**Flexible deposits** – You can add funds to your certificate whenever you want, giving you the freedom to grow your savings at your own pace.

**Discount toward closing costs** – When a member uses an Ascend Home Purchase Share Certificate to facilitate buying a home and secures financing through Ascend, the mortgage loan processing fee will be waived.

**Penalty-free withdrawal** – If a withdrawal is made before the 36-month maturity date, the penalty may be waived if a withdrawal is made in conjunction with purchasing a home.

Ready to get started? Visit [ascend.org/certificates](https://ascend.org/certificates) to view current rates and open your certificate today. ➡

Federally insured by the NCUA. NMLS#451452. All loans are subject to credit approval.

\*Minimum \$1,000 deposit required. Offer effective as of December 1, 2024. Rates are subject to change at any time. Fees can reduce your earnings.

# Ascend Schedules 74th Annual Meeting & Board of Directors Election

The Nominating Committee for the Ascend Board of Directors has submitted nominations for three Board seats to be filled in 2025. Biographical data on nominees Valerie Molette, Mark W. Rigney, and Tonya Quarles are included.

Nominations by petition must be submitted to the secretary of the Board of Directors no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, February 17 to qualify. Nominations by petition must be signed by one percent of the membership (minimum of 20 and maximum of 500 signatures). Biographical data and a signed “Notice of Willingness to Serve” must accompany petitions.

Blank petitions and “Notice of Willingness to Serve” forms may be obtained by contacting the Ascend marketing team at [mktg@ascend.org](mailto:mktg@ascend.org). In the event no nominating petitions are filed by the general membership, nominees submitted by the Nominating Committee will be elected by acclamation. In this case, according to the by-laws, a mail ballot is not required.

Nominations will not be accepted from the floor at the Annual Meeting if there is at least one nominee for each position to be filled.

The results of the 2025 Annual Election will be announced at the 74th Annual Meeting, scheduled for 1 p.m. Saturday, March 29, and will be held in the Apollo Conference Room at Ascend Headquarters in Tullahoma.



**TONYA QUARLES**

3 Year Term

## **EMPLOYMENT**

- VP/Gulf Coast Valley Central Sales, Dell Inc., 2001 – present

## **EDUCATION**

- MBA, Management, University of Phoenix, 2006
- BA, Marketing, Middle Tennessee State University, 2001

## **EXPERIENCE**

- Member Ascend FCU, 2022 – present
- Board of Directors, 2023 – present
- Associate Board Member, 2022 – 2023





**VALERIE MOLETTE**

3 Year Term

#### **EMPLOYMENT**

- Managing Director, Business Services, Deloitte Services LP, 2019 – present
- Managing Director, Finance, Deloitte Services LP, 2016 – 2019
- Various Finance, Operations, and IT positions, Deloitte, 1999 – 2016
- Accounts Payable Analyst, United Parcel Services, 1994 – 1999

#### **EDUCATION**

- MBA, Business Administration, Tennessee State University, 2003
- BS, Biology, Tennessee State University, 1998

#### **EXPERIENCE**

- Member Ascend FCU, 2014 – present
- Board of Directors, 2019 – present  
Treasurer, 2020 – 2022
- Supervisory Committee, 2017 – 2019  
Chairman, 2019
- Board Development Committee, 2016 – 2017



**MARK W. RIGNEY**

3 Year Term

#### **EMPLOYMENT**

- VP of Operations, MAG Aerospace, 2024 – present
- Chief Operating Officer, Selenius Holdings, Inc., 2024
- VP & General Manager, Cyber & Secure Systems, Jacobs Engineering, 2023
- VP, Global Future of Work Corporate Transformation, Jacobs Engineering, 2020 – 2023
- VP & General Manager, Enterprise Operations Group, Jacobs Technology, Inc., 2018 – 2020
- VP, Jacobs Connected Enterprise Center of Excellence, Jacobs Technology, Inc., 2016 – 2018
- Director, Advanced Consulting Services, Jacobs Technology, Inc., 2015 – 2016
- Director, Information Technology & Systems, Aerospace Testing Alliance, 2004 – 2015
- VP of Research, Development, & Engineering, Rawlings Sporting Goods & Worth Inc., 2002 – 2004

#### **EDUCATION**

- MS, University of Tennessee Space Institute
- BS, Tennessee Technological University
- BS, Computer Science, Lipscomb University, 1984

#### **EXPERIENCE**

- Member Ascend FCU, 50 years
- Board of Directors, 2014 – present  
Board Chairman, 2023 – present  
Board Secretary, 2015 – 2017  
Board Treasurer, 2017 – 2018
- Associate Board Member, 2013 – 2014

# Protect Yourself from Phishing Scams

In today's digital world, phishing scams are more prevalent than ever. No matter if it's through text, email, or phone, the goal of the scammer is always the same: pose as a legitimate business or trusted contact to manipulate the victim into giving out sensitive information such as passwords, credit card numbers, and more. Here are a few tips on how to spot and protect yourself from a phishing scam.

