CoBCU members enjoy new services with CAFCU

On June 1, members of Church of the Brethren Credit Union awoke to a totally new banking experience. On that day, the merger between the denomination’s long-standing credit union merged with Corporate America Family Credit Union, an organization that will provide expanded products, services, and locations, while still maintaining the integrity and customer service commitment of CoBCU.

After more than 72 years of serving the Church of the Brethren with savings and loan opportunities, as well as checking accounts and online banking, CoBCU’s Board of Directors unanimously approved a merger proposal with Corporate America Family Credit Union in March. CoBCU’s Board was pressed to seek a partnership with a larger credit union due to the impact of a fragile economy, a declining demand for loans, and the inability for an institution of its size to offer adequate products and services while maintaining a balanced budget.

“The Credit Union Board and staff worked tirelessly to find a merger partner that would bring additional services, more locations, and shared values for our members,” said BBT President Nevin Dulabaum, a CoBCU member for 37 years and a Board member.

After performing a thorough search of potential merger candidates across the country, the CoBCU Board accepted a merger proposal from CAFCU, a $550 million credit union based in Elgin, Ill., that serves nearly 60,000 members across the country. This decision was based on CAFCU’s mission statement, excellent member service track record, familiarity with credit union mergers, financial stability, and its impressive list of products and branch locations.

FedEx is shipped out of BBT’s portfolios for 2011

Each year as part of its socially responsible investing initiatives, the Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust Board approves two lists of companies that earn significant revenue from U.S. military operations. One list identifies the top 25 publicly traded defense contractors based on the size of contracts awarded by the Department of Defense in the previous year, and the other list includes all publicly traded companies that generate more than 10 percent of their revenue from Department of Defense contracts.

The firms on the lists are screened from BBT investment portfolios, along with firms that receive more than 10 percent of their revenue from abortion, alcoholic beverages, firearms and other weapons, gambling, pornography, or tobacco.

In addition to screening these 63 companies out of BBT’s investments, the organization will not use the services of these companies — most notably FedEx — this year.

Visit Investments at brethrenbenefittrust.org to review these two lists. — B.S.
President’s Message

During a specially called members meeting on Friday, April 29, Church of the Brethren Credit Union members overwhelmingly approved a merger with Corporate America Family Credit Union that will lead to a greater variety of products, service hours, and locations.

“We feel that CAFCU is the best choice, and it’s great to know that our members agree,” said Nevin. “This will be a great new chapter in the life of our denomination’s credit union.”

Over 50 members attended the meeting, and more than 300 members voted to approve the merger via proxy ballots that were sent out at the beginning of April. Both CoBCU and CAFCU staff were present to answer questions, including CAFCU President Peter Paulson.

Learn more about CAFCU at www.cafcu.org or by calling 800-359-1939. — B.S.

Legacy of the Credit Union lives on at CAFCU

I was dismayed. As I studied the proposed 2011 budget for Church of the Brethren Credit Union last September, along with reports on marketing activities, loan volume, and membership numbers, I realized that the Credit Union as we knew it was not big enough to survive in the current economic climate. BBT, which had served as sponsor and administrator of CoBCU since 2004, certainly could not afford to underwrite the 70-year savings and loan ministry any longer.

The Credit Union started first as the Highland Ave. Church of the Brethren Credit Union, which then merged with and took the name Brethren Employees Credit Union. It was on April 1, 2004, that it became Church of the Brethren Credit Union. I have been a member of the Credit Union for nearly four decades. I took out my first loan to purchase a bike and paid off the loan from my paper route earnings. I have also financed all of my cars with this financial institution, always enjoying the personal and prompt customer service, which is why I never went anywhere else.

Last fall, I couldn’t help but wonder what would become of this ministry, which has long promoted a strong stewardship of resources among its members through printed materials, seminars, and advice.

Acting Director Lynnae Rodeffer and I mapped out a strategy. We took the issue to the BBT Management Team, to the BBT Board, and then to the CoBCU Board. In November it became official — BBT would cease serving as CoBCU administrator in 2011, but would help the Credit Union search for a merger partner. As directed by the CoBCU Board, Lynnae looked at more than 100 faith-based and secular credit unions, seeking a partner that educated its members about sound financial management practices, offered the types of services CoBCU could only dream of offering, and did not have services that would compete directly against BBT’s ministries.

In the end, the CoBCU Board chose to merge with not-for-profit Corporate America Family Credit Union. Those of us who have worked with the CAFCU staff believe we have found a kindred spirit organization. It is owned and directed by its individual members, and its main purpose is to help those members. CAFCU’s excess deposits are mainly invested in safe mortgage loans — a product that CoBCU was never large enough to offer. It offers a program called BALANCE™ that gives free financial advice and counseling to its members. It is a member of a nationwide shared branching network, which means a person can go into one of 6,500 credit unions across the country and conduct CAFCU business. With more than 60,000 members, it is a credit union that is as large as we wanted CoBCU to be. On June 1, when CoBCU merged into CAFCU, it became the credit union of our dreams.

