January, 2024

COMMON CENTS

VALLEY STRONG CREDIT UNION

VALLEYSTRONG.COM



BUILDING A STRONG FINANCIAL FUTURE

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NCUA Federally Insured by NCUA | Equal Opportunity Lender



Message from the President/CEO

NICK AMBROSINI

A FOUNDATION BUILT ON TRUST, INTEGRITY, AND PRUDENT FINANCIAL PRACTICES

I am immensely proud to reflect on Valley Strong's enduring commitment to making a meaningful impact on the communities we serve. For over 80 years, our purpose has remained constant: to enhance the well-being and prosperity of those who call our communities home.

At the core of our community engagement efforts lie the vibrant events and sponsorships that bring us closer to our neighbors. These activities are not just about corporate involvement; they are a testament to our genuine care for the people and places we serve. From local festivals to charitable partnerships, we cherish these opportunities to connect, learn, and grow stronger together.

Our corporate donations represent a concrete expression of our commitment to giving back. We understand that our success is deeply intertwined with the prosperity of our communities. Through strategic philanthropy and support for important causes, we aim to create a lasting impact, helping to build a stronger, more resilient society.

Furthermore, our dedication to financial literacy, youth-focused products, and financial education is unwavering. We believe in equipping the next generation with the knowledge and tools they need to navigate the complexities of personal finance, enabling them to achieve their dreams and aspirations. Our commitment extends beyond banking; it is a promise to empower the future.

As we look forward to the new year, the world remains entrenched in conflict and divisiveness. There is no doubt that 2024 will bring forward a unique set of challenges. Nevertheless, we are steadfast in our support of our communities and aim to be a calming voice for prosperity for those that we serve.

In closing, our promise to provide top-notch service remains at the forefront of our mission. As we celebrate our long history of service, we are reminded that our commitment to our communities has never faltered.

With gratitude and determination,

Nick Ambrosini

Have a comment or suggestion?
Email us at **valleystrong @ valleystrong.com**
or call **(800) 221-3311**

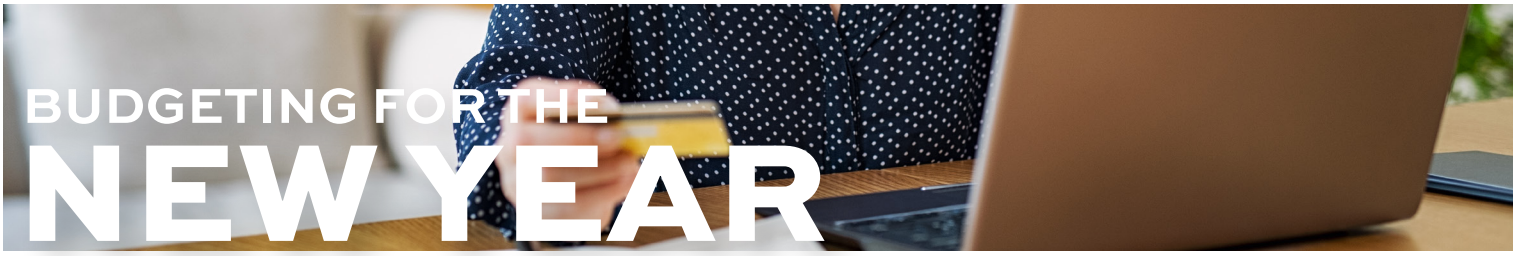
Nick Ambrosini is President/CEO of Valley Strong Credit Union, which operates branches across California and serves more than 360,000 individuals, with approximately $4 billion in assets. It is one of the largest financial institutions headquartered in the San Joaquin Valley.



THANK YOU
FOR VOTING VALLEY STRONG

2023 BEST
VOTED BEST FINANCIAL INSTITUTION IN KERN COUNTY 29 YEARS IN A ROW

THE OFFICIAL COMMUNITY'S CHOICE AWARDS Best of San Joaquin
VOTED BEST CREDIT UNION AND BEST AUTO PROVIDER IN SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY



BUDGETING FOR THE NEW YEAR

As the current year comes to a close, it's natural to start thinking about the upcoming new year and all the possibilities it holds. One important aspect of preparing for the new year is creating a budget.

Why It's Important to Prepare a Budget for the New Year
Creating a budget for the new year brings many benefits. It allows you to:

· Plan for expenses: Identify your fixed monthly expenses and allocate funds accordingly, preventing overspending and unexpected financial circumstances.

· Set goals: Set realistic financial goals and track your progress toward achieving them.

· Save money: By knowing where your money is going, you can identify areas where you can cut expenses and save more money.

· Reduce debt: You can prioritize monthly payments on debt, allowing you to pay off debts faster and save on interest payments to be debt-free.

· Prepare for emergencies: A budget ensures that you have enough savings in your savings account for unexpected living expenses or emergencies.

