

# ASI FCU and St. Bernard's Project: A Development Educator Perspective

## A REAL Solutions® Program Review



"Because of CUDE Claire Ippoliti, ASI FCU has been able to connect with opportunities and nonprofits which we never knew existed in our own backyard...part credit union executive, part community organizer and 100% community development hero, Claire's dedication has made New Orleans a better, more sustainable and more vibrant place to live for people in need."

**Mignon Tourne' - CEO, ASI Federal Credit Union**

***ASI FCU and St. Bernard's Project – A Development Educator Perspective*** is a 2010 publication of the National Credit Union Foundation's REAL Solutions® program.

## **About the National Credit Union Foundation (NCUF)**

The National Credit Union Foundation (NCUF) raises charitable funds, runs innovative programs, and makes impactful grants for America's credit union movement. NCUF's mission is to "promote and improve consumers' financial independence through credit unions." Among the NCUF programs achieving this mission:

**REAL Solutions®** — Helping millions of consumers gain access to affordable financial services, achieve financial literacy, grow savings, build assets, and buy homes.

**Development Education** — Leading training on cooperative principles in the modern consumer marketplace to overcome what credit unions identify as the greatest threat to their future: "the eroding of credit union philosophy."

**Social Impact Management** — Meeting a "triple bottom line" that benefits credit unions, members, and communities.

## **About REAL Solutions®**

REAL Solutions® is the signature program of the National Credit Union Foundation. REAL — "Relevant, Effective, Asset-building, Loyalty-producing"— Solutions® works to help credit unions offer a wide range of products and services that have proven successful in serving working families with low wealth and modest means. Using product/business models created and tested by credit unions, REAL Solutions® disseminates information to credit unions through special meetings, an [online impact center at realsolutions.coop](#), and state and national conferences. In the first two years as NCUF's signature program, REAL Solutions® was adopted in 30 states and is saving members tens of millions of dollars. It has now become a documented business strategy for credit unions to grow their memberships by serving the underserved. Real people with real needs are finding REAL Solutions® at credit unions.

## **About the Development Education Program**

The Development Education (DE) Program is an innovative, interactive six-day experience that covers credit union social responsibility, international issues, domestic finance issues, Community Development Credit Unions, volunteerism, history, philosophy, and more contemporary issues, all under the umbrella of 'development.'

## **About the CUDE**

**Claire Ippoliti, CUDE** was born and raised in Philadelphia, where she is currently vice president of lending for Philadelphia Federal Credit Union. Philadelphia Federal Credit Union with over \$790 million in assets has nine branch offices located in Philadelphia and Bloomsburg, PA. Claire oversees loan originations and servicing for consumer, first mortgage and business loans. Claire has worked in the financial services industry since the mid-1980s and joined Philadelphia Federal Credit Union in 1992. She received a BA degree in criminal justice from Temple University in 1989. Claire served on the CUNA Lending Council's Board 2004 – 2009, is a Board member of CAMP Rehoboth, a non-profit community center in Rehoboth Beach, DE and a Board member of Temple University's College of Liberal Arts Alumni Association. Claire is a proud Credit Union Development Educator.

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**Philadelphia Federal Credit Union(PFCU) in Philadelphia, PA**

**Assets:       \$795 million**

**Members:    100,000**

The mission of the Philadelphia Federal Credit Union is to provide for the financial well-being of our membership through a dedicated and unique combination of professional and personal service. As a member-owned institution, we will invest daily in building one-on-one relationships with our membership community through uncompromising service, convenience and a complete offering of competitive financial products and services.

REAL Solutions<sup>®</sup>, the signature program of the National Credit Union Foundation (NCUF), provides support, tested business models and tools to leagues and credit unions helping them to provide new and additional financial products and services to families of low-wealth and modest means. To date, more than 1,000 credit unions in 36 states and 34 state leagues/associations are actively seeking to reach emerging markets including immigrants, young people, persons with disabilities and low-wage households.

To bring information to leagues and credit unions in the timeliest fashion, NCUF hosts an online impact center at <http://realsolutions.coop>, full of REAL Solutions<sup>®</sup> product innovations, case studies, and tested business models.