Some might look at the end of the CoBCU identity with sadness. Last September I certainly did. But that was when all I could see was an ending. Actually, this is the start of the next chapter. Even in this difficult economic climate, the members of CoBCU will continue to receive top-notch service delivered with compassion and plenty of products to meet their banking needs. We’re excited that the legacies of Highland Ave. Church of the Brethren Credit Union, Brethren Employees Credit Union, and Church of the Brethren Credit Union will live on through this new and exciting phase. — N.D.
Biking. Swimming. Camping. Road-tripping. These and other activities that are typically done in the summertime may seem safe enough — after all, it seems like everyone’s doing them — but they can be quite dangerous. Take jogging or walking, for example — the National Safety Council reports that more than 5,900 pedestrians are killed by automobiles each year, with noticeable increases in the summer. Then there’s the sun. A 2001 study in *British Journal of Dermatology* reports that a person’s risk for melanoma — the deadliest form of skin cancer — doubles if a person has had more than five sunburns at any age.

Clearly, summer fun can have a detrimental impact on your health. So what are some things to keep in mind when planning your summertime activities?

**Team up for solo sports**

Even if you choose to run, bike, rollerblade, or walk alone, make sure to let your friends or family know where you are going and when you plan to return home. If you can, take your cell phone with you. If you can’t, think about purchasing an ID bracelet or keeping your name and an emergency phone number somewhere on your clothing, shoes, or equipment. That way, if something happens to you, your loved ones can be alerted, and the hospital staff can access your health information.

**Swim safely**

Enjoying the precious bodies of water that God put on this earth — if you live near or are visiting one — is a great activity for warmer days. But sometimes those beaches are not safe for bathing. The National resources Defense Council has some information on the types of pollution to which you may unknowingly expose yourself in bodies of water across the country; read some FAQs about beach contamination at goo.gl/RLkmf. It’s also a good idea to check with local news sources to see if your nearby lake, river, or ocean is safe to swim in on that day. And don’t forget the sunscreen!

**Traveling without trouble**

With the predicted high cost of gasoline this summer, it may be safer for your body AND wallet to consider alternate forms of transportation. What about train travel? This safe, fuel-efficient, and relaxing travel option can get you to many parts of the country (including Grand Rapids, Mich., the site of this year’s Annual Conference). If you don’t work too far from your home, why not think about spending less time in your car and more time on your bike, in your sneakers, or strapped into your rollerblades? A few miles of exercise in the morning and evening can help you stay fit and expose you to summer’s beauty.

**Have a camping trip, not a horror film**

Exposing your family to the elements through camping can be a great bonding ritual, but it comes with a huge list of dangers. Apparently humankind has been civilized for far too long to let “instinct” take over in the wild. It’s helpful to bring some domestic habits with you when you head off to the great outdoors — washing hands and food thoroughly, keeping perishable goods chilled, and making sure you’re vaccinated against any illnesses found in the region where you’re pitching your tent.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have compiled some camping safety tips on their website. Visit cdc.gov/family/camping/ to keep your “roughing it” less rough! — B.S.

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**Walking event a success despite weather woes**

A few minutes of light rain never stopped an exerciser committed to physical fitness — that’s what participants in the annual National Walk @ Lunch Day proved on April 27 at Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill.

Sponsored by Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield and Church of the Brethren Insurance Services, this year’s National Walk @ Lunch event featured indoor and outdoor walking paths, as well as snacks and a time for fitness and fellowship.

Church of the Brethren Inc. employee Moala Penitani won a pedometer and some exercise accessories in a giveaway after the event. If you are reading this, you are eligible!

Long-term care insurance is a resource available to people between 18 and 84 years of age to pay for care that is needed if they become mentally incapacitated or lose the ability to perform at least two activities of daily living.

Don’t have long-term care insurance yet? Church of the Brethren Insurance Services can assist you with that. Client Development Representative **Randy Yoder** can offer a quote on a policy through six reputable insurance providers for all Church of the Brethren members and employees, as well as their families and friends. Contact Randy at 847-622-3362 or ryoder_bbt@brethren.org. — B.S.
Former Credit Union representatives shift to new roles

With the transition of Church of the Brethren Credit Union to its new identity as CAFCU, some personnel changes were made. **Jill Olson**, formerly the loan officer and office specialist for Church of the Brethren Credit Union, and **Connie Sandman**, formerly CoBCU’s member services representative, moved from their previous positions to new roles at Brethren Insurance Services and Brethren Pension Plan respectively on June 1.

Jill will bring her customer service experience to her position as member services representative for Pension. Having previously served Brethren Insurance Services, Connie will feel at home serving as member service representative for Insurance.

“BBT has had a long-standing need to increase customer service in these ministries,” said BBT President Nevin Dulabaum. “I am excited that Jill and Connie will fill these roles — they’re both excellent customer service representatives.”

