

How DE Changed My Life

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As a teller in the 80s, I never thought I'd stay in the credit union industry. Then I started to learn about the credit union movement and credit union philosophy and that changed everything. I became a DE in 2003, and at the time I was serving as the Vice President at Northeast Family Federal Credit Union. I now am the CEO at my credit union, and I believe that DE bolstered my love for credit unions, helped expand my career opportunities, and it added value and meaning to my work.

DE changed my life in more ways than one. One large impact it had was the inspiration and determination to start a student-run high school branch. Our credit union started as a teacher's credit union and I took to heart the cooperative principle of education, as it fit so well with our CU's roots and our member lives. When I returned from DE, I embarked on a years-long advocacy effort that bore fruit in 2009 with our high school office located in the school where the credit union's founder taught. Our intention was to help the school, and a wonderful benefit has been what the bright high school interns bring to the credit union. It has been a win-win for all involved.

At my credit union, we strive to be very close to our members and 'be their best financial friend'. As the CEO and a strong believer in the DE Program, I have sent several of our employees through the program to instill in them credit union philosophy and values. I believe this helps staff carry out our mission and promise. I also believe the DE experience and a values-based understanding of our CU gives meaning to the work our staff does.



DE Training has impacted not only how I lead my credit union, but it has provided me with life-changing experiences that I would not have had otherwise, such as being involved in the launch of the AfricaDE or CaribDE programs.. I have also been presenting to the ACCOSCA congress in Africa for the past two years in conjunction with my involvement in American Friends of Kenya (AFKinc.org). I helped start AFK in 2004, another one of my DE project's I took on after graduation. In this organization, we work with networks of community, library, and education leaders in Kenya

to improve people's lives and make a difference. For example, this past year we began financial literacy classes in our network libraries. I have also worked with a Haitian women's group to help them with microfinance. None of this would have happened without DE.

DE also boosted my involvement in the credit union industry on a more local level. The DE network was helpful in me pursuing the chairmanship of the Credit Union League of Connecticut and helping to start initiatives like Reality Fairs as a collaborative effort with the League and Connecticut Credit Unions. DE Training provided me with more than just

knowledge and tools about credit union philosophy, but also a strong network of like-minded, passionate individuals who I call my family.

Credit union cooperative structure and values are the true differentiator compared to other financial institutions. Philosophy is a motivating force that drives members to use their credit union and inspires employees, and volunteers. DE keeps philosophy alive