



**A MESSAGE FROM
ACUMA PRESIDENT**

Peter Benjamin, CMB



Competent, Confident, Consistent

Credit Unions Must Be Ready to Serve Members

By Peter Benjamin

Most of us don't set out from day one in pursuit of our dream job. That opportunity comes — if it comes at all — as the result of study, hard work, and a growing knowledge of who we are as people and professionals and how we fit into this very complicated life. Fortune favors the prepared mind, or so philosophers say. If we're smart and follow our instincts, we just might land a role that makes a difference in this world.

For some of us, however, finding our true path can also be a matter of dumb luck. I was working my way through college at a law firm as a “production assistant”, their term for the lucky employee who made sure the copier always had paper, the coffee never ran out, and none of the partners' needs ever went unmet. Suffice to say, I hated it there. My best friend worked at a mortgage



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ship Month, a time that recognizes the rights and opportunities of everyone to follow their own path to the American Dream. We are mortgage lenders one and all, or support the efforts of those who help make that dream come true for credit union members nationwide. It's a dream that supports our members' safety, financial security, their sense of pride and, in some cases, even their sense of worth. It's not a responsibility to be taken lightly.

I didn't know all that when I took that first part-time job with the mortgage firm my friend recommended. Back then it was more about managing loans and pushing paper, something that many of us still do every day. But as I moved through the ranks at various mortgage companies it dawned on me that there was something much larger and more important going on here. It was something that started touching me at a deeper level.

I began to see some of the faces of the borrowers behind the mortgages, to understand their wants and needs. They came to us, both male and female, of all ages, races and creeds, and their needs were always the same. They wanted a house where their families would be secure

company and suggested I apply. It didn't take long for me to settle in, and only a little longer still to understand the important role mortgage lenders play in helping individuals take care of their families and, in turn, helping build stronger communities through homeownership. It's fair to say that I never looked back, and I likely never will.

This past June was designated National Homeowner-

and could grow safely, a place that would help them amass the wealth they'd need to survive and maybe even thrive in an increasingly expensive world. They wanted something of worth, of which they could say with pride, "This is our home."

I think that's when I knew I had found as close to a calling as I ever would, a reason to get up in the morning and work hard every day, something that made a difference in an often indifferent world. And I understood the importance of the role that we play to the people that we serve.

Even though June has passed, I believe we should think of every month as National Homeownership Month, because increasingly homeownership is the ultimate goal of everything we do every day. We don't serve the process of making mortgage loans, we serve the recipients of those loans. In fact, mortgage loans have no meaning if there are no members to benefit from them. The credit union movement's founding philosophy — "Not for profit, not for charity, but for service" — is or should be the perfect motto for what we do.

I truly believe the next three to five years will be the era of credit union mortgage lending, a time when we reach out to more current and potential members with better rates and terms than our non-credit union competition can provide. The market has been rapidly changing due to economic and world trends, yet credit unions have maintained a steady five- to six-percent penetration into the trillion-dollar mortgage market. It's time to start thinking about ways to grow that niche.

And we can do that because we are credit unions, member-owned financial cooperatives that cooperate to compete successfully with



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It was my dream job, I said, and I was sure they would never pick me.

Thankfully, I was wrong. They picked me, and I am very grateful to have been given the opportunity to serve you. I guess dreams do come true after all, and now it's time for all of us to come together and make sure the American Dream of homeownership comes true for all credit union members everywhere. ▲

other types of lenders. Thanks to that cooperation and the growing use of technology, even the smallest of us can successfully serve the market. As credit unions, we are competent, confident and consistent in our member service, and that is something borrowers need now more than ever.

After I interviewed for this job, I told my wife Danielle that this was the place I wanted to work, where I could execute my best efforts to make sure everyone understood that home mortgages were first and foremost about the people they served, and not the other way around.



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