**Lynnae Rodeffer departs BBT’s employment**

After she completes her service for CoBCU as the Credit Union director of special projects, **Lynnae Rodeffer** will no longer serve as a staff member for Brethren Benefit Trust. Lynnae began to serve in this role in January 2010 and worked to grow the Credit Union from her home office in Snohomish, Wash.

Lynnae will lead two insight sessions related to financial education at Annual Conference 2011 in Grand Rapids, Mich., on behalf of BBT. — B.S.
Money tips from BBT staff

As the financial services agency of the Church of the Brethren, Brethren Benefit Trust is asked a lot of questions by the denomination’s members — even if the answers might not lie in the purview of Pension, Foundation, or Insurance.

Here are some ideas and thoughts that have arisen among BBT staff members over the last few months that we’d like to pass on to Benefit News readers —

How do I make sure my tax refund is appropriate?

According to *Time* magazine, about 120 million Americans received a tax refund in 2010; in 2011, the average refund will be $2,952. Did your huge refund make you think, “I sure could have used this money during the year,” or did the figure you owe the Internal Revenue Service wipe out your bank account?

Consider making an adjustment on your W-4 — the IRS form that determines how much money your employer will withhold from your paycheck for taxes each pay period.

Adjusting your W-4 to better balance your withholdings and take-home pay is summed up excellently by Kevin McCormally, editorial director for Kiplinger.com: “The more ‘allowances’ you claim on the W-4, the less income tax will be withheld.” Typically, a single person would include allowance for one person. If that leaves you with too little money at the end of the tax season, you can reduce your allowance to “0” and get more back at the end of the year.

You can ask your human resources department to let you review your current W-4 form, and if you wish to make changes, you can ask them for a blank form or download one at [www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw4.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw4.pdf). Although your financial adviser can help you make this decision, Kiplinger offers a useful tool for calculating the impact of your withholdings — kiplinger.com/tools/withholding.

How does car insurance work if I’m driving someone else’s automobile?

Although it’s mandated by most state governments, car insurance can still cause trouble when you get in a collision. When you drive someone else’s car, you are officially covered by the car owner’s insurance, not yours. So if you have an accident, it’s the car owner’s insurance policy that could be liable for damages.

An accident in another person’s car could really affect the car owner’s insurance rates, especially if the owner has had one or more accidents in the past.

According to Farmers Auto Insurance’s policy, “Generally speaking, the insurance goes with the car. For example, if you have an accident while driving someone else’s car, the owner’s insurance would apply toward damages first. Your auto insurance would generally apply in the event that the owner of the vehicle had no auto insurance or did not have enough auto insurance to pay the damages.”

So remember: If you drive someone else’s car and get into an accident, the car owner may be the one who pays for the damage. Can that person’s insurance record handle a new claim? If not, can you afford to pay for it out-of-pocket?

How should my savings habits reflect inflation?

Inflation, or the increase in the cost of goods and services over a period of time, plays a serious role in your savings. If you are earning less on your investments than the rate of inflation, the value of your reserves will actually decrease over time. You may have the same amount of cash, but its worth will be less than it was when you started investing.

Right now, the U.S. inflation rate, as indicated by the Consumer Price Index data for the 12-month period preceding March 2011, is slowly and steadily rising — the CPI has risen close to 1 percent over the last two months alone, and that figure doesn’t account for things like gasoline and other energy costs.

In an opinion piece written for *The New York Times*, Christian financial expert Dave Ramsey warns, “You just can’t keep up with inflation.”

For emergency savings that needs to be somewhat liquid, Dave writes that keeping it in a savings account or money market account is fine. But for savings that you don’t plan to access for more than five years, Dave thinks it’s imperative that you invest it in a higher-earning vehicle like a mutual fund or through the fund options available in your retirement savings program.

Other economists agree. As inflation picks up steam, it will increase the cost of everything, including daily essentials. Make sure that your long-term savings vehicle has a rate of return that floats above the annual percentage of inflation. Otherwise, you will lose any potential earnings to the natural process of inflation. — B.S.
Check out some tips from BBT about tax returns, car insurance, and inflation inside.

BBT and CoBCU boards and staff honored at annual banquet

From near and far, Brethren Benefit Trust’s Board, staff, and guests gathered to celebrate employee service at the organization’s annual banquet on April 30.

Three BBT staff members were honored that night for their tenures — Client Development Representative Randy Yoder was thanked for his five years of service, and both Loyce Swartz Borgmann, BBT’s manager of client relations, and Eric Thompson, director of operations for Information Technology, were commended for 10 years of commitment to BBT. Half of the members of the Church of the Brethren Credit Union Board, those who served as staff, and members of the Credit Union’s Supervisory and Credit committees were on hand to be recognized for their service to that organization, which merged with Corporate America Family Credit Union on June 1.

The evening ended with a performance from musicians Evan and Kalli Bravos. — B.S.