

CASE STUDY

SIUCU Helping
it's Community

Executive Summary

SIUCU Credit Union has a reputation for being a community partner and helping people in its rural, economically challenged service area. But extending its altruistic mission to schools was an obstacle. After sponsoring Banzai, SIUCU's Community Outreach department saw new opportunities to effect real change in the lives of individual kids. What follows are real cases of SIUCU directly helping students to live better financial lives.

Giant Area, **GIANT NEED**

"I have the best job in the world."¹ A lot of people say it, but Kim Babington, VP of Community Outreach at SIUCU Credit Union (SIUCU), really means it. And you can tell she means it by the painstaking work that she and her colleagues put into community outreach, in which Banzai plays a central role.

SIUCU saw a need for financial literacy in the people it serves. Its service area of 200 miles is one of the most impoverished areas of the United States. Poverty rates in southern Illinois have been pretty high, and those rates aren't slowing despite the growing employment rate everywhere else. From 2010 to 2015, poverty in rural Illinois increased by 7 percentage points more than in urban areas.² Carbondale, the headquarter town of SIUCU, has more residents living below the poverty line than any other Illinois town by about 30 percentage points.³ And of the 42 Illinois counties that made the Poverty Watch List, SIUCU serves 24, which accounts for half of SIUCU's membership.⁴

1. Kim Babington interviewed by Bryce Peterson, July 13, 2018. Video Conference. Interview cited throughout.
2. "Poverty striking rural Illinois at a faster rate than cities," Illinois News Network. August 20, 2017. https://www.ilnews.org/news/economy/poverty-striking-rural-illinois-at-a-faster-rate-than-cities/article_Of66093c-841e-11e7-bdf4-dbdad2302a63.html
3. City-Data.com. "Carbondale, Illinois (IL) Poverty Rate Data," accessed August 1, 2017. <http://www.city-data.com/poverty/poverty-Carbondale-Illinois.html>
4. Reboot Illinois. "42 Illinois Counties Made the Poverty Watch List by the Social Impact Research Center," Huffington Post. Updated April 15, 2015. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/reboot-illinois/42-illinois-counties-on-t_b_6678944.html

BY THE NUMBERS

Since Q2 2018, SIUCU has nearly quadrupled its sponsorship, with its student count increasing 32% in just one quarter.



**SCHOOLS
SPONSORED**



**TEACHERS
SERVED**



**STUDENTS
EDUCATED**

Despite these obstacles—and 10 years into her tenure at SIUCU—Kim Babington remains committed to serving her community. SIUCU’s aspiration to help its service area is a lofty one. That’s why it has dedicated the biggest portion of its budget to community outreach.

THEIR MOTTO: PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE

Babington spent six months researching financial education programs. “When I started this [outreach for financial literacy] four years ago, I could only get into two schools before using Banzai..To try to get into those schools by myself was not possible.” Within six months of partnering with Banzai, Kim was sponsoring 20 schools, then 53 schools by the end of the year. And when Banzai Junior, the elementary school-age program, was launched, it grew even more. Now she has more than 100 times that original amount of schools under her purview.

What’s most striking about the SIUCU sponsorship, aside from the sheer radius of its reach, is the amount of classroom presentations Kim gives in her schools. “Sometimes I drive more than an hour to do these classroom presentations. That’s my job, and that’s what I enjoy doing.” Kim says that the scale of their sponsorship has “opened doors for [her] tremendously.”

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SIUCU’s dedication to community outreach is a demonstration of its motto, “People helping people,” in ways that have little direct connection to the credit union. For instance, Kim is very involved with the local special Olympics organization. “They know that SIUCU is a community partner,” she notes. And that phrase reveals a lot about how SIUCU perceives itself within its service area. Many of Kim’s sponsored students live so far from a branch that most of them will probably never become account holders at SIUCU or any other FI, even though SIUCU offers online services. These are students who lack regular Internet access.



SIUCU’s headquarter branch in Carbondale, Illinois. Image: SIUCU

“We have one county that doesn’t even have an ATM or bank anywhere in their vicinity,” she says. “So being able to help the underprivileged is something on our minds.” It also helps that SIUCU’s board of directors fully supports this idealistic mission.

