

# ONESource

Spring 2026

## OUR PROMISE

# For You, For Life



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## Ready to Buy a Home This Spring?

### Six Steps to Start Your Homebuying Journey

Spring is one of the most popular times to buy a home, and for many first-time buyers, it can feel both exciting and overwhelming. If you've been thinking about making a move, you don't need to have everything figured out to get started. A few simple steps can help you feel more prepared and informed.

Here's how to move from "just thinking about it" to meaningful action.

#### 1. Start with pre-approval.

Before you begin house hunting, it helps to know what you can afford. It's also important to organize your financial documents to gain a clear view of your income and assets. Getting pre-approved will let you know what price range is possible. Pre-approval can also strengthen your offer in a competitive market.

#### 2. Understand mortgage options and rates.

Mortgages come in a variety of forms. A fixed-rate mortgage is one where your interest rate stays the same for the life of the loan, giving you consistent, predictable monthly payments. An adjustable-rate mortgage (ARM), on the other hand, typically starts with a lower rate, but after a set period of years, that rate can change.

The mortgage rates available to you are heavily influenced by market conditions and your credit score. Even a small difference in rate can add up over time, so it's worth some research to understand your options.

#### 3. Think beyond the monthly mortgage.

Your mortgage payment is just one part of the homeownership picture. Be sure to factor in property taxes, insurance, utilities, and ongoing maintenance. You'll also want to be aware of costs associated with the homebuying process itself, such as closing costs and home inspections. Planning for these costs upfront can help you avoid surprises along the way.

#### 4. Build a budget with homeownership in mind.

Buying a home should feel exciting, not stressful. One way to bring calm to the process is to build a new budget based on your hypothetical future home. Go ahead and add in anticipated maintenance costs. Will a new home also mean getting a dog? Add those costs in, too! The goal is to get insight into what your monthly finances will look like after you've purchased a home, allowing you to plan accordingly.

Turn the page to continue reading about buying a home.

# Ready to Buy a Home This Spring? CONTINUED

## 5. Be prepared for a competitive market.

Spring markets can move quickly. Homes may receive multiple offers, and decisions often happen fast. Knowing your priorities ahead of time, like location, size, and must-have features, can help you act quickly when the right home comes along.

## 6. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

You don't need to be an expert to buy a home. Having the right guidance can make the process much easier. Your realtor and your financial institution should be resources you ask questions of regularly. Raising questions early can help you avoid confusion and feel more confident as you progress through the process.

## You don't have to do this alone.

Buying your first home is a big milestone, and you don't have to navigate it by yourself. Commonwealth One's Member Advantage Mortgage team is here to help you understand your options and walk with you through the process.

From competitive rates to personalized support, we're here to make homeownership feel more approachable and achievable.

Take the first step this spring. We're ready when you are.

## Avalanche or Snowball Which Debt Strategy Is Right for You?

If you're working toward paying off debt, you've likely heard of the avalanche and snowball methods. Both can be effective approaches. The difference comes down to how you prioritize your payments and what keeps you motivated.



### The Debt Snowball: Start small for quick wins

With the snowball method, you focus on paying off your smallest balance first while making minimum payments on everything else. Once that smallest debt is paid off, you roll that payment into the next smallest balance, and so on.

#### Example:

If you have balances of \$1,000 and \$5,000, you would start with the \$1,000 first, regardless of interest rate.

Seeing accounts paid off early can feel motivating and help you stay committed to the process.

### The Debt Avalanche: Focus on interest first

With the avalanche method, you prioritize the debt with the highest interest rate while continuing minimum payments on the rest. Once that debt is paid off, you move to the next highest rate.

#### Example:

If your \$5,000 balance has a 19% rate and your \$1,000 balance has an 8% rate, you would focus on the 19% debt first, even though it's larger.

This method can save you more money over time because you reduce the amount of interest you pay overall.

