

How DE Changed My Life

Pat Wesenberg, *CUDE Class of 2007*

I have truly been privileged to work in the credit union movement since 1981 and during that time I have experienced a tremendous amount of success that I don't believe would have been attainable without my participation in the CUDE program. I was hired as the CEO of a credit union in 1994 and I thought I had hit the pinnacle of my career at that time. Little did I know that I had only scratched the surface of the possibilities that awaited me.

In 2006, I decided to run for a position on the CUNA Board and was fortunate enough to get elected to that position. I also had the great honor of meeting a true credit union advocate and icon – Dick Ensweiler. He served as the Chairman of CUNA when I joined the board. Dick mentioned the DE Program in conversation, and I was intrigued by his enthusiasm for the training. The following year I applied and was accepted into the April DE class in Madison, Wisconsin.

The DE program opened my eyes to a much bigger universe than I knew existed. It gave me a sense of confidence to continue to reach outside of my comfort zone and embrace the credit union philosophy in a way that helped me appreciate the opportunity that I had, in my position, to give back to the credit union community. DE taught me that speaking in front of a group was not as dreadful as I once thought.

Because of this new found confidence, I had the courage and the drive to run for a position on the Executive Committee of the CUNA Board. I served on the CUNA Executive Committee for several years and eventually became the CUNA Chair. I have had the opportunity to serve as the Chair of the CUNA Strategic Services board, serve on the selection committees that hired 2 CUNA CEO's, join the National Credit Union Foundation Board and participate in several international credit union assignments.



DE has had a huge impact on Simplicity Credit Union. We have developed a partnership with our local schools to provide financial education to the students. Our school branches provide employment opportunities to students while introducing them to the credit union difference. Several staff members have attended the DE program and through their leadership we have improved our onboarding process to include the cooperative principles and credit union philosophy, organized community events to fight hunger in our area, and have become much more engaged in community activities.

The DE program has had a profound impact on my life and has contributed greatly to a long and successful credit union career. However, the most important take away for me has been



acquiring the confidence to speak about the poverty that I grew up in and not feel ashamed. It really helped me understand that this situation wasn't anything that my parents could have changed. I gained a true understanding of how difficult things were for my mother when my dad lost his life in a car accident and she was left unemployed with 10 children and no savings. It provided me with the understanding that bad things happen to good people and we don't always know what someone is trying to cope with. I have developed a great deal of compassion and understanding for others because of what I learned and experienced as a Credit Union Development Educator; I am eternally grateful.