

Credit Union moves to Upland

New financial support available for students

By ELLIE TIEMENS

Afena Federal Credit Union will soon find another home in Upland, Indiana.

The new branch of this Grant and Wabash county-based credit union was set to open their new Upland branch in the space previously occupied by Joe on the Go in mid-to-late July of this year. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they have experienced some delays and have not set a firm date for the grand opening.

Afena is a member-owned cooperative founded in 1957 under the name Marion Independent Federal Credit Union. Today it has grown to over \$65 million in asset-size and serves over 8,000 members.

Its two current locations are both in Marion, located near the Kohl's and T.J. Maxx. The credit union decided to open an additional branch in Upland following the closure of Star Financial in town.

"Every community deserves a hometown credit union with real people and smiling faces, and we believe that Afena is uniquely positioned to serve the banking needs of the Upland community," said Shelby Schuh, vice president of marketing at Afena Federal Credit Union. "We are thrilled to be able to open this beautiful new branch in Upland and provide the community with a full-service local financial institution to serve all of their banking needs, whatever they may be."

Afena is excited to deepen their roots and expand their reach in Grant County to the Upland community.

They look forward to the opportunity to partner with local businesses and residents in the coming years.

"A financial institution is an important part of the community," said Ron Sutherland, special assistant to the president and member of the Upland Town Council. "Therefore, having a financial institution choose to operate in our community will be important to our residents, businesses and the attractiveness of our town to others."

Further, Afena sees the potential to be an asset to local students, particularly Taylor students.

Though they recognize that many students come to Taylor with bank accounts already established at financial institutions in their hometowns, Afena believes that they have a variety of services that could still be useful to students.

"Afena has multiple financial counselors on staff who specialize in helping to create budgets, understand personal finances, and develop the skills needed for future financial success," Schuh said. "College is a time when many students find themselves on their own for the first time and may be interested in taking charge of their own finances. We offer free student checking accounts with debit cards, financial counseling and a free comprehensive online program called Banzai to develop financial skills and knowledge."

Additionally, Afena is investing in new technology to provide more video banking services that could allow students with limited ability to come to the branch in-person to still have accessible banking.

More information for these programs can be found on their website at <http://www.afenafcu.org/>.

“It is clearly valuable to have a business entering the town,” said Stephen Olson, vice president for business development and services/chief financial officer. “Banking is an interesting business in this era due to the digital nature of money transactions now. I’m hopeful that Afena will be successful.”

Though it is unsure when Afena will officially open its doors in Upland, the community can expect a credit union dedicated to helping its members achieve their financial goals, as their mission statement says.

Afena is excited to serve the Town of Upland, Sutherland said.

“We could not be more excited to be able to move forward with the branch opening, despite the unfortunate circumstances,” Schuch said, “and we look forward to an opening that will ensure the safety and security of all staff, members and the community-at-large.”

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