### What do the two approaches look like over time?

Let's say you have:

- \$1,000 at 8%
- \$5,000 at 19%
- You can pay **\$200 per month**

After **six months**, the two approaches start to look different:

- With the **snowball method**, you would focus on the \$1,000 balance first. You'd likely have it paid off within that timeframe and just be getting started on the \$5,000 balance. That early payoff can feel like a big win for your momentum.
- With the **avalanche method**, you would put your extra payment toward the \$5,000 balance with the 19% rate from the start. After six months, you would still have both balances, but the higher-interest debt would be reduced to around \$4,000, helping you avoid more interest over time.

In this case, the snowball method delivers a quick psychological boost, while the avalanche method starts saving you more money earlier.

### So, which one is better?

Both strategies work. They just have different upsides.

- If you're motivated by quick progress and small wins, the **snowball** method may feel more rewarding.
- If you prefer a numbers-driven approach and want to minimize interest, the **avalanche** method may be the better fit.

There's no wrong answer. Progress is what counts.

And remember, if you hit a setback, that doesn't erase your progress. It just means you adjust and keep going.

### We're here to help

CommonWealth One offers financial counseling to help you build a plan and stay on track. Whether you're just getting started or looking for ways to simplify your payments, we're here to support you every step of the way.



## Practical Tips for Every Stage

Teaching kids about money can be simpler than you think. In fact, some of the most important lessons happen through everyday moments like grocery shopping, saving for a toy, or earning an allowance.

The goal isn't to teach everything at once. It's to build confidence step by step so kids grow up feeling comfortable and capable with money.

Here's how those lessons can evolve as your child grows.

### Early Childhood: Start with simple concepts

At a young age, money is a new idea. This is the perfect time to introduce basic concepts like how money works, the different types of bills and coins, and the foundational math skills needed to calculate amounts. You may also want to introduce the idea of choice. That is, we make decisions with our money, and we often think carefully about those decisions because we have a limited quantity of money.

During early childhood, you might:

- Let kids use a clear jar to save for something they want
- Talk through simple decisions like choosing between two items at a store
- Explain that money is earned and used with intention

Keeping some cash on hand is helpful when kids are younger, as their learning benefits from touching and seeing money as it changes hands.

### Elementary Years: Build habits and responsibility

As kids get older, they can begin practicing money skills with some independence.

You might:

- Introduce an allowance tied to household responsibilities
- Help them set a short-term savings goal for a special toy or experience
- Encourage dividing money into categories like save, spend, and give

The elementary years are a great time to start letting your kids order and pay at restaurants, grocery stores, or gas stations. Even as you supervise their interactions, you want them to experience having ownership of simple financial transactions. These early experiences can help prepare them for more complicated transactions down the road.

### Teen Years: Practice real-world skills

Teenagers are ready for more hands-on experience. This is a great time to help them establish habits they'll use into adulthood.

You might:

- Open a checking account or debit card in their name
- Talk about budgeting for things like gas, clothes, or entertainment
- Introduce concepts like credit, interest, and long-term saving
- Help them set up direct deposit for their first job

In the teen years, you want to gradually move into the role of advisor. Giving teens some control over their money, along with supportive guidance, will help them grow in responsibility over time.

### Options for your family

Raising financially confident kids is a long-term investment, and CommonWealth One is eager to help. We offer youth accounts and educational resources designed to help families build strong financial habits together.

With the right foundation, today's small lessons can turn into lifelong skills.





## Your Vote Matters for Our Upcoming Merger

In the coming weeks, you'll have an opportunity to take part in an important moment for CommonWealth One. We'll be sharing full details soon regarding a proposed merger with **Arlington Community Federal Credit Union**, including what it means for you as a member. While we know change can create uncertainty, our team is confident that this merger will benefit members of both institutions.

### How the voting process will work

Eligible members will receive a ballot with instructions on how to vote. Ballots will be delivered:

- By email, or
- By mail if you have opted out of electronic communications

Voting will be open from **May 5 through June 25**, giving you time to review the information and make your decision.