## Don't Trust Caller ID

Through a tactic known as spoofing, scammers can make themselves appear as anything on your Caller ID. Be wary about providing any personal information over the phone until you verify the legitimacy of whoever is calling, even if the Caller ID appears to show the call is coming from Ascend.

## Ignore Suspicious Emails and Texts

If you receive an email or text message from an unidentifiable source, delete it and do not click any links. If the suspicious message appears to be from Ascend and you are unsure if it's legitimate, call 800-342-3086 or visit us in branch to confirm the validity of the message. Do not call the phone number listed in the message.

## Check Website Security

A secure website's URL will begin with "https" rather than "http." The "s" at the end of "http" stands for secure and is using an SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) connection. Also, be sure to check the lock icon in your browser bar. When clicked, this provides detailed information on the security of a website.

Please keep in mind that Ascend representatives will **NEVER**:

- Ask a member for account number via email or text message
- Ask a member to share their user ID or digital banking password
- Ask a member for a one-time passcode
- Ask a member to send money via Zelle® to make their account "current" or "in good standing"
- Call a member to verify a Zelle® transaction



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

# Ascend Recognized by American Banker

**Once again named one of the nation's best credit unions to work for.**

For the ninth consecutive year, Ascend is proud to be recognized by American Banker magazine as one of the top 70 best credit unions to work for in the United States. Ascend is the only Tennessee credit union listed nine times since the program's inception in 2014, and one of only two Tennessee credit unions that made the list of organizations honored this year.

In recognizing Ascend for its exceptional workplace, judges praised a new staff feedback initiative that helped enhance our training and professional development programs, which has resulted in a 46% internal promotion rate. Judges also cited the partnership Ascend has with Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), which includes an 18% tuition discount for Ascend employees in addition to the credit union's pre-existing tuition reimbursement program.

Employee benefits at Ascend include tuition assistance, opportunities to support local fundraising efforts, and 10 paid holidays. Additionally, Ascend pays for 100% of health coverage for employees, and 90% of employees are currently enrolled in the plan. The credit union also offers 401(k) contributions that match 100% of an employee's contribution by the fifth year of participation, up to 10% of the employee's annual salary.

Being named to this prestigious list of credit unions requires positive feedback from employees on the award program's survey. We're delighted that our colleagues believe Ascend is a great place to work. We will continue our efforts to be the most loved financial institution in our market, both by our employees and the Middle Tennessee communities we serve.

For more information on how to join our award-winning team, visit [ascend.org/careers](https://ascend.org/careers). ➡





# Ascend in the Community

We're Making an Impact in the Most Important Place We Can – Home

## Walk to End Alzheimer's – Alzheimer's Association

Ascend sponsored two Walk to End Alzheimer's events in Lynchburg and Murfreesboro, along with donating \$10,000 to the Alzheimer's Association's Tennessee Chapter. The money raised from the walks will be used to provide critical care and support resources to individuals and families affected by dementia. In total, Ascend, employees, and members have contributed more than \$20,000 to help in the fight against Alzheimer's since 2012.



Ascend employees attend the Walk to End Alzheimers Event on Sept. 21 in Lynchburg.

## Costumed for a Cure – Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS)

This Halloween, employees at Ascend locations throughout Middle Tennessee participated in the annual Costumed for a Cure fundraiser benefiting the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS).

Employees dressed up in their most creative costumes and decorated pumpkins, and anyone who visited an Ascend branch could vote for their favorite costume or pumpkin with a contribution to LLS.

The event raised \$4,167 from employee and member donations, bringing the 18-year fundraising total to \$53,046. All funds will go toward supporting blood cancer research, as well as improving the quality of life for patients and their families.

In addition to the fundraiser, Ascend contributed \$10,000 toward LLS' Dare to Dream Project, which is transforming treatment and care for kids with blood cancer.