Assessing Your Current Financial Situation
Have you ever felt anxious about your finances and wondered if you are making the most of your hard-earned money? Assessing your current financial situation is a crucial first step to achieving your financial goals and securing your financial future.

Take a Look at Your Income and Expenses From the Past Year
Start by reviewing your bank statements, credit card bills, pay stubs, and any other financial documents. Add up your total income, including any regular salary or wages, bonuses, and investment income. Then, subtract your total expenses, including rent/mortgage payments, bills, groceries, entertainment, and anything else you spent money on. This will give you a clear picture of your total net income.

Identify Any Patterns or Areas Where You Might Need to Cut Back
Once you have your net income, it's time to examine your spending habits. Look for any areas where you might need to cut back, such as eating out too often or spending too much on clothes. You may identify patterns that you were not aware of, such as impulse spending or subscriptions you don't use. Consider creating a budget to help you manage your expenses and avoid overspending. If you have debt, consider creating a debt repayment plan to help you pay off your loans more quickly.

Determine Your Financial Goals for the New Year
The first step in setting realistic financial goals is to determine what you want to achieve. Start by asking yourself what you want to accomplish financially this year. Is saving money a priority? Paying off debt? Investing in your retirement? Once you have a clear idea of what you want to accomplish, write them down and make them specific.

Setting unrealistic goals will only cause frustration when they are not reached. To make your goals more attainable, break them down into smaller, achievable steps. For example, if your goal is to save $5,000 for a down payment on a home, break it down into smaller, achievable steps, such as saving $100 a week for 50 weeks.

Prioritize Your Goals According to Importance
It's crucial to prioritize your financial goals according to importance. Make a list and order them from most important to least important. By doing this, you can focus on the goals that matter the most and allocate your resources accordingly.

How to Create a Successful Budget Plan
Money management can be a complicated and stressful process, especially if you don't have a proper budget plan in place. Creating a budget plan is not only essential for keeping your finances organized, but also for staying on track with your savings goals.

Start by Tracking Your Expenses
Before creating your budget plan, you should know where your money is going. Tracking your expenses will give you a clear idea of how much you're spending on different categories such as rent, groceries, transportation, entertainment, etc., and allocate your income towards each category. You should prioritize your essential expenses, like rent, utilities, and groceries.

Use Budgeting Tools or Apps
Many budgeting tools are available to help you simplify the process of creating a budget plan. These tools can help you track your expenses, set financial goals, and manage your income effectively. Some tools even offer features like bill reminders and automatic categorization to make budgeting more manageable.

Some budgeting apps, like PocketGuard, even offer advice and customize your budget plan based on your spending history. You can also use any budgeting app or tool to track your expenses, like Mint, YNAB, or Personal Capital. Try different apps and tools to determine the one that works best for your specific financial life.

Set Aside Money for Unexpected Expenses or Emergencies
Although emergencies can be unpredictable, you can always be prepared for them by setting aside some money in an emergency fund. In your budget plan, allocate a small percentage of your income to this fund. Having this fund will give you peace of mind and protect you from taking on debt in case of unexpected expenses.

Summary
Having a budget is crucial for financial stability and achieving your goals. As we enter the new year, it's important to start preparing and creating a budget that works for you. By taking action now, you can set yourself up for success and have control over your finances in the coming year.



PROTECT YOUR FINANCES



Beware of Phishing Emails

Be cautious of unsolicited emails. Do not click on suspicious links or download attachments from unknown sources.



Strong Passwords

Ensure your online banking and email passwords are strong and unique. Use a combination of upper and lower-case letters, numbers, and special characters.



Multi-Factor Authentication

Enable MFA for your online accounts. This adds an extra layer of security to protect your financial information.



Secure Your Devices

Keep your computer, smartphone, and other devices up to date with the latest security patches and antivirus software. Protect them with a strong PIN or password.



Check Your Statements

Regularly monitor your statements for any unauthorized transactions. Report any discrepancies immediately.

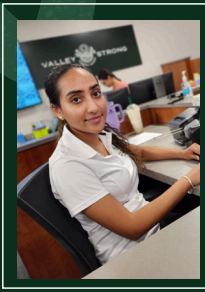


Know Who To Contact

If you ever suspect any unusual or fraudulent activity related to your account, please contact us immediately. We are here to help protect your financial well-being.

For more information and resources
Visit our security center at valleystrong.com/security

TEAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Avtar Brar *Artisan Lead MER*

In her two years with Valley Strong, Avtar has risen from being a part-time Member Experience Representative to a Lead Member Experience Representative role. She is a true asset to the Credit Union and brings joy to our Members and her team every single day. Her customer service is above and beyond and she shines brightest when her passion for our community is on display. Avtar has supported numerous fundraising campaigns and initiatives in support of nonprofit organizations like CAPK, The Children's Miracle Network, and Ronald McDonald House. Her individual commitment has also inspired others around her to get involved.