The voting process will conclude with a **Special Meeting of the Membership**:

**June 25**  
**CommonWealth One Main Branch**  
**4875 Eisenhower Avenue**  
**Alexandria, VA 22304**

At that time, the results of the vote will be finalized and shared.

### Watch for more details

We'll be sending a full communication on **April 27** with everything you need to know, including details about the proposed merger, key benefits, and how to participate in the upcoming member vote. In the meantime, you can learn more by visiting the merger information page on our website: [www.cofcu.org/better-together](http://www.cofcu.org/better-together).

Your voice matters because CommonWealth One is your credit union. We encourage you to review the information when it arrives and take part in the voting process.

We look forward to sharing more with you soon.

## Annual Meeting: May 28

### Save the Date

As a member of CommonWealth One, you're more than a customer; you're an owner. Our Annual Meeting is your opportunity to stay informed, connect with leadership, and have a voice in the future of your credit union.

Join us as we share updates on the past year and discuss upcoming initiatives designed to better serve you and our communities.

### ANNUAL MEETING DETAILS

**May 28 at 5:30 p.m.**  
**CommonWealth One Main Branch**  
**4875 Eisenhower Avenue**  
**Alexandria, VA 22304**

**We hope you'll join us to be part of  
the conversation.**

# TeamONE SPOTLIGHT



**Emily Frazier**  
*Compliance Officer*

When members trust Commonwealth One with their finances, people like Emily Frazier are working behind the scenes to protect that trust every day.

As a Compliance Officer, Emily helps ensure the credit union operates within regulatory guidelines while protecting members from financial risk. That includes monitoring for potential fraud, money laundering, and other suspicious activity, all while supporting teams across the organization.

“Compliance touches almost every area of the credit union,” Emily shares. “My role is making sure everything is operating the right way, not just the quick way.”

That mindset reflects what “For You, For Life” means in practice. For Emily, it’s about thinking beyond the immediate task and focusing on long-term trust. Doing things correctly today helps create a safer, more reliable experience for members tomorrow.

One moment that stands out in her work came when a team member flagged a transaction that didn’t feel quite right. Because of that quick action and Emily’s follow-up, the credit union was able to stop a potentially harmful situation before it impacted the member.

“It reinforced something I always say: if you see something, say something,” she explains. “That awareness can make a real difference.”

While much of her work happens behind the scenes, its impact is felt every day. By identifying unusual activity and helping guide investigations, Emily plays a key role in protecting members’ financial well-being and reinforcing the reliability of the credit union.

Outside of work, Emily is an avid reader, finishing around 200 books a year, and enjoys anything with a little spice, whether that’s a favorite meal or a great story.

Want to hear more from Emily? Watch the full interview to learn more about her role, what motivates her, and how she helps bring Commonwealth One’s mission to life.

## BRANCH LOCATIONS

### Alexandria, VA

#### Main

4875 Eisenhower Avenue  
M – F: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm  
Sa: 9:00 am – 12:30 pm

#### Duke Street

4557 Duke Street  
M – F: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

#### Humphreys Engineer Center

7701 Telegraph Road  
Reopening Soon

#### Titans

Alexandria City High School  
M: 11:00 am – 3:00 pm

#### Seminary Road

4900 Seminary Road  
M – F: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

### Harrisonburg, VA

#### Regional Office

42 Terri Drive  
M – F: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm  
Sa: 9:00 am – 12:30 pm

#### Drive-up:

M – F: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm  
Sa: 9:00 am – 12:30 pm

#### James Madison University

The Union  
M – F: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm



### Washington, D.C.

#### GAO Building, 3rd Floor

W: 8:00 am – 1:00 pm  
and 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

#### HEC (Reopening Soon)

T & TH: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

ATMs at all locations.



P.O. Box 9997 • Alexandria, VA 22304  
(703) 823-5211 • (800) 424-3334  
Routing Number: 256078365

[allpointnetwork.com](http://allpointnetwork.com)  
(888) SITE-CO-OP  
[co-opcreditunions.org](http://co-opcreditunions.org)



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