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Solarity Credit Union Celebrates the Opening of Pilot Engagement Center in Yakima

(Washington, United States, Tuesday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017)

Today, Solarity Credit Union, a not-for-profit financial cooperative serving the needs of over 50,000 members, has confirmed that its pilot Engagement Center has opened its doors on Nob Hill Boulevard in Yakima. The concept allows Solarity's Guides to focus on the needs of members at the new location by leveraging the latest advances in smart banking technology to build relationships.

In 2017, the behaviors of financial services customers are rapidly changing. They wish to enjoy more sophisticated levels of knowledge, expertise, and engagement - whether face to face or via state of the art technology. As members and consumers transition to digital banking, the need for more "typical" branches is decreasing. The financial industry is continuing to see the closure of branches due to this change.

According to The Financial Brand, the percentage of consumers doing their banking online increased significantly from 2012 to 2015, but has now begun to plateau. Early adopters like Millennials, have been converted, but the goal now is to help transition members that frequent their local branch to the digital world of banking. To provide their members with the digital tools they need, Solarity Credit Union designed their Engagement Center to be a transformational experience for both new and existing members through interaction - not transactions.

As the financial industry and banking landscape changes and develops, Solarity's early adoption of the "smart branch" business model has evolved to meet the needs of its growing number of customers. Engagement Center Guides (ECGs) are on hand to help customers to learn about and simplify every process with ease and confidence. The EGCs are highly skilled, service-minded Solarity employees dedicated to providing a full-service experience for both members and everyone else who enters the space. The enthusiastic staff assembled are trained in all aspects of the organization as well as conversationally competent in areas like mortgages and business.

The idea behind the new location is to allow the EGCs to educate members on how best to use new technology to complete transactions through Smart ATMs, mobile deposits, and so much more. Solarity's objective for the innovative Engagement Center is to develop a prototype that can be used in different markets to act as a channel for taking the interaction with members beyond the typical banking transaction.

"Solarity's Engagement Center is our response to changing member demands for deeper and more meaningful relationships and value enhanced by skills and the latest technology. Our highly trained EGCs are prepared to deliver extraordinary experiences and exceptional value," explained Ralph Cumbee, Chief Experience Officer, Solarity Credit Union. "The strategic use of technology will further enrich the interaction. It is Solarity's goal to be the best financial institution our members and potential members can have."

The New Technology-Centric Solarity Credit Union Location Features:

- Video conferencing technology: Members can now engage directly with one of the Digital Mortgage Loan Officers. With two dedicated spaces within the Engagement Center, customers can apply for a loan and learn everything they need to know about the mortgage process in a welcoming and custom-built environment.

- Located in center of the Engagement Center, members will be able to participate in a variety of financial workshops and have hands on education opportunities for opening an account, how to use online banking, or even get the Solarity App set up on their smart phone or tablet.
- Solarity Credit Union's Smart ATMs provide many of the same services as provided by a traditional banking teller including; accepting cash and check deposits, handling transfers between accounts, cashing checks, access to account information and traditional withdrawals.
- The pilot Engagement Center is fitted with the most advanced technology on the market to enhance member privacy. Sound masking technology protects private conversations from those who are not in the immediate area. Directional speakers only focus sound into a specific area making them an ideal tool for marketing and other messages.

The vision at Solarity Credit Union is to create extraordinary experiences for their members at every interaction. Solarity recognizes how important member satisfaction is and puts members' needs at the forefront of the organization.

**About Solarity Credit Union:**

With over \$1 billion in assets under management, Solarity Credit Union's digitally focused community-centric co-op currently serves more than 50,000 members and offers a comprehensive range of products and services to meet ever-evolving financial needs. Membership is open to everyone who lives, works, worships, or attends school within a Washington State school district. Think of our website as a digital financial guide at your fingertips. Visit [solaritycu.org](http://solaritycu.org) today.

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