

# The Professional Touch

FIRST QUARTER 2024

Dear members,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, management and staff of East Texas Professional Credit Union, I would like to thank you for choosing our Credit Union for your financial needs, and to welcome you to the new year! It is my honor to serve you, and this year I will celebrate my 20th year as President and CEO of this great institution.

Since our inception in 1953, ETPCU has proudly and confidently worked hard to meet every trial and challenge that the financial services industry has faced - and 2023 was no different. As each challenge arose, our Credit Union worked diligently to provide a safe and secure place for East Texans to continue to borrow and save. Our focus remained on improving the financial well-being of our members while maintaining the long-term financial stability of the Credit Union. During our 70-year history, our Credit Union has operated with conservative management principles designed to provide one of the top-rated and safest financial institutions in the United States, and we have no plans to change this philosophy.

Our hard work and conservative principles have not gone unnoticed. East Texas Professional Credit Union enters the new year as the number one Credit Union in the state of Texas, and the fourth-ranked Credit Union in the United States, as ranked by S&P Global Market Intelligence. To compile the rankings, S&P Global calculated scores for each U.S. credit union based on five significant measurements in comparison with industry standards: member growth; loans per member; net worth as a percentage of total assets; loan delinquency ratio; and return on average assets. It is truly a privilege to be recognized both statewide and nationally with these esteemed honors.

In addition to providing a safe harbor for our members' financial health, we feel that giving back to the communities we serve is another way of showing our appreciation for the continued support of our membership. We believe that helping our neighbors and working with local organizations across the many communities we serve is a prerequisite for being a premier financial institution. As a way of sharing our gratitude to our friends and neighbors, the East Texas Professional Credit Union Kindness Crew was formed. All ETPCU management and staff are members of our Kindness Crew, and we are proud to share that we "Choose Kindness." In 2024 you will see our Kindness Crew out and about in all the East Texas communities we serve performing random acts of kindness as we work together to build awareness of kindness and community.

In closing, I fully appreciate the loyalty and support given to us by our 98,000 member owners who have chosen East Texas Professional Credit Union as their financial institution of choice. While we celebrate our past accomplishments, we want our members to know that ETPCU stands ready and well positioned to face both the challenges and opportunities that 2024 may bring. Once again, I want to express my gratitude for your trust, confidence, and your continued support and I wish each of you the very best that 2024 has to offer.

Sincerely,

*Byron Nordin*  
President / CEO



## IMPORTANT TAX RETURN INFORMATION

- ★ All payable parties must sign the back of a government issued tax refund check.
- ★ All payees must be on an account for a tax refund direct deposit.
- ★ Government issued checks made payable to two people can only be deposited to an account with the same two people on the account.
- ★ Account holder's name must be printed on the tax refund prepaid card. Proper identification will be required for negotiation.
- ★ All tax refund prepaid debit cards must have an EMV/microchip before being negotiated.

## Annual Membership Meeting

East Texas Professional Credit Union's annual membership meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn located at 300 Tuttle Circle, Longview TX 75605 on April 20, 2024 beginning at 2 p.m. Please join us to learn about your credit union's growth, success and plans for the future. Refreshments will be served and drawings for cash prizes will be held following the business portion of the meeting. We look forward to seeing you at this important event.

## Update Contact Information

With the beginning of the new year, we ask that you check your accounts for current information. Please make sure that your address, email address, phone numbers, joint owner and beneficiary information is updated with correct data.

## Notice to Members

Pursuant to Texas Credit Union Department Rule 91.315, documents relating to East Texas Professional Credit Union's finances and management are available at [www.etpcu.org](http://www.etpcu.org) or by contacting East Texas Professional Credit Union Senior Management at 903.323.0230.

## Holiday Hours

East Texas Professional Credit Union will observe the following upcoming holidays:

### Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Monday, January 15, 2024  
Lobby & Drive Thru Open  
409 E. Loop 281; Longview  
Lobby Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Drive Thru Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
All Other Offices Closed

### Presidents' Day

Monday, February 19, 2024  
Lobby & Drive Thru Open  
409 E. Loop 281; Longview  
Lobby Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Drive Thru Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
All Other Offices Closed

## Privacy Notice

East Texas Professional Credit Union's Privacy Notice is available for review at <https://www.etpcu.org/privacy.htm>. The notice was last revised June 2012. To request a printed copy via mail, please call 903.323.0230 or 800.256.5009.