This paper is the second in a monthly series of interviews with credit union development educators, designed to provide REAL Solutions<sup>®</sup> credit unions and league liaisons with strategies used to grow and enhance REAL Solutions<sup>®</sup> initiatives, and as a venue for DEs to share their projects. This interview describes ASI FCU and St. Bernard's Project. Please learn more from this interview with Claire Ippoliti, CUDE, VP of Lending.

**1. Tell us about your DE Experience - i.e. when did you go through DE, and what did you find most interesting about your DE experience?**

I went through the DE training in April, 2007. What I felt was most interesting about going through the training was that after already working in the credit union movement for over 17 years, the training opened up my mind to new ways of seeing our movement and how we can help and serve more consumers.

**2. Has the DE experience inspired you to look at new ways to serve your members, your community and the national movement? If so, in what way?**

For me, primarily I took a more global approach with bringing the message of credit unions to other consumers. I did not focus on what I could bring to the table at my credit union, rather what I could do to get the message out about credit unions to those who may not be aware of the credit union difference or our philosophy of people helping people. The impact of this is

saving consumers on average \$104 per person through lower loan rates and fees than by using banks as estimated by CUNA.

**3. Are you working on a DE project? If so, tell us about your project and how it will help an emerging market (i.e., youth).**



Folks from ASI FCU and St. Bernard's Project meeting at the Clifford N. Rosenthal Community Resource Center.

Recently, I finished up coordinating a meeting between ASI FCU and St. Bernard's Project. After performing hurricane recovery work in New Orleans for several years now, I met families that were struggling with so many issues just one of those is an issue of housing. I learned about ASI FCU on a national listserv shortly after my first visit to New Orleans. I then met with several folks from their non-profit affordable housing project, A Shared Initiative, INC. After volunteering with several recovery organizations in New Orleans, I found St. Bernard's Project to have a broader mission when it came to the

recovery work. Now, ASI FCU and St. Bernard's Project are working together to find ways to collaborate and provide affordable housing for local residents. By virtue of this partnership consumers that have not known about credit unions, now will.

**4. Does your credit union provide funding to support your project or are you working on your project as a volunteer? Please provide details of the program.**

The credit union has been supportive in many ways, sponsoring a fundraiser for a hurricane recovery organization is one example. Aside from one trip to New Orleans with a few other credit union employees, these projects are something I decided I would do on my own time with my own money.



**5. How does your DE project provide a benefit to your credit union and its members? How does your DE project benefit the community?**

As I mentioned I took on a global approach to increasing awareness of credit unions, so with this in mind while serving on the Board of the CUNA Lending Council, I recommended we start offering a volunteer opportunity at our conference as a way to increase awareness. While working in New Orleans I talked with the youth and families about credit unions and wrote numerous articles which were published in non-credit union publications in addition to credit union publications.

At the Hurricane recovery fundraising event sponsored by PFCU we brought together hurricane survivors displaced in Philadelphia, hurricane recovery volunteers and over 80 people from the Philadelphia area and discussed the credit union difference in with the recovery effort.



CUNA Lending Council members putting together hygiene kits for the students of The Monarch School in San Diego with the volunteer coordinator of the school looking on.

**6. How does your DE project provide a benefit to your credit union and it's members? How does your DE project benefit the community?**

I believe that, although my specific projects do not provide a direct benefit to PFCU members, there is an indirect effect. By visiting with others and working these projects I am exposed to other potential opportunities that PFCU and our members may benefit from. I have gained new skill sets that I have used in my role at PFCU.

**7. Would you encourage other DEs credit unions and leagues to get involved in a like program/project?**

As much as I have enjoyed the work I have been doing, I understand that unless we are able to mobilize many others to perform credit union development education work, it is going to be a long journey. Many are doing the work, many more could be. So, yes, I encourage other DE's to get involved in any way possible. If they attend their child's little league events, for example, ask to speak about credit unions. The work can be as little or as much as you want. I believe that, at times, folks put up barriers – some are real, others not. Work on seeing the difference – then work on spreading the message of credit unions.

## **8. Add any final observations and suggestions as appropriate.**

Can you imagine if every credit union related conference, educational session, regional meeting had a volunteer component with the focus on bringing credit union folks from around the country (or world) to help local people, the impact this can have?

A credit union has many departments which together achieve the overall goals of the organization and this is also true within the DE world. The area I chose to focus on is one of many and together we will provide socially responsible governance and solutions for our members and potential members.