Charlotte branch employees pose in-costume for our Costumed for a Cure fundraiser.

## Breast Cancer Awareness Month – Susan G. Komen Foundation



Ascend employees attend Susan G Komen's Nashville MORE THAN PINK walk on Oct. 5.

During the month of October, Ascend employees contributed to a fundraising campaign for Susan G. Komen Central Tennessee, raising \$2,556. Including this year's donation, Ascend employees have raised \$24,909 for Komen since 2018. Ascend also contributed an additional \$5,000 to sponsor the Nashville MORE THAN PINK Walk, which was held on October 5, and \$5000 to sponsor the VIPink Backstage Bash. The money donated will help fund local breast cancer detection and support projects for those with critical needs, with the goal of eliminating barriers to lifesaving services.

## 14th Annual Heroes Breakfast – Operation Stand Down Tennessee

Ascend CEO Matt Jernigan and Ascend team members attended the 14th Annual Operation Stand Down Tennessee (OSDTN) Heroes Breakfast, held on Oct. 24. OSDTN is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing comprehensive resources and support to military-connected individuals. Through programs focused on housing, employment, and other wrap-around services, OSDTN helps veterans reintegrate into civilian life, achieve stability, and connect with their communities. The Heroes Breakfast is a signature event that honors the service and sacrifice of veterans and military personnel. Ascend served as an event sponsor with a \$15,000 donation.



CEO Matt Jernigan and Ascend employees attend the 14th annual OSDTN Heroes Breakfast on Oct. 24.

# Budget for a Financially Strong 2025

As the new year approaches, it's important to make sure you're financially prepared for the calendar to turn. A budget may turn into your favorite tool, helping you identify areas where you can cut back or allocate funds toward different areas. You can create a budget using a spreadsheet, a budgeting app, or by working with a certified financial counselor. Here are a few tips for starting and maximizing your budget:

## **Make a List of Essentials & Priorities**

Essentials include your rent or mortgage payment, car loan, utilities, and fixed costs like student loans, insurance, and other necessary expenses. Priorities are charitable contributions, savings, and retirement contributions.

## **Put Your Savings in High-Yield Accounts**

High-yield accounts, like certificates or the Ascend Interest Earning Checking account, are perfect for saving for a large expense, reducing debt, or establishing an emergency fund. Both generally have a high rate of return, earning you more than a traditional savings account.

## **Automate Your Payments & Transfers**

Once you've figured out how much your essentials and priorities cost

monthly, set up Online Bill Pay so you won't forget any bill payments and automatic transfers between your checking and savings accounts.

## **Spend or Roll Over the Leftovers**

After your necessary payments and savings are accounted for, the rest is yours to spend or roll over into the next month. Remember to keep track of how much you've spent each month and put any rolled-over money into your high-yield account.

## **Make Sure You're on the Right Path**

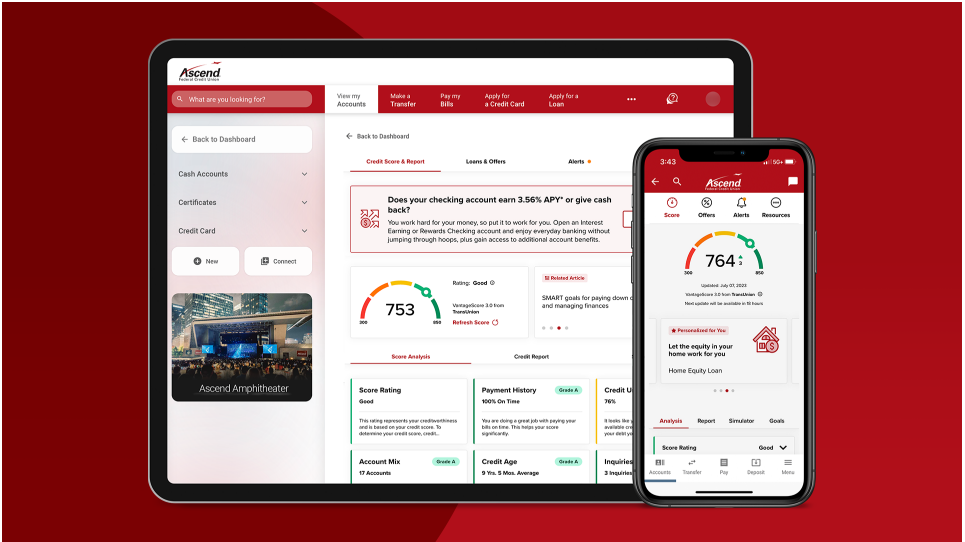
When you have your budget together, or if you need assistance starting one, contact a certified financial counselor for a review. Ascend members can schedule an appointment for a free Financial Health Checkup at [ascend.org](https://ascend.org). ➡





# Find the Perfect Loan with Confidence

Utilize free credit score monitoring with SavvyMoney.



