

**STEPHENIE SOUTHARD NAMED CUNA’S 2021 PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO –** September 22, 2021 – BCU is pleased to announce that Vice President and Chief Information Security Officer Stephenie Southard was recently named CUNA’s 2021 Professional of the Year. The award honors one individual who exemplifies excellence in credit union information technology. It recognizes individuals who, in all aspects of their chosen profession, consistently excel for the benefit of their credit union and the advancement of the cooperative movement.

“I couldn’t be prouder of Stephenie as this award honors all of what those of us who work with her see each day,” said CJ Presto, BCU’s Executive Vice President / Chief Financial Officer. “Stephenie has been absolutely selfless in leveraging viable technologies that provide significant value to our members.”

CUNA’s 2021 Professional of the Year award comes on the heels of significant internal and external recognition Southard has received for her outstanding contributions. Internally, Southard shepherded management and staff to achieve a level 4 in all five categories of the NIST Cybersecurity Framework – a goal set by the BCU Board of Directors in late 2019 to be achieved in 2020. And externally, she was named one of the 10 Best CISOs of 2021 by *Tech Magazine* and nominated as a 2020 CISO of the Year by the Chicago chapters of the Association of Information Technology Professionals, ISACA, FBI-InfraGard, Information Systems Security Association and the Society for Information Management.

**The north star of BCU’s cybersecurity program**BCU adopted the NIST Cybersecurity Framework as the north star of its cybersecurity program in 2018. Southard was tasked with achieving the top cybersecurity certification, an undertaking made more challenging by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic months after her 2019 hire. Yet Southard and her team carried forth undeterred, meeting the difficult goal and improving BCU’s business resiliency and incident response protocols in the process.

A person smiling for the camera

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BCU Vice Pesident and Chief Information Security Officer Stephenie Southard

**Supporting ongoing security awareness and sharing insights**With the NIST Cybersecurity Framework achieved, Southard continues supporting security awareness to better protect union operations for BCU’s 295,000 members. Southard and her team are implementing governance and sustainability practices and establishing a risk identification program. They also share information with clients and employees on identifying phishing emails, or suspicious phone calls to protect them from scams.

Given Southard’s expertise and increasing visibility, other CISOs coming into the ranks are eager to learn from her. Southard sits on advisory boards and is gaining popularity as a nationwide keynote speaker, sharing her insights with audiences virtually on everything from governance processes and risk identification to technology platforms.

“My team and I are always investigating new sets of vulnerabilities and what comes out in the end is a magnificent win for all,” Southard said. “Watching the light bulb go off in someone’s head when they see why security is important makes me feel like I’m doing my job.”

**About BCU:** BCU is a purpose-driven organization that empowers people to discover financial freedom. With over $4.9B in assets, while being both not-for-profit and member-owned, the Credit Union is driven by the commitment to provide extraordinary. BCU members enjoy access to financial services and well-being programming that inspire confidence through the brand promise “Here Today For Your Tomorrow”. Lifetime membership is offered to employees and families of America’s best workplaces and those living or working in Chicago-area communities. **To learn more about BCU, visit** [**BCU.org**](https://www.bcu.org).

