



## Harford County Public Schools

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **EDGEWOOD HIGH OPENS DOORS TO FIRST STUDENT-RUN CREDIT UNION IN THE COUNTY**

*Edgewood High School/Academy of Finance Ram Branch of Aberdeen Proving Ground Federal Credit Union*

A ribbon cutting ceremony today at Edgewood High School marked the grand opening of the Edgewood High School/Academy of Finance Ram Branch of Aberdeen Proving Ground Federal Credit Union (APGFCU), the first student-run credit union in the county. Comptroller of Maryland Peter V. R. Franchot, Board of Education of Harford County President Leonard D. Wheeler, Superintendent of Schools Robert M. Tomback, APGFCU Board Chair David H. Gilbert and APGFCU President/CEO Don W. Lewis, among many other Edgewood High and school system staff, were on site to celebrate the event.

The Ram Branch will be open to Edgewood High School students and staff 52 days during the school year, scheduled around the school's lunch periods. Academy student teams will work at the branch, under the supervision of the Academy's coordinator and APGFCU representatives.

Juniors and seniors currently in the Academy of Finance (AOF) at Edgewood High will serve as the tellers and run the daily operations of the credit union, including basic savings and checking account activities like deposits, withdrawals and transfers. The students will also handle member service functions, such as opening new accounts and explaining credit union promotions.

The students were required to apply for the teller positions, interview and attend extensive training. The training, provided solely by APGFCU, was all-inclusive to running a full-service credit union branch. While the student tellers will not earn monetary compensation, the experience they will gain is invaluable. This is a phenomenal opportunity for the students to take what they are learning in the classroom and apply it to a real-world experience, as all aspects of working at the Ram Branch will tie directly back to each core class taught in the AOF.

When asked why he would like to participate in the student credit union, Edgewood High junior Malik Gilmore stated, "... I believe it will enhance the student body and the community's financial literacy. Having this opportunity will give me hands-on experience in an actual business environment, which can be a lucrative investment for my future. I would appreciate this because it could bring well deserved credibility to Edgewood as a community."

Edgewood High junior Chassidy Cage shared similar sentiments when applying for her position at the branch.

"This opportunity helps us gain job experience and everyday skills, like communicating with people and gaining confidence. Most kids my age would never get an opportunity like this and I am glad I get this opportunity which can have a big impact on my life."

The AOF at Edgewood High School is designed to prepare students to enter college having already studied many areas required for a degree in the fields of business and finance or to enter the world of business at above entry level upon graduation from high school. Students gain firsthand experience in the challenging world of

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finance through a culminating paid internship program. The AOF at Edgewood falls under the umbrella of the National Academy of Finance (NAF), a nonprofit organization established in response to a growing demand for industry-validated curricula and cutting-edge instructional techniques in the finance arena. NAF is a leader in the movement to prepare young people for college and career success and has refined a proven educational model which includes work-based learning experiences.

“All HCPS students are receiving a foundation for personal financial literacy through instruction,” said Harford County Public Schools Superintendent Robert M. Tomback. “However, the students graduating from the Academy of Finance have a distinct advantage over other graduates because they have gained real and relevant work-based experience and professional financial literacy.”

Not only does the Ram Branch benefit the students involved and the school population as a whole, it also highlights a strong community partnership with APGFCU.

“This student-run branch exemplifies our core value to give back to the communities we serve,” said David H. Gilbert, chairman of Aberdeen Proving Ground Federal Credit Union. “APGFCU has been formally recognized as a leader in Harford County, the state, and the nation for our youth financial literacy efforts. We have a long history of partnering with local schools to provide financial literacy education that helps students build healthier financial lives, which in turn, builds stronger communities.”

While other counties have opened similar student-run credit unions in their high schools, Edgewood is proud to be home to the first one in Harford County.

“The goal of every high school is to provide students with opportunities intended to prepare them for the future they envision for themselves,” said Edgewood High School Principal Larissa L. Santos. “The Academy of Finance is just one more way that Edgewood High is providing students with the opportunity to do just that.”

“The secret to financial literacy is ‘Begin when they’re young.’ With over 17% of our members under age 18, we’re committed to providing financial education to young people,” said Don W. Lewis, president/CEO of APG Federal Credit Union. “The opening of this student-run branch is the realization of a long-term vision. I thank our board of directors and Tina Mike, APGFCU’s assistant vice president of financial education, for their commitment to education and empowerment.”

Outfitted with the normal security measures put in place by financial institutions, the School Resource Officer and administrative staff of Edgewood High School will provide additional security support to the branch. Putting such measures in place ensures a safe operational environment and effective learning experience for all who participate in and utilize the services of the RAM Branch.

For additional information about the Edgewood High School AOF program, please contact the Coordinator, Carolyn Kustanbauter, at 410-612-1500, or the Supervisor of Business and Technology Education, LaVerne Pitts, at 410-588-5244.

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