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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VyStar Credit Union Earns National Ragan Award for Transforming Youth Financial Education

JACKSONVILLE, FL — VyStar Credit Union has received the [2025 Ragan Corporate Social Responsibility Award](#) in the Education or Scholarship Program category, recognizing its innovative and impactful efforts to empower youth through financial education and scholarships.

Presented by Ragan Communications, a leading voice in organizational communications, these awards celebrate excellence in public relations, marketing, and corporate social responsibility. VyStar was recognized among top organizations nationwide that set the standard for purpose-driven impact and authentic communication.

"At VyStar, education is the cornerstone of opportunity," said Lysa Barbano, VyStar Senior Vice President, Market President. "This national recognition recognizes the incredible work our teams do every day to uplift students and strengthen communities. We're proud to invest in the future of Florida's youth and honored to be part of their journey toward financial empowerment and success."

VyStar was selected from a competitive field of eight finalists, for its holistic approach to youth financial education, combining classroom learning, real-world experience, and long-term support through scholarships and community reinvestment.

For more than 73 years, VyStar has expanded equitable access to financial resources. The VyStar Academy of Business High School Branch Program reimagines financial education by embedding student-run branches directly within high schools. Operating across eight Florida school districts, these 19 branches serve as immersive learning environments where students gain hands-on banking experience, build financial confidence, and develop career-ready skills. Since its launch in 2006, the program has reached over 156,000 students, provided more than 2,200 paid internships, and led to full-time employment at VyStar for 100 graduates, and helped thousands build financial confidence and career skills.

Building on this foundation, VyStar partnered with the Florida Prepaid College Foundation (FPCF) in 2024 to award 18 two-year college scholarships, with FPCF matching VyStar's contribution dollar-for-dollar. VyStar also launched the Path to Prosperity Scholarship Program, awarding four additional scholarships to students from Florida's most underserved zip codes, helping break cycles of poverty and open doors to higher education.

Beyond scholarships, VyStar invests directly in schools and learning experiences. Through the High School Debit Card Give Back Program, VyStar donated over \$31,000 to 18 participating schools in 2024, ensuring schools could access critical resources. VyStar also hosts Financial Fitness Reality Fairs, interactive simulations that expose students to real-life budgeting and financial decision-making. This comprehensive approach ensures students gain both the tools and confidence they need to thrive.

"Early access to financial education and hands-on industry experience empowers students to make informed decisions, avoid common financial pitfalls, and build long-term stability," said Michael Rathjen, VyStar Vice President of High School Programs. "Helping our youth prepare for their financial future instead of having to repair from their past is an investment in the future of our communities."



Looking ahead, VyStar's investment in youth continues to expand. In 2026, the credit union will open its 20th VyStar Academy of Business High School Branch at Melbourne High School in Brevard County. This expansion marks another milestone in VyStar's mission to equip students with financial education training and career-building opportunities across Florida.

"Congratulations to VyStar Credit Union," said Brendan Gannon, Senior Marketing Manager at Ragan. "Their remarkable efforts show what's possible when organizations align purpose with action and communicate with authenticity. We're thrilled to celebrate their impact and share their stories."

For more information about the Ragan CSR Awards and to view the full list of winners, visit:

<https://www.ragan.com/awards/corporate-social-responsibility-awards/2025/winners/>

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About VyStar Credit Union

VyStar Credit Union is the second-largest credit union headquartered in Florida, with 78 full-service branches across Florida and Georgia, 1 million members and assets of over \$14 billion. VyStar is the top mortgage lender in Northeast Florida and a major employer in the region with over 2,300 employees across the communities it serves. VyStar membership is open to everyone who lives or works in the 49 contiguous counties of Central to North Florida, 29 Georgia counties, and past and present military members and their families all over the world. VyStar members have access to 55,000 surcharge free ATMs worldwide. For more information, visit vystarcu.org, and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X \(Twitter\)](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

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