



credit  .org

| 2019 ANNUAL REPORT



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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## We are a nonprofit financial services enterprise.

With a 45-year history of financial coaching, credit.org is bringing something to the table that no one else can: people, options, and solutions! We are proud of what we have accomplished during our history, and we are excited about what the future holds, for the consumer and our nonprofit organization. With innovation comes change, and with change comes growth. In that we remain focused and vigilant in our constant pursuit of providing first-class financial counseling and education by staying at the forefront of our ever-changing times.

By leveraging our history and industry experience in financial education, evolution has become embedded in our culture. Our organization's leadership evolved in 2019 when I was appointed by the Board of Directors as the new President of credit.org and charged with continuing the important work that has earned us the respected name and reputation that we have today.

Our organization's mission is to provide information and coaching that educates consumers when they are faced with tough financial decisions. We do this by providing sound advice and coaching on different financial options and solutions, including debt resolution, mortgage and homebuyer related topics, credit report reviews and monitoring, and improving outcomes for homebuyers, homeowners, and renters. No topic is too big or small, but always tailored to meet your specific situation.

There are plenty of online resources out there to help you DIY with your financial decisions, but the complexity of such finance topics as debt resolution, obtaining a mortgage, and credit may require more practice than reading a bunch of blog posts and articles. Even more so, online resources and services won't hold you accountable, help you change unhealthy money behaviors, remove the emotion from your finances, or "make a plan" specific to your own situation. Sometimes your financial future could use the help of an experienced professional.

Instead of improvising with your personal financial decisions, turn to a trusted financial coach. Our team of experienced coaches have helped millions of people in the midst of financial crisis. A financial coach is someone who will help you understand the basics of personal finance and help you develop and maintain healthy financial habits. Their principal job is to empower you, and to help you reach your financial goals and learn how to better handle finances responsibly. They typically work with clients who want to resolve debt, create a budget, save money, or just improve their financial literacy generally. That's who we are, and that is what we do.



Just like a coach for a sports team, a financial coach teaches you the knowledge and skills you need to play the game, helps you create healthy habits that improve your performance, and then encourages you from the sidelines. Same idea, very different game. Financial coaches focus on fundamental financial needs and take a more personal, hands-on approach to working with consumers. In the beginning, you'll work together as a team to lay out your financial goals and create a plan to meet them.

Whether you're trying to get help with your financial situation, learn more about your credit score, or perhaps buy your first home, you can trust credit.org to cut through the clutter and give you the information you need. We educate you on the process, empower you to make the right decisions, then match you with the best solutions. It's that simple. From our core values to our coaching, we will always remain humble, empathetic, and compassionate because that's who we are, and that's what you deserve. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melinda Opperman".

**Melinda Opperman** | **PRESIDENT AND  
CHIEF RELATIONSHIP OFFICER**

# 2019 COACHING, COUNSELING, AND EDUCATION STATS

We believe the cornerstone of financial security is personal financial education and action. This belief fuels our commitment to helping both financially fragile consumers as well as those seeking reliable information from a trusted resource receive the knowledge and tools they need for life-long financial empowerment and well-being.

In 2019 alone, we provided direct services to 29,695 clients, primarily reaching low-to-moderate-income (LMI) populations that needed financial education, coaching, and counseling support the most, as our client demographics reflect. Two-thirds (66%) of the clients we served last year were LMI, and 57% were minorities. Credit.org's highly-trained team of financial coaches provided assistance to consumers nationwide in the areas of foreclosure prevention, consumer credit and debt, reverse mortgage, bankruptcy pre-filing, homeownership, and debtor education.

In its history, the organization has helped more than 5 million people become more financially informed, stable, and resilient.

Credit.org's certified financial educators conducted 80 in-person financial literacy workshops on topics including budgeting, money management, understanding credit reports and scores, and identity theft prevention. The team delivered interactive workshops to both youth and adult audiences, totaling 1,020 class graduates.

As the community has come to rely on credit.org, we've expanded the ways consumers can reach us nationwide. Through credit.org's Financial Instructional Training "FIT" Academy, the agency's e-learning portal, 5,231 consumers nationwide signed on to gain important financial knowledge. ■

20,773 TOTAL CLIENTS

## OUR AVERAGE CLIENT



50  
YEARS OLD

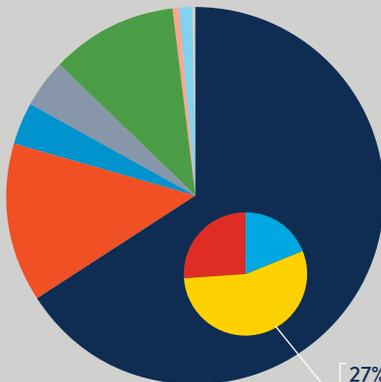
\$62,014  
IN UNSECURED DEBT

\$48,521  
HOUSEHOLD INCOME

7  
CREDITORS

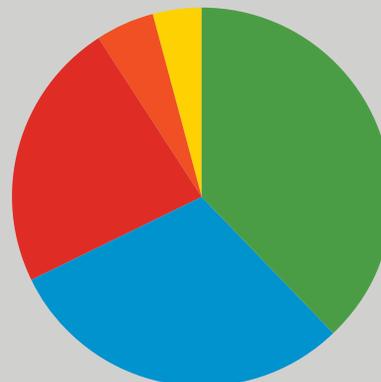
## Demographic Breakdown

### RACE & ETHNICITY



27% Hispanic  
54% Non-Hispanic  
19% Choose not to respond

### REASON FOR COUNSELING



# BEA CORTES COUNSELOR OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER

## Anica Mendez



**Anica Mendez**  
Bea Cortes Counselor of the Year—  
Credit.org  
First runner-up, NFCC's Outstanding  
Individual Housing Counselor of the Year

