MEDIA CONTACT:
Jaime Clark, VP Public Relations
(540) 315-5249
marketing@freedomfirst.com

Freedom First Becomes the First Credit Union in Southwest Virginia to Receive Juntos Avanzamos Designation

October 2, 2024 (Roanoke, VA) — Freedom First is now the first credit union in Southwest Virginia to receive the Juntos Avanzamos (Together We Advance) designation for our commitment to serving Hispanic consumers.

To receive this designation, a credit union must complete an extensive application process and implement initiatives that show commitment to serving the Hispanic population.

This designation signals to the Spanish-speaking community that Freedom First is building out resources to ensure they have access to the same products and level of service that our English-speaking members do. Freedom First is ready to support and empower Hispanic consumers through Spanish-speaking staff, interpretation and translation services, free financial wellness counseling, special loan and depository services, outreach efforts, and website, marketing, and educational materials.

"Our mission is '*Helping People Prosper – Helping Communities Thrive*,' and we want to emphasize that includes *everyone* in our community," said Freedom First President & CEO Paul Phillips. "The phrase '*Together We Advance*' fits this mission statement perfectly because the designation shows that Freedom First is here for people from all walks of life, including those who speak Spanish, to provide the tools, resources, and means to achieve financial success."

As a Community Development Financial Institution, receiving this designation will help us continue to be a trusted resource in the communities we serve, specifically providing Hispanic consumers with additional support and financial security.

For more information on Freedom First, visit www.FreedomFirst.com.

To learn more about Inclusiv and Juntos Avanzamos, visit https://inclusiv.org/initiatives/juntos-avanzamos-together-we-advance/.

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EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

NCUA

About Freedom First Credit Union: Freedom First Credit Union is the largest member-owned Community Development Financial Institution in Southwest Virginia. Founded in 1956, Freedom First has grown to over 60,000 members, assets of over $1 billion, and 11 branch locations in the Roanoke and New River Valleys. People living, working, worshipping, going to school, or contributing to a nonprofit in the Roanoke, New River, and Shenandoah Valleys or Greater Lynchburg are eligible for membership. Freedom First members benefit from competitive rates, secure and convenient technology, and the knowledge that their money is being reinvested in their community. For more information, please visit **www.freedomfirst.com**.

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About Juntos Avanzamos (Together We Advance) is a designation for credit unions committed to serving and empowering Hispanic consumers – helping them navigate the U.S. financial system and providing safe, affordable and relevant financial services. Juntos Avanzamos credit unions employ bilingual, culturally competent staff, accept alternative forms of ID and treat all of their members with respect, regardless of immigration status. Juntos Avanzamos was first developed by the Cornerstone League as a Hispanic outreach program in Texas. Today it a partnership with Inclusiv and the Network of Latino Credit Unions and Professionals (NLCUP). Inclusiv is a trade organization whose mission is to help low- and moderate-income people and communities achieve financial independence through credit unions. The network has now grown to represent 134 credit unions in 28 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. Freedom First is the only credit union in Southwest Virginia and the only second in the State to have received this designation.