## OUT AND ABOUT

East Texas Professional Credit Union takes pride in being a part of the communities we serve. In the last few months we participated in numerous East Texas high school pep rallies, the East Texas Yamboree parade, the Kilgore Downtown Trick-or-Treat festivities, the Panola County Senior Expo, Daingerfield Days and much more.

The East Texas Professional Credit Union Kindness Crew has also been out and about the last few months, participating in the 3rd Annual Back the Blue Golf Tournament at Tempest Golf Club and serving 25 gallons of free hot chocolate during the Kilgore Christmas parade.

It is our privilege to take part in local activities, and we look forward to each one. Follow us on social media to keep up with our events.

f @East Texas Professional Credit Union  
i @easttexasprofessionalcu



## Project F.I.T.

Financial Independence Training

Strengthen your financial future with East Texas Professional Credit Union. Project F.I.T. was created to ensure a financially fit foundation for our young Texans. The program is designed for members ages 12-22 to teach you how to budget, save and live within your earnings.

Call us at 903.323.0230 to reserve space for an upcoming financial literacy course. Project F.I.T. is taught at our 5000 E. George Richey Rd. office location in Longview. The course length is one hour and begins at 5:00 p.m.

January 25, 2024 ★ February 29, 2024  
March 28, 2024

On-site curriculum is also available at participating local high schools.





## 5-Star Service

East Texas Professional Credit Union is proud to announce our annual employee award winners! These staff members were recognized for their exemplary service, positive attitudes and unparalleled work ethic. We are honored to have you as a member of our Credit Union family and thank you for your hard work and dedication to our members and our institution!



**Outstanding Spirit**  
Natalie Bunger  
Promoted to Branch  
Manager



**Outstanding Productivity**  
Zachary King



**Outstanding Member Service**  
Heather Thomas



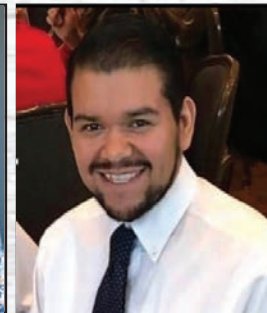
**Outstanding Supervisor**  
Catie Thomas



**Outstanding Branch Employee**  
Eva Luna



**Rising Star**  
Morgan White



**Outstanding Achievement**  
Ubaldo Meraz



**MVP**  
Earli Mueller



**Team Player**  
Vicki Walker



**Rookie of the Year**  
Courtney Woodard



**Promoted to IT Service Specialist II**  
Jason Dubois



**Promoted to IT Service Specialist II**  
Floyd Cain



**Promoted to Branch Coordinator**  
Blanca Ramirez



## Employee of the Year

Nicole Lawson has been recognized by East Texas Professional Credit Union as the 2023 Employee of the Year. Nicole joined the ETPCU family in 2017 as a Call Center Representative before moving to the Hallsville branch as the Branch Coordinator in 2019. Nicole then transferred to the LeTourneau branch as the Branch Coordinator in 2020 where she was later promoted to AVP/Branch manager. She has been promoted to her new role as AVP/Branch Operations Management Trainee. Nicole has excelled as a leader and top performer throughout her career. Congratulations to this outstanding employee for her hard work and commitment to the Credit Union.



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## PROTECT THE ONES YOU LOVE

Technology is seemingly ingrained in every aspect of our lives. Digital records exist for most everything about us. General information, financial records, medical records, credit history, online searches and purchase activity are all stored electronically in the interest of efficiency and improving the customer experience. Most people openly share their personal information through social media and a variety of apps. For people with bad intentions, all these records are a treasure trove of opportunity.

While we are all potential targets for fraud and scams, the bad guys focus disproportionately on senior citizens. We are experiencing a significant increase in our senior members being targeted by text (smishing), phone calls (vishing), and email (phishing). Regardless of the method of contact, most of these situations fall into one of three general categories: tricking seniors into sending the bad guys money, establishing a relationship of trust and stealing the senior's savings, or using seniors to move/laundry stolen funds.

