

## How DE Changed My Life

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As I stepped through the doors of Islandwood in August 2009, I wondered, “What will make this training different than any other training I’ve attended?” As I got back in my car to drive home following the training, I unequivocally knew the answer to that question. The National Credit Union Foundation’s Credit Union Development Educator (DE) Training was one of the most inspiring weeks of my life.



I was one of thirty-seven participants who came from all over the world to participate in the DE experience, representing South Africa, England, Peru, and all over the United States. Learning with, and from so many diverse perspectives provided clarity and a deeper understanding of the contributions credit unions make worldwide. I met some truly passionate and dedicated people who live and love the credit union philosophy and devote themselves wholeheartedly, as I do, to sharing the credit union difference and values with others.

Development Education is not just a designation to tag behind your name, but an experience that permeates your entire being. It strikes an emotional, social and physical chord that opens the door for each person’s self-discovery. I learned much more about the movement and others, but most importantly, I discovered some things in myself that have made me a much more effective leader in my personal and professional life.

I gained a new appreciation for early credit union pioneers who forged their way to ensure we are where we are today. Because of their passion, commitment and strong belief in the financial cooperative model, the credit union movement has grown into a global, sustainable resource for millions of people, worldwide. Development is building a safety net, and that development, built with the support of the international credit union operating principles as our plumb line is what makes us unique and differentiates us from other financial institutions. Development Educators are the catalysts of the credit union movement that help drive this overall message, and I am proud to be one.

The primary goal of both of my DE “Life on The Edge” events was to provide experiential learning opportunities, resources, community input and tangible outcomes to help change people’s perception of and response to poverty within our community – as well as how that relates to homelessness and housing – by providing a deeper understanding of the challenges and obstacles those in poverty face day to day. The “Life on The Edge” events focused on changing individual perception and



were a great example of the power we all have to be catalysts for change. It got people to think outside themselves and to work cooperatively toward community collaboration. Through partnerships I formed with local agencies, information gathered at these events was used to determine how best to distribute a \$1 million Poverty Alleviation Grant into the community. Today, I am thinking about pursuing a third event to continue the momentum.



Whether it is touching one life or changing an entire community, the credit union operating principles of *ongoing education, social responsibility* and *cooperation among cooperatives* can yield astounding results. The cooperation and mutual self-help that credit unions are built upon can rally and motivate others to take action too. That's where DE took me. It opened my eyes to bigger possibilities and to the belief that I could make a significant difference – and I did. And when that happens, the ripple effect is unending.