



**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Please see attached listed of credit unions and their corresponding contacts

**SOUTHERN MICHIGAN CHAPTER OF CREDIT UNIONS DONATION FORGIVES \$2.5 MILLION IN MEDICAL DEBT**

At a press conference this morning, the Southern Michigan Chapter of Credit Unions announced a \$25,500 gift to RIP Medical Debt, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The gift, a collaborative effort by nine credit unions, will abolish \$2.5 million in medical debt for 3,182 people in Jackson, Lenawee, Hillsdale, Calhoun and Washtenaw Counties in Michigan.

RIP Medical Debt uses donations to purchase medical collection accounts at a greatly reduced cost and pays off the debt for the neediest people. More than 3,000 local recipients of the credit unions’ joint act of kindness will be notified soon by a letter from RIP Medical Debt.

Speaking at the press conference, American 1 Credit Union CEO Martha Fuerstenau shared, “Each of our credit unions recognizes that medical debt doesn’t happen by choice. We don’t view medical collections as an indicator of financial irresponsibility. However, because loan rates are based on credit scores, the impact of a medical collection reaches into the wallet of our neighbors month after month. It’s a vicious financial cycle that also burdens the emotional health of those underneath its weight. Through collaborative giving, we are creating a new virtuous cycle for more than 3,000 individuals and families.”

The individuals selected for debt abolishment are truly in need, according to Jerry Ashton, founder of RIP Medical Debt. “We find people who earn less than two times the federal poverty level or are in hardship by paying 5% of their annual income out of pocket for medical expenses, or who face insolvency due to their medical debt being greater than their assets.” Ashton continued, “I cannot tell you how thrilled RIP Medical Debt is to partner with this amazing collection of Southern Michigan credit unions that do not simply talk about community involvement but live it daily. In this case, it consists of a wonderful donation on their part which has enabled our non-profit to go out into the debt market to locate debt in their communities, buy it for pennies on the dollar, and then forgive that debt along with removing any credit blemish it may have created.”

The credit unions involved in this project provide financial counseling in various forms for anyone in their communities. Fuerstenau expressed the hope that the gift of debt abolishment will serve as a step toward restored financial wellness for the recipients.

During the gift presentation, CEO of CP Federal Credit Union Chrissy Siders announced that the Michigan Credit Union Foundation added to the gift given by the nine local credit unions, making the impact even larger. The Southern Michigan Chapter of Credit Unions is comprised of Aeroquip Credit Union (Jackson), American 1 Credit Union (Jackson), Blue Ox Credit Union (Battle Creek), Community Choice Credit Union (Farmington Hills), CP Federal Credit Union (Jackson), Lenco Credit Union (Adrian), South Central Credit Union (Jackson), TLC Community Credit Union (Adrian), and Washtenaw Federal Credit Union (Ypsilanti).

The Southern Michigan Chapter of Credit Unions is led by President Terri Paperisky, CEO of South Central Credit Union.

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