

# SECU

## The Client

Founded in 1951, SECU is the largest state-chartered financial cooperative in Maryland, with over 230,000 members. SECU is ranked among the top 50 credit unions for total assets in the U.S. As of December 2013, assets were \$2.7 billion. Headquartered in Linthicum, Maryland, SECU has 22 branches and 106 ATMs throughout the state. SECU also provides access to over 70,000 surcharge-free ATMs nationwide through the CO-OP and Allpoint networks.



Skills Needed:

Crisis Communications & Issues

Management

Strategic Communications Planning

Media & Influencer Relations

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Categories: Professional Services

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## The Challenge

With a strong commitment to community involvement, SECU found itself contributing to a wide range of non-profit organizations throughout Maryland. Because there were so many requests for donations, however, SECU recognized that its contributions were having little real impact and that it was receiving minimal recognition for the donations it was making. Moreover, because it was so focused on community outreach, SECU was doing very little to promote its other activities, including its member services and legislative initiatives.

## The Solution

SECU initially retained Weiss PR to develop its strategic communications plan. Recognizing that SECU's community outreach effort was spread too thin, Weiss PR recommended that the credit union focus exclusively on a cause that had a direct relationship to its overall mission – financial literacy. The firm then worked with SECU to assure that all causes to which it contribute had a financial literacy dimension and that the donations were significant enough to attract the interest of local and trade media. By securing media coverage for its contributions, SECU could reinforce its positioning as an organization focused on financial literacy, while garnering public recognition for "giving back" to the community.

As community outreach became more focused, Weiss PR was in a position to assist SECU in implementing an integrated outreach program that included advertising, media outreach, and social media, all of which aimed at consistently promoting both the broad range of services offered to SECU members (e.g., mobile banking, debt counseling, and disaster relief funding) and legislative initiatives (work on Capitol Hill in support of the Credit Union Small Business Jobs Bill and continuation of the credit union tax exemption) – all of which had the potential to impact credit unions. Weiss PR also handled public relations surrounding new branch openings, acquisition of other credit unions, personnel moves, and key sponsorships, including the naming rights for Towson University's SECU Arena.

## The Results

Since 2007, SECU's total assets have increased from \$1.7 billion to \$2.7 billion. SECU's focus on financial literacy over that period has helped to distinguish it from competitors, while providing support to numerous financial education initiatives including the nationally-respected FoolProof Initiative, Junior Achievement, The Millionaire's Club, The Buck Starts Here, and scholarship programs aimed at Maryland state employees and community college transfer students. SECU has also stayed consistently in the public eye for its expanded service offerings, strategic sponsorships, and leadership on such national issues as the cap on member business lending.