A common theft scam we see today involves the bad guys calling and impersonating a Microsoft employee. The bad guys prey on a senior's lack of technological knowledge and create a sense of urgency to allow "Microsoft" access to their device to protect them from fraud. The bad guys can then access login credentials for banking, install malware to track activity on the device, and convince the victim to send payment for the service they are doing. Please keep in mind, "Microsoft" will never randomly call you and try to access your device. Preventing this type of fraud is easy. Simply disconnect the call immediately to protect yourself.

The bad guys utilize more in-depth techniques to develop relationships with seniors that ultimately lead to large dollar theft from the victim. Typically, the bad guys have gathered information about an individual before contacting them. This information comes from social media and data breaches where their information has been compromised and sold. Often, the bad guys contact widows/widowers or lonely seniors. Over time, the bad guys become a "virtual companion" that fills a void and separates the victim from family and friends. As the relationship deepens, the victim may reference a boyfriend/girlfriend or fiancé. At this stage, the bad guys present financial constraints the victim can help resolve. Stories range from helping family with medical issues, to helping the bad guy get an inheritance that they will share with the victim, or travel expenses for the bad guy to meet the victim. Requests are made to wire money or buy gift cards and supply the card number so they can be used. Some victims even take out loans to help the bad guy. The victim is so committed to the "relationship" at this point, that they will lie about having met them in person and make efforts to protect the bad guy. Preventing this type of fraud is much more difficult since the victim has been duped into believing everything is real. Family and friends must stay involved in seniors' lives to protect them.

The bad guys use these same techniques to launder money using victims that do not have money as mules to "clean/laundry" money that has been stolen from other victims. The only difference with this money laundering scenario is there are other victims and the senior is being used to move the stolen funds. The bad guys will deposit the funds to the senior's account through either a wire, electronic deposit, or by making a mobile deposit using the senior's mobile banking credentials. The senior is instructed to either buy gift cards and send the information to the bad guys or wire the funds to a third party as part of the money laundering process. Although the senior is not the actual victim, they are being used to perform illegal activity that is very detrimental to the victims. Preventing this form of fraud is equally difficult since the senior is invested in the "relationship" with the bad guys. Family and friends must stay engaged in seniors' lives and take an active interest in their daily activities.

If you are a victim in any of the above scenarios, discontinue all contact with the perpetrator immediately. Change your social media credentials and make your accounts private. Change your phone number if they are calling or texting you. Use a reputable service provider to scrub your computer/laptop for malware. Contact the Credit Union and your other financial service providers to change your account number, online banking credentials, and get a new debit/credit card.

Financial exploitation of the elderly is a huge problem. The Senate Committee on Aging reports older Americans lost \$1.1 billion to fraud in 2022. Members of this committee stated they believe this figure is "almost surely an underestimate," since it does not factor in the instances of victims who don't report scams due to embarrassment. If you suspect a family member is being financially exploited, please contact Adult Protective Services at (800) 252-5400 or report online at <https://www.txabusehotline.org>. Emergency situations should be reported by phone, as online reports may not be investigated immediately.

## EAST TEXAS PROFESSIONAL CREDIT UNION SCHOLARSHIP

**ETPCU McLaughlin Scholarship - \$2,000**  
(for those who wish to pursue an education degree)

**ETPCU Presidential Scholarship - \$1,000**  
(for those who wish to pursue a degree in any field)

\* The applicant, or an immediate family member, must have a credit union account in good standing to qualify for either scholarship. (Immediate family member is defined as a parent, grandparent, brother or sister.) Scholarship eligibility extends to any graduating high school senior attending school within the following counties: Anderson, Angelina, Camp, Cass, Northern Cherokee, Franklin, Gregg, Harrison, Henderson, Marion, Morris, Nacogdoches, Panola, Rusk, Smith, Titus and Upshur.  
THE APPLICANT MUST QUALIFY FOR MEMBERSHIP THROUGH ONE OF THE COUNTIES THAT WE SERVE.

Applications are available online at [etpcu.org](http://etpcu.org). They may also be picked up at the counselor's office at any high school within our field of membership, or at any East Texas Professional Credit Union office location.