"Avtar knows how to Embrace the Fun! She is such a joy to be around and I always smile when I see her car in the parking lot because I know she will make my day better." Christal W., Lead Financial Solutions Officer



Gemma Saldana *Tulare Lead MEO*

My name is Gemma Saldana and I have been with Valley Strong Credit Union for over 3 years. I started as a USO II at the North Visalia location and now the Lead MEO at the Tulare Branch.

My 1st work experience at a credit union was fun and rewarding. Some of the members came to me for advice and ended becoming my friends. I believe showing members you care about them helps all your interactions go much more smoothly and gives them confidence with the organization.



Elena Sanchez *Fairfield Lead FSO*

Elena began her Valley Strong journey in 2007 as a Financial Services Officer and over the last 16 years has become a corner-stone of the Solano County team. Throughout her tenure, Elena has consistently demonstrated unwavering dedication, contributing significantly to the success and growth of Valley Strong. Today, as a Lead Financial Solutions Officer, her invaluable expertise and optimistic outlook on life has created a positive work environment for all Team Members within the organization.

Elena has been recognized by our Members, who will wait to be assisted specifically by her, and who will take the time to submit meaningful feedback because of the outstanding service she continues to provide them.



Christopher Da Rosa *Pershing BSO*

Chris has been with the credit union since July 2021, serving our Stockton Members at the Pershing Avenue Branch. This year, he was promoted to a Branch Solutions Officer (BSO) which allows him to travel between all branches in San Joaquin and Solano Counties to help our teams where needed.

Chris has spent his extra time helping Valley Strong give back to the community by organizing a volunteer event at St. Mary's Dining Room, a nonprofit organization that responds to poverty in San Joaquin County by feeding the hungry, caring for health issues and restoring human dignity to over 700 individuals each day.

Grow Your Possibilities with checking, savings, and loan options designed for your personal banking needs.

DataMobile App
On-the-go banking is easy, secure, and loaded with features and benefits.

Credit Cards
Choose a Visa® Credit Card that fits you and supports your community.

Auto Loans
Take advantage of competitive auto loans and refinancing options.

Home Loans
Let our experienced Mortgage Loan Officers help you make the right decision when it comes to financing.

Investing
Choose Valley Strong Retirement & Wealth Management Group to help you pursue your goals.

Financial Courses
We offer financial courses for budgeting, saving, investing, and debt management with expert guidance. Get ready to take control of your finances.

VALLEY STRONG CREDIT UNION

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BRANCHES

KERN COUNTY

Artisan Square	1341 Allen Road
Buena Vista	3300 Buena Vista Road, Suite J
CTEC	7301 Old River Road
Delano	1828 Cecil Avenue, Suite A & B
Downtown	2424 Chester Avenue
Ming	4530 Ming Avenue
Mt. Vernon	3901 Mt. Vernon Avenue
Panama	5001 Panama Lane
River Run	6101 Coffee Road
Tehachapi	1002 W. Tehachapi Boulevard
Town and Country	8200 Stockdale Hwy., Ste. P

TULARE COUNTY

Central Visalia	1501 S. Mooney Boulevard
Dinuba	1245 W. El Monte Way
Porterville	745 N. Newcomb Street
Tulare	1989 E. Prosperity Avenue

SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY

Airport Way	2405 S. Airport Way
Benjamin Holt	435 W. Benjamin Holt Drive *(ATM access only)* ***Temporarily Closed***
Lodi	200 S. School Street
Manteca	206 E. Yosemite Avenue
Pershing Avenue	4603 N. Pershing Avenue
Stockton	18 S. Center St.

SOLANO COUNTY

Oliver Road	1499 Oliver Road Fairfield
Paradise Valley	3330 North Texas Street, Fairfield *(Located Inside Raley's)*
Vacaville	151 Elmira Road, Vacaville

COMING SOON

Stockdale Ranch	16227 Stockdale Hwy
Hanford Full Service Branch	
Fairfield Administrative Office & Full Service Branch	

DEPARTMENTS

Contact Center	(800) 221-3311
DataVoice	(800) 248-3336
Business Services	(800) 221-3311 ext. 7530 4530 Ming Avenue, Bakersfield
Home Loan Center	(800) 221-3311 ext. 7926 4530 Ming Avenue, Bakersfield
Retirement & Wealth Management Group	(800) 221-3311 ext. 6930



Fairfield Administrative Office



HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

New Year's Day	Monday, Jan. 1
Martin Luther King Day	Monday, Jan. 15
Presidents' Day	Monday, Feb. 19
Good Friday	**Friday, Mar. 29**
Branches open until noon	
Memorial Day	Monday, May 27
Juneteenth	Wednesday, June 19
Independence Day	Thursday, July 4
Labor Day	Monday, Sept. 2
Columbus Day	Monday, Oct. 14
Veterans Day	Monday, Nov. 11
Thanksgiving Day	Thursday, Nov. 28
Christmas Eve	Tuesday, Dec. 24
Branches open until noon	
Christmas Day	Wednesday, Dec. 25