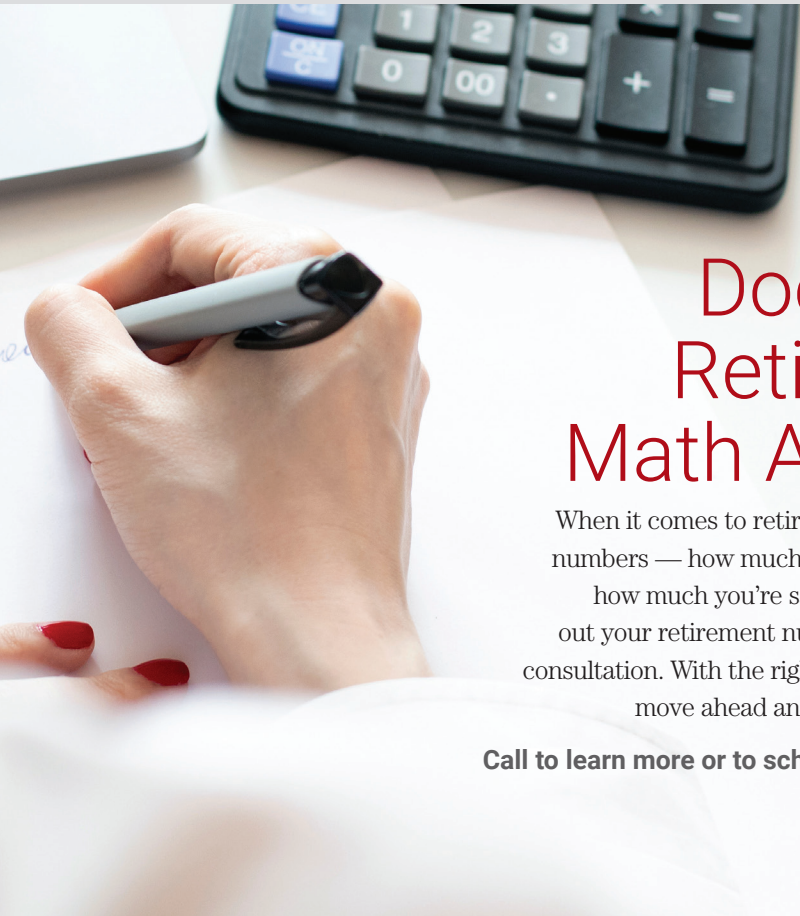
An anticipated lower interest rate environment in 2025 could make it the right time to take out a loan or refinance into a lower interest rate. If you're ready to take advantage of the lower rates to get a car loan, mortgage, or personal loan, for example, it's important to know your credit score beforehand.

Ascend makes it easy for our members to stay on top of their credit. We've partnered with SavvyMoney to provide credit score monitoring and other helpful resources, all at no cost, and their soft credit pulls won't impact your score when you make an inquiry.

In addition to allowing access to your credit score anytime, SavvyMoney also monitors your credit report daily and informs you by email if there are any big changes detected, such as a new account being opened, a change in address or employment, delinquency being reported, or an inquiry being made. This monitoring tool is a great way for Ascend members to keep an eye out for identity theft.

SavvyMoney is available in Ascend digital banking and our mobile app. Take advantage of this free feature so you're prepared for any financing needs in 2025.

When you're ready to take out a loan, Ascend has options for every type with low rates and flexible terms. Get started by visiting our consumer loans page at [ascend.org/loans](https://ascend.org/loans). ➡



# Does Your Retirement Math Add Up?

When it comes to retirement, it's all about the numbers — how much money you'll need and how much you're saving to get there. Find out your retirement numbers by scheduling a consultation. With the right information, you can move ahead and plan with confidence.

**Call to learn more or to schedule a consultation.**



Randall W. Harris, ChFC® CFP®	VP, Wealth Management	931-454-1307
Lee Baker	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

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Not Insured by NCUA or Any Other Government Agency	Not Credit Union Guaranteed	Not Credit Union Deposits or Obligations	May Lose Value
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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](http://www.lpl.com/disclosures/is-lpl-relationship-disclosure.html) for more detailed information.

