

GEORGIA CREDIT UNION

Affiliates

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GEORGIA CREDIT UNIONS HELP CONSUMERS IN TIGHT TIMES

Duluth, GA (July 16, 2008)—Like many Americans, Georgians are feeling the pinch of the economy now more than ever. Rising gasoline and grocery prices, coupled with rising unemployment rates, are cause for alarm for people living paycheck to paycheck. And with the recent downfall of IndyMac Bancorp, Inc., the bailout of Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae—the two government sponsored mortgage companies that own or guarantee \$5.2 trillion in U.S. home mortgages— and countless other signals that the economy is facing a recession, consumers are seeking some relief.

Turning to a financial institution for assistance now might not seem like the right thing to do, but for the 1.7 million Georgians who belong to a credit union, now is the perfect time to ask for help. Credit unions across the state have programs in place to assist consumers with making ends meet, an effort that has defined credit unions since their inception.

“No matter your income, everyone is feeling the squeeze of the economy these days,” says Mike Mercer, president of Georgia Credit Union Affiliates, the association that represents the state’s 179 not-for-profit credit unions. “Credit unions are owned by their members, who are everyday people trying to make ends meet. So they operate specifically for the benefit of the members. People need help and they can find a variety of programs to assist them at a credit union.”

For example, at Etowah Valley Federal Credit Union in Cartersville, members can receive a short- term loan to help pay for back-to-school clothing and supplies, just in time for the statewide sales tax holiday, July 31 – August 3. The credit union also offers a

catastrophic clause in its loan product for members facing job loss. By cutting loan payments in half for six months, members can breathe a little easier while getting their lives back in order. "Members are facing a lot of financial challenges. The programs we offer help get them back on their feet," says Sonja Miller, member service representative at Etowah Valley Federal Credit Union.

In response to the recent IndyMac collapse, CSRA Federal Credit Union in Augusta is helping to ease the minds of its members by allowing them to restructure their accounts with balances over \$100,000, free of any early withdrawal fees. That's a risky proposition for any financial institution, but the credit union's CEO, Charm McCall says the offer is demonstrating to members that the credit union wants to ease any concerns members might have about their money. "Our members know that their deposits are insured up to \$100,000 by the NCUSIF [National Credit Union Share Insurance Fund]. We want to reassure our members that their money is safe at CSRA," says McCall. "If a member is more comfortable to restructure their certificates and shares with us, we can walk them through the process."

"We want to help members' pocketbooks today and help their financial situation in the long run," says Deborah Clark, director of member development at Georgia Power Valdosta Federal Credit Union. For members facing medical emergencies, divorce or other lifestyle hardships, Georgia Power Valdosta FCU allows them to skip one payment once they have made three consecutive payments on auto and signature loans. "Times are changing and we want to give our members an incentive to improve their lives and continue to count on their credit union for help when needed."

Across the state, credit unions offer similar programs to assist members meet the challenges of a tight economy. "We're all hoping this economic crisis won't last long," says Mercer. "But while we're all going through it, it makes sense to put your trust in a financial institution that has your best interest at heart."

Consumers interested in joining a credit union can visit georgiacreditunions.org.

About Georgia Credit Union Affiliates

Georgia Credit Union Affiliates (GCUA) is comprised of three state support organizations—Cooperative Services, Inc., Georgia Central Credit Union and

Georgia Credit Union League. Georgia Credit Union Affiliates is a trade association that provides advocacy, educational, operational and marketing support for Georgia credit unions. There are 179 credit unions in Georgia, with total assets of \$12 billion, serving over 1.7 million members.

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