

## YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

# Christine Carpenter

## *First Choice Financial Federal Credit Union*



The Fulton Montgomery Regional Chamber of Commerce is proud to recognize Christine Carpenter of First Choice Financial Federal Credit Union as the recipient of the Young Professional of the Year Award. The award honors a Chamber member under the age of 40 whose commitment, enthusiasm, and positive energy contribute to the betterment of the region. For Carpenter, the recognition reflects a decade of dedication to her organization, her community, and the people she serves.

A 2009 graduate of Johnstown High School, Carpenter has built her entire professional career close to home. She describes that decision as deeply meaningful. Growing professionally in the same community where she was raised has allowed her to give back to the people and places that helped shape her. Attending community meetings or seeing former teachers, mentors, and neighbors reminds her how connected the region truly is.

“It means everything to me,” Carpenter said. “Being able to work here and give back to the community that helped me grow is a full circle moment.”

Carpenter joined First Choice Financial Federal Credit Union in September 2015 as a part time teller after working on a New York State of Health project with Maximus in Albany. Seeking a position closer to home, she took what she describes as “the biggest gamble” of her career by stepping into the teller role. That decision proved to be life changing.

Her career progressed quickly as she advanced to full-time senior teller serving all branches. From there she was promoted to Marketing and Compliance Officer before ultimately stepping into her current role as Vice President of Marketing and Business. Her promotion to vice president was finalized in 2025, marking a significant milestone in her ten-year journey with the credit union.

In her role, Carpenter oversees marketing initiatives, community partnerships, and member engagement efforts. She manages digital and traditional marketing channels including social media, websites, email campaigns, advertising, and printed materials. Much of her work also focuses on building relationships with nonprofits, schools, and community organizations to ensure the credit union remains active and engaged throughout the region.

“Our mission is people serving people,” Carpenter said. “Every role within the credit union matters, from the teller helping someone with a transaction to leadership guiding strategy. We all play a part in changing someone’s life.”

One of Carpenter’s proudest accomplishments has been expanding the credit union’s scholarship program. Originally established in 2006, the program historically focused on traditional college bound students. Under her leadership, the scholarship initiative has evolved to reflect the diverse educational pathways of today’s learners.

The program now awards ten \$1,000 scholarships supporting college students, trade school students, adult learners, and GED graduates. Carpenter was inspired to broaden the program after reviewing applications from nontraditional students, including homeschool applicants and individuals pursuing skilled trades.

“There are so many different paths people take in life,” she explained. “We wanted to make sure the scholarship program recognized and supported those journeys.”

Carpenter’s commitment to professional development extends beyond her organization. For the past four years she has served on the New York Credit Union Association’s Young Professionals team, a statewide group of emerging leaders dedicated to advancing the credit union movement. While she admits that being one of the youngest professionals in many rooms initially felt intimidating, Carpenter has learned to embrace those moments as opportunities for growth.

“Sometimes you walk into a room and feel like the youngest person there,” she said. “But you just keep showing up, learning, and doing the work.”

Carpenter credits much of her success to the mentors who supported her along the way. Present and former credit union leaders including Christine Pedrick, Brenda Coons, and Erica Tomlinson played instrumental roles in guiding her development and helping build her confidence. She also acknowledges the broader leadership team at First Choice Financial for creating an environment that allowed her to grow professionally while balancing motherhood and family life.

As an active Chamber member, Carpenter values the organization’s role in connecting businesses and strengthening the regional network. “The Chamber has been incredibly supportive,” she said. “It provides opportunities to network, learn, and build relationships across our community.”

Looking ahead, Carpenter remains focused on continuing to learn, support community initiatives, and encourage others to get involved. “Don’t wait for the perfect opportunity,” she advises young professionals. “Just start. Volunteer, attend local events, explore the region. The more you get involved, the more impact you can make.”

For Carpenter, the Young Professional of the Year Award is both an honor and a motivation to keep moving forward.

**FIRST CHOICE FINANCIAL FEDERAL CREDIT UNION**

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