

COMMUNITIES TOGETHER INC



Financial education can make a real difference in people's lives. But let's face it: **a workshop about credit scores doesn't exactly draw crowds.** So when Communities Together connected with Lafayette Federal Credit Union (LFCU) at The Faircliff—a Somerset Development Co. community in Washington, DC—Community Engagement Coordinator Sherlin Morales Jimenez had an idea. She wanted residents to have access to useful financial information, but she also wanted the experience to be engaging, social, and worth showing up for. Her suggestion? Bingo. LFCU came back with something even better: **Credit Score Trivia.**



Branch Manager Rudolph “Rudy” Isaac and Membership Development Officer Sara Giraldo turned an important but potentially intimidating topic into an engaging (and competitive!) game.

Residents answered questions about building, protecting, and understanding their credit, with correct answers raising their simulated credit scores and prizes going to the highest and most improved scores.

It was fun. But more importantly, residents learned information they could actually use.

That first event has grown into an ongoing partnership built around residents' needs. When changes to SNAP benefits led more Faircliff residents to ask about employment and increasing their income, LFCU responded with a résumé-building workshop. Rudy walked residents through strengthening their résumés, answered individual questions, and invited participants to email him afterward for additional help, while Sara made herself available to support Spanish-speaking residents.

One participant, Bruce Young, came to the workshop eager to expand his employment opportunities. Sherlin connected him directly with Rudy for additional support—and Bruce has since secured a new job.

“I am amazed at the way LFCU is invested in helping the individual succeed without ever asking: ‘Do you bank with us?’” Sherlin says.

Today, LFCU continues to bring to the Faircliff opportunities that combine practical financial education with community building—from learning how to save while making deposits in real savings accounts to new interactive programming. The Credit Score Trivia game was such a success that LFCU has even developed it into an app, which will debut at The Faircliff soon.

For Communities Together, partnerships like this are about more than bringing a program into a building. **They are about connecting residents with people and institutions that listen, respond, and continue showing up.**

Healthcare at Home in Loudoun County

Getting routine healthcare means finding a provider, scheduling an appointment, arranging transportation, and navigating insurance—barriers that can be especially difficult for older adults to overcome. Senior residents at Madison House in Leesburg, Virginia, now have another option: **care comes to them.**

Communities Together partnered with Giant Pharmacy to bring a pharmacist directly to the community through a Vaccine & Wellness Clinic. Twenty-six residents participated, with opportunities to ask questions about vaccine options, benefits, and potential side effects before deciding what best suited

their individual needs.

Residents—with or without health insurance—could receive vaccines at no cost, and the staff made referrals for those needing further support.

“I’m always happy when medical care can come to the residents,” said Cathy Payne, Assistant Community Manager at Madison House Apartments, an AHD-owned site in Leesburg.

By bringing trusted healthcare partners directly into the communities we serve, Communities Together is helping remove barriers between senior residents and the care they need to stay healthy.

By the Numbers

Hunger is spiking this year. Through August, 1,250+ residents have received food support from Communities Together and its community partners.

Team Highlight: Nicholen McGougan

Nicholen McGougan stood out from the moment she joined Communities Together as the Community Coordinator for Special Populations at Bernard E. Mason Apartments in West Baltimore in February 2025.

Drawing on decades of experience working with people with disabilities as well as management experience, Nicholen quickly built strong relationships with residents and the community management team. She also demonstrated a knack for identifying residents' needs—and finding the resources and partnerships to meet those needs. Just seven months later, Nicholen earned a promotion to Team Manager. Today, she oversees Community Coordinators serving Govans Manor (in East Baltimore), Laurel Lakes (Laurel, MD), Bernard E. Mason, and Brookland Manor (Washington, DC).



Nicholen with Bernard E. Mason resident, Jean.

In her expanded role, Nicholen has become an advocate not only for residents, but also for the resources her team needs to serve them well. She has successfully worked with Communities Together's client ownership and management partners to secure additional coordinator time at two sites, building strong client relationships along the way. She is also part of the engagement team at Brookland Manor, helping determine how

Communities Together can best support community and program engagement in that large Northeast DC community.

Through it all, Nicholen's focus remains on the residents.

"Nicholen McGougan is a pro's pro and a wise soul," says Communities Together's Executive Director Tom Vellenga. "Profoundly dedicated to the self-empowerment of the people we support, she is unfailingly reliable, creative, upbeat, hardworking, entrepreneurial, and tenacious in the service of others. We're fortunate that she's also a savvy supervisor and supportive colleague, and we all greatly appreciate her leadership."

In service,

The Communities Together Team

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