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ASCEND FEDERAL CREDIT UNION UNVEILS DETAILS OF NEW ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

Ascend Federal Credit Union has revealed details of its new corporate headquarters in Tullahoma, Tenn.

In February Ascend announced plans to build a new facility to support growth and strengthen the service level its members have come to expect over the past 57 years.

"We are very excited to share the details of this project," Ascend President and CEO Caren Gabriel said. "Our volunteer Board of Directors recognizes the correlation between support staff and our ability to deliver excellent member service. Ascend is growing, and this beautiful new facility meets the challenges of our anticipated growth in a financially responsible way."

The credit union purchased the property for its current headquarters at 550 William Northern Blvd. in September 1994 from Sverdrup Technology Group, now Jacobs Engineering. Earlier this year, Ascend and Jacobs entered an agreement enabling each corporation to address its immediate office space needs as well as long-term business growth. Under the deal, Ascend sold its headquarters back to Jacobs and also received land on Airpark Drive to build a new Administrative Office.

"We were quickly approaching maximum occupancy of our current headquarters," Gabriel said. "In 1994, we had nine financial centers, and we didn't offer many of the member benefits available today. Fourteen years later, we have added five financial centers with another under construction in Cool Springs. We offer more products and services now including Internet account access, telephone loan service, a check card, Health Savings Accounts, youth accounts, gift cards, and a Platinum Visa. To maintain the excellent service our members expect, each new product and location requires back-office staff for support.

"Today, we have an in-house Call Center and 12 departments that play a key role in effectively serving our 130,000-plus members. Our new facility will not only provide ample room for our current support personnel, but it will accommodate staff growth for the next 20 years."

Gabriel reiterated statements she made in February regarding Ascend's commitment to Tullahoma.

"With 15 full-service financial centers throughout Middle Tennessee, we could have built our new headquarters anywhere," she said. "But, we wanted to preserve our 57-year alliance with Arnold Air Force Base. Our roots are here. We are already one of the largest employers in

Tullahoma, and we intend to add staff as necessary to ensure our members get the best possible service. Tullahoma will benefit not only from use of local labor to construct the facility but from the additional property taxes and expanded capacity for local employment this new building will offer.”

Designed by St. Louis-based NewGround, the 80,000-square-foot facility will be among the largest and most efficient office buildings of its type in the surrounding area. Sustainable initiatives have been engineered into the facility including energy efficient lighting, waste recycling, and the use of furniture and flooring systems that are from either renewable or recyclable products.

Major features include state-of-the-art training rooms, a reference library, an employee break room, and an extended-hour fitness center. Training rooms will be equipped with advanced audio-visual equipment to better prepare employees for member interaction on the front lines. These individual training rooms also combine to form one large multi-purpose assembly room where the credit union will host member educational seminars and workshops.

“This new facility will help us attract, train and retain top people,” Gabriel said. “It will allow us to better equip our staff to improve service delivery in the financial centers. We want to provide a work space that not only allows employees to be productive and enjoy the time they spend serving members but also promotes a healthy lifestyle, which will help us reduce health care costs.”

NewGround Project Development Manager Russell Hatke described the design of the new headquarters.

“The architectural style is intended to reflect the brand image of the credit union as strong, reliable and dependable while being a leading-edge, forward thinking provider of financial products and services,” he said.

Hatke said the credit union’s brand promise of “raising possibilities” for members is literally built into the new office.

“Visitors will have a sense of vertical proportion that articulates the credit union’s core value of raising possibilities,” he said. “The building will be a visible, readily identifiable focal point in the community.”

Gabriel said the new facility will be a beacon of confidence, fidelity and strength for people who may have had their faith in other financial institutions tested.

“Our Board wanted a new headquarters that employees, members and the community could be proud of, and that is exactly what we will build,” she said. “Ascend is a very strong and reliable brand, and that strength and reliability will emanate from our headquarters to our members throughout Middle Tennessee and the world.”

The cost of constructing Ascend’s new Administrative Office is approximately \$18 million. Groundbreaking for the new facility is scheduled for 9 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 23, and construction is scheduled to be completed in early 2010.

Ascend Federal Credit Union is a full-service financial institution with 16 locations in Middle Tennessee. Federally insured by the NCUA, membership is limited.

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