BEST PRACTICE: PRESENTING IN CLASSROOMS

Kim relies heavily on Banzai’s teacher outreach program, since she’s always out and about giving classroom presentations. And because of the sheer size of her sponsorship reach, this approach works. Here’s how.

Within a week or two of teachers signing up for Banzai, Kim messages them to let them know she’s available as a classroom resource. Banzai’s Manager software makes this part easy. Messaging those teachers adds a personal touch and gives them a local person they can rely on, and it keeps Banzai support staff in the loop. When asked whether she’s ever had to leave a teacher’s presentation request unanswered, she answers, “Never. I respond to all of them.” Scheduling

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KIM BABINGTON
SIUCU



issues are common, but Kim ends up still making it to about 60 percent of the schools who request her presentations—and she gets a lot of them. In fact, in 2017 she received 54 requests. As a result, Kim ends up getting into schools about two or three times per week during the school year.

Kim further explains why she's so gung-ho about financial literacy: "I want to make a difference in someone's life every day, and Banzai gives me the opportunity to do that."

REAL STORIES

In one after-school program that SIUCU supports, Kim saw palpable proof of her sponsorships impact on the community. While teaching the kids in this program, one student piped up and asked her whether she was the same lady who had just presented in a school classroom a few weeks earlier, to which Kim had driven over an hour from her main branch location. Recalling that interaction, Kim says, "That makes me feel good. They know who I am now, and they know what SIUCU can do for them, and Banzai has been the leading factor to get me to that point. I could never say anything bad about Banzai..You guys had the product that I wanted."

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SIUCU has also begun sponsoring Banzai Direct, a community-facing product that teaches financial literacy for community groups, account holders, and families.

Student and teacher feedback in Banzai Manager are also part of Kim's review of Banzai's effectiveness. One of Kim's favorite comments from a student was, "I had no idea how much milk costs." Little illuminations like that show her that Banzai is giving kids a reality check. Of course, there will always be students who don't pay attention, Sue says. She continues, "But most of the time I get great participation."

One story Kim usually shares with her classes illustrates how she, as a kid, had no concept of what things really cost in the real world, and of the trade-offs adults have to make:

Sandra Blackman's student says:

"I have learned that literally EVERYTHING costs money and you never know what's going to happen. So you have to plan for things to happen at any moment."

One student comment received in Banzai Manager. Source: Banzai, inc./SIUCU.

I come from a small town of 3,000 people; there's not even a stoplight. We got a Dairy Queen when I was about twelve, and that was probably the biggest thing we had. I remember my mom gave me ten dollars to go to the grocery store, and she said, "Kim, go to the grocery store and get me two pounds of hamburger." I just kept whining, "C'mon, Mom! Let's go to the Dairy Queen." My mom worked at a factory, and my dad was a coal miner. She sat me down, and she said, "Kim, I've got this ten dollars. You can go to the grocery store and get two pounds of ground beef, and we will have supper for the rest of the week. Or you can use this ten dollars to go to the Dairy Queen and feed us for one night, and we have nothing else to eat for the rest of the week." So I try to explain to the kids that the value of money doesn't mean anything to them now. But when your parents say, "No we can't go have fast food right now," there's a reason for it.

Kim not only relates to the background of her kids but also illustrates with stories from her own life that ring familiar to their ears. Remember that many of the counties under SIUCU's sponsorship have populations living below the poverty line. In one school where Kim presents, many students get their only daily meals there. Some kids' parents use only cash because of their lack of accessibility to financial services.

One girl from Cobden High School, an SIUCU-sponsored school, remembered Kim's presentation about financial literacy from her freshman year. Four years later upon graduating, this same girl came to an SIUCU branch and asked for "the lady who does the classroom presentations." Kim came out to meet this recent graduate, who wanted to tell Kim in person that her presentation had really affected her as a high school student, and that she had also come to the credit union to open her own account. "That's when I know I did my job. Things like that let me know Banzai is really bringing impact to my community."

Someone less optimistic than Kim might have thought the driving distance was too great, the impact too hard to measure, or the population not part of the credit union's target market—but think of the real people and real influence that kind of mind-set would have missed. SIUCU has positively affected its community and left many impressions with Banzai.

“I want to make a difference in someone’s life every day, and **BANZAI** gives me the opportunity to do that.”

Kim Babington SIUCU

Banzai!

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