# Buying a Car in 2025? Ascend Can Give You the Keys

The possibility of a lower interest rate environment in 2025 has many people thinking about upgrading their ride. If you have an eye on your dream vehicle and need a loan, consider these helpful tips before you head to the lot.

## Figure Out How Much You Need and Get Pre-Approved

Start by checking your credit score and calculate how much you can afford for a down payment and monthly payment. Ascend members can view their latest credit score at no cost, thanks to the SavvyMoney credit score monitoring program located in digital banking or the Ascend mobile app.

Once you have your budget figured out, get pre-approved for your auto loan from a trusted lender. This can help in the bargaining process at the dealership.

## Test-Drive Multiple Cars

This is the fun part. Even if you think you have your dream car in mind, take your time and test out several different vehicles to make sure you're getting exactly what you want. Try cars in different price ranges, too.

## Get the Right Loan with the Right Lender

When your finances are in order and you've chosen the perfect vehicle, it's time to secure the best loan to match with the right lender. Ascend is proud to be one of the top auto loan lenders in the state of Tennessee with competitive rates, flexible terms, and excellent service.

If you're ready to hop into the driver's seat of your dream vehicle, the right time may be coming soon. Learn more and apply for an Ascend auto loan at [ascend.org](https://ascend.org). ➡





# Welcome New Select Employee Groups

**Middle TN Studebaker Drivers Club – Lewisburg**

**Omicron Omega Murfreesboro Chap. Delta Theta Tau – Murfreesboro**

**Riley's Creek Baptist Church – Manchester**

**Community Church at Windrow – Rockvale**

**Ultium Cells – Spring Hill**

Email [bizdev@ascend.org](mailto:bizdev@ascend.org) to learn how employees and members of your organization can partner with Ascend Federal Credit Union. ➔

## Don't Miss the Ascend Scholarship Deadline

**The 2025-2026 scholarship application is now open!**

For more than 20 years, Ascend has awarded \$281,000 in scholarships to our members. The Ascend 2025 scholarship application is now open.

Ascend will award 10 scholarships at \$2,500 each to students who are Ascend members. Scholarships will be awarded to five traditional and five non-traditional students for the 2025-2026 academic year. Scholarships are non-recurring, but previous winners may re-apply if they meet program requirements.

The deadline to apply is February 28, 2025.

Visit [ascend.org/scholarships](https://ascend.org/scholarships) for eligibility requirements and to apply. ➔



# Looking for a checking account that fits your lifestyle?

**Earn 3.56% APY<sup>1</sup> with Ascend Interest Earning Checking<sup>2</sup>**



Whether it's for everyday expenses or your next family adventure, your Ascend Interest Earning Checking account will earn you extra cash on your monthly balance so you can fund what matters most to you. Plus, your account gives you access to additional benefits and discounts to help you save even more. Registration and activation will apply.



**TELEHEALTH  
SERVICES**



**MOBILE PHONE  
PROTECTION**



**FUEL  
SAVINGS**



**TRAVEL & LEISURE  
DISCOUNTS**

**Open your account today at [ascend.org](https://ascend.org) to start earning. ➡**

Federally insured by the NCUA.

<sup>1</sup> Annual Percentage Yield.

<sup>2</sup> Earn 3.56% APY on your Interest Earning Checking balance up to \$15,000. Balances over \$15,000 receive share rate of .20%.

<sup>3</sup> Available for the account holder and their spouse/domestic partner and up to six (6) dependent children age 2 and older. This is not insurance.

<sup>4</sup> The descriptions herein are summaries only and do not include all terms, conditions and exclusions of the Benefits described. Please refer to the actual Guide to Benefit for complete details of coverage and exclusions. Coverage is provided through the company named in the Guide to Benefit. Guide to Benefit can be found online at [ascend.eclubonline.net](https://ascend.eclubonline.net). Insurance Products are not insured by the NCUA or any Federal Government Agency; not a deposit of or guaranteed by the credit union or any credit union affiliate.

# The best place to bank isn't a bank.

[ascend.org](https://ascend.org)

[memberservice@ascend.org](mailto:memberservice@ascend.org)

800-342-3086

STAR: 800-342-8663

For more information about all of our locations, visit [ascend.org/locations](https://ascend.org/locations).



[@ascendfcu](https://www.instagram.com/ascendfcu)

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



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