

Small Credit Unions in Washington, What Difference Do They Make?

Saving a Senior's Home from Foreclosure, by Matt Roberts, Collections Manager

In the fall of 2025, while working on a delinquent account, I reached out to an 87-year-old member who had fallen behind after multiple returned payments on his home loan. He shared that at his age, finding work was impossible (he was actively looking), while he was consistently short about \$400 each month just trying to get by on a limited fixed income. We were genuinely worried that without finding a solution, we might have to move forward with foreclosure proceedings—something we desperately wanted to avoid. Our goal was never to take his home; instead, we hoped to help him stay in the place he'd lived for decades.

Rather than pushing the account aggressively through collections as a larger bank might (dialing for dollars), I took the time to listen carefully and understand his full situation. At a small credit union like Tri-CU, we have the flexibility and personal connection to treat members as people facing real hardship, especially vulnerable seniors.

Working together with other credit union employees, we researched local resources tailored to low-income elderly residents. We specifically encouraged him to apply for a county property tax exemption for seniors and to pursue available power utility rebates and discounts—programs he hadn't known about or pursued on his own. He followed our guidance, completed the applications, and qualified for both the property tax exemption (including a substantial refund covering 60 months of previously paid taxes) and meaningful power rebates that reduced his monthly utility burden.

The outcome was life-changing: The tax refund will allow him to **pay off his loan in full**, and the ongoing rebates will create lasting room in his budget. He will remain stable, independent, and securely in his home—exactly where he wanted to be. This resolution was only possible because of our small credit union's willingness to go beyond rigid policies, invest time in personalized guidance, and leverage community knowledge to connect him with overlooked resources.

This story is a powerful reminder of how small credit unions earn their place in the community—by prioritizing people over profit and delivering real, compassionate support to those most often overlooked.

Tri-CU is a small credit union in Kennewick Washington. They have a single office with only 14 employees. They are about \$75M in assets and serve only their bi-county area. For more information contact Doug Wadsworth, President. Doug@Tri-CU.com, 509-735-8331 x100