Credit.org proudly recognizes Anica Mendez as our Bea Cortes Housing Counselor of the Year for 2019.

Anica brings her long background, knowledge and ever-growing expertise in the financial industry to help her clients gain the knowledge they need to succeed.

Anica joined the credit.org family in 2013. As a testament to her commitment to serve others in need, Anica has received exceptional client and peer feedback. She is a top performer amongst her peers, achieving the highest levels of quality scores and productivity measures.

In addition to her own personal values, Anica affirms credit.org's core values of Quality, Integrity, Excellence, and Compassion, in each interaction she has with her clients. Her optimism is evident in every client interaction; her strong work ethic and her passion to provide financial and housing education to each of her clients.

### LEADERSHIP

Anica consistently displays a mastery level of quality in delivering multiple types of housing counseling services (first time homebuyer education, pre-purchase and post-purchase counseling, home preservation and foreclosure prevention) and has received acclaim in many areas for her unique delivery. As a result of Anica's quality counseling delivery, fellow counselors often request her assistance or guidance. Anica's supervisor said, "Anica is

usually the first person we go to when we develop or launch a new line of business related to housing. Anica's attention to detail, ability to quickly learn and grasp new concepts and projects with high accuracy and communication skills are among her greatest qualities, and her peers see her as the go to person for best practices in the department."

### COUNSELING APPROACH

Serving others comes naturally to Anica. Her commitment and desire to impact the lives of others through her professional career as a certified housing counselor is obvious. She started her professional career in the non-profit industry at age sixteen with a summer job as a housing receptionist at a community organization. It was at that job she discovered her passion to serve others in need.

Anica's style of counseling is more of a "coach." She is driven to assist her clients through the different stages of their journey. Anica is a source of motivation and encouragement for her clients, consistently following up to ensure they are on track towards achieving their financial and housing goals.

Anica presents a holistic approach to counseling, and goes beyond the typical role of a counselor and presents more like a life-coach as the client evaluates their options. The rapport she establishes with her clients keeps them engaged in the conversation and involved in the creation of their individualized action plan. During her tenure with credit.org Anica has personally counseled over four thousand (4,000) clients.

She is also an advocate for providing sustainable consumer financial and housing counseling to every generation of client we serve, spanning cultural groups as a bilingual counselor, providing counseling in both



**Melinda Opperman and Luis Carillo** present the NFCC award to **Anica Mendez** for 1st runner up for NFCC’s Outstanding Individual Housing Counselor of the Year.

English and Spanish. Over her years with credit.org, Anica counsels clients on how to better manage their money, preserve homeownership, communicate with their lender to avoid mortgage foreclosure, or to obtain their first mortgage loan through first-time home buyer education.

This client note represents the kind of feedback that credit.org receives about Anica:

*“Anica was a fantastic and very detailed with her approach and counseling. Anica went above and beyond with her assistance and we are very grateful and now feel empowered to get the required assistance needed. As we had medical issues that caused our financial problems and stress. Anica was very empathetic, kind and understanding to our situation and never judgmental to the fact that we fall behind on our mortgage payments.”*

Regards,  
Mr. & Mrs. E <Full name omitted for privacy>

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

In her spare time outside of work Anica likes to volunteer at her child’s school teaching kids with special needs how to swim. This is very close to Anica’s heart as her 6 year old son, Isaac, has ASD (autism spectrum disorder) and was diagnosed with severe ASD when he was 2 years old. Isaac has achieved many milestones with Anica’s perseverance and patience, and he is now able to go to school like any kid his age. For the past two years Anica has volunteered with Raising Special Kids Arizona, teaching families to budget for kids with special needs and plan ahead for their future.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Anica shines daily as a National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) Certified Consumer Credit and Housing Counselor.

Between 2018 and 2019 Anica has been a fifteen (15) time recipient of credit.org’s esteemed Excellence Award for quality counseling delivery. The criteria for this award is a 100% quality score from Management and Quality Assurance’s evaluation of the counselor’s comprehensive counseling session.

Anica is one of credit.org’s most versatile and experienced counselors with an innate ability to connect and serve our clients with an unparalleled level of dignity, work ethic and compassion.

# AMERICA SAVES WEEK

## *Pledge to Save: Set a Goal, Make a Plan and Save Automatically.*

Getting more people to set a savings goal and make a plan for success is the intent of the Inland Empire Saves campaign. The campaign is part of the national America Saves campaign, a social marketing campaign started by the Consumer Federation of America.



