



Best North Bay Business Community Leader

BRETT MARTINEZ

By Richard Paul Hinkle

Redwood Credit Union (RCU) President/CEO Brett Martinez likes to say he grew up in the business. “My mother was the CEO of a small credit union,” he explains, which may be why his mantra—and that of RCU—is, “People helping people.”

Opened in 1950 by seven County of Sonoma employees, RCU now serves more than 140,000 members and, with nearly \$2 billion in assets, is the 11th largest credit union in California (the 54th largest in the country). There are 15 branch offices from San Francisco to Ukiah along the Highway 101 corridor, as well as in Napa and Point Arena.

community. That might have been at our office or it might have been with one of the many boards I serve on, from the United Way to the Santa Rosa Chamber of Commerce or the North Bay Leadership Council. We’re proud, for example, of the Community Room we built into our new offices on Cleveland Avenue. We use it for staff meetings and training sessions, but it’s also available to any of the nonprofits we’re associated with—free of charge.”

Martinez wears the weight of responsibility easily, even happily. “I really do enjoy helping people,” he says with unforced enthusiasm. “I feel responsible for our 340 employees and our 140,000 members.”

“It gives me the greatest satisfaction to drive home at the end of the day knowing I’ve done something to help the people of our community.” —Brett Martinez

“One of the primary differences between our industry and other financial institutions,” says Martinez, “is that credit unions were founded on the philosophy of ‘People helping people,’ and this is one of the greatest benefits of Redwood Credit Union membership. You have to remember we’re a nonprofit. Our successes are returned to our members in the form of lower fees and higher interest rates on savings. We have our own full-service auto center and our own insurance company. It’s one-stop shopping. Our goal is for members to enjoy financial health—to prosper and reach their goals and dreams—and we’re committed to doing everything we can to help them achieve financial well-being.”

Growing up in San Bernardino, Martinez knew early on what he wanted to do with his life. “It gives me the greatest satisfaction to drive home at the end of the day knowing I’ve done something to help the people of our

Martinez knows the current financial climate brings all sorts of stressful elements into play, from expanding debt to rising unemployment. “That can easily become overwhelming,” he says. “You see people out there not doing the right thing. We want our members to know that there are options; there are solutions. That’s what we’re here for—rolling up our sleeves every day to listen to our members, to know their needs. I know some financial advisers are offering quick-fix deals and bankruptcy as options and, while these may seem tempting at first, these actions almost always end up creating more problems than they solve. Not only that, but they can have long-term negative effects on your financial future, effects that can take years to overcome. Better to go slow, and plan wisely, for the long term.” ■

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