*7th Annual Inland Empire Saves Campaign taking the America Saves pledge (l to r, standing), Melody Winter Head, Federal Reserve Bank San Francisco; Sandra Espadas, National Core; Maria Gallegos, City of San Bernardino; Sandra Bowers, Hope Through Housing; Priscilla Leal, Lutheran Social Services of Southern California; Dawn Lee, NHSIE; Tristan Cali, Pacific Premier Bank; Martin Sanchez, Wells Fargo Bank; and Alan Greenlee, SCANPH; (l to r, seated): Teresa Ichsan, Housing California; Melinda Opperman, credit.org and Inland Empire Saves Campaign Coordinator; David Hahn, Habitat for Humanity of San Bernardino.*

Credit.org championed the launch of “Inland Empire Saves” ([inlandempiresaves.org](http://inlandempiresaves.org)) after the Summer of 2012’s Inland Empire Community Development Forum sponsored by the Community Affairs Offices of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, and Office of the Comptroller of Currency. At that Forum the nonprofit, public and private sector stakeholders sought a course of action to rally the Inland Empire around, an area hit hard by the housing bust. As foreclosure filings throughout California hit record highs, the prolonged foreclosure crisis affected the Inland Empire, which emerged as the fourth most affected market in the country. The campaign was developed as a regional initiative to encourage individuals and families to take control of their financial future. February 2019 was the campaign’s seventh America Saves Week.

As of March 2019 (after Saves Week) Inland Empire Savers: 690  
Average Pledged to Save Per Month: \$162.29  
Median Pledged to Save Per Month: \$100.00  
Total Dollars Pledged to Save Per Month: \$104,513.50  
Total Dollars Pledged to Save Annualized: \$1,254,162.00





Pictured top left: Credit.org's **Jennifer Rodriguez** (left) standing behind the America Saves Week pop-up banner at our Southern California pre-purchase first time homebuyer education workshop, the group takes the America Saves Week 2019 Pledge.

Top right: Latham Riverside chalk-wall by credit.org's IT Manager **Ryan Hoskin** and **Jennifer Rodriguez**. Credit.org motivated staff to participate during America Saves week by making a pledge and sharing with co-workers their financial goals on their Chalk Wall dedicated to America Saves. Staff enjoyed expressing and fore wishing their goals on their wall by writing them out with colorful jumbo chalk sticks.



The Proclamation from the Mayor and City Council of Riverside officially declaring the week of February 25-March 2, 2019 America Saves Week.

Additionally, credit.org provided financial education and resources at the U.S. Army Fort Irwin's Military and Family Support Center during America Saves Week. Credit.org's role was to support educational services to help balance the demands of military life and the overall wellbeing of family readiness by educating active military services members and their families. Topics included healthy saving habits, the importance and wise use of credit, understanding their credit reports and scores to optimize their financial future, mobility and deployment, and economic readiness. Fort Irwin National Training Center is a major training area for the United States military and is a census-designated place located in the Mojave Desert in northern San Bernardino County, California.

Aforementioned is credit.org's work with America Saves Week 2019. America Saves is a campaign coordinated by the nonprofit Consumer Federation of America (CRA) and is dedicated to helping individuals save money, reduce debt, and build wealth. Credit.org is the campaign manager for Inland Empire Saves. The goal of this program is to promote awareness of the need for good saving habits, particularly for low and moderate income individuals. Credit.org offers information, advice, and encourages those who wish to build financial security by paying off high cost debt, building an emergency fund, saving for retirement, and saving for the down payment on a home, a car, an education, or a consumer purchase. ■

## The S.E.R.V.I.C.E. COMMITTEE

### Springboard Employees Recognize Volunteerism In our Community & Environment

The S.E.R.V.I.C.E. committee is comprised of volunteer team members from various departments within the agency, who are dedicated to making a difference in the community above and beyond their day-to-day job responsibilities. They volunteer their time after working hours and sponsor events throughout the year.

2019 was a very successful year for the committee, sponsoring activities throughout the entire year. A new event in 2019 was to feed the homeless in Riverside, which was done in the Spring and the Fall. Over 300 care packages that included food, water and personal hygiene products were distributed. Another new event was participation in the Spark of Love Toy Drive, which proved to be a great success and will return in 2020. Repeat events included the committee continuing to bring awareness to Autism and Multiple Sclerosis (MS), by fundraising and donating the proceeds to each foundation, sponsoring an annual school supply drive and organizing biannual blood drives. A repeat event from 2018 was partnering with Habitat for Humanity, where the committee and many other employees of the agency devoted a Fall Saturday to paint a mobile home for an underprivileged family of five.

We could not be more proud of our S.E.R.V.I.C.E. Committee for championing events that give back to the community we serve. They are true heroes that rally our employees and encourage them to show appreciation to those who contact us for services by providing much needed services of the heart. ■



# Board of Directors

**Melinda Opperman**  
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF RELATIONSHIP OFFICER OF  
CREDIT.ORG

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VICE PRESIDENT LENDING,  
EDWARDS FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

# Top Contributors





United Way of the  
Inland Valleys  
[WWW.UWIV.ORG](http://WWW.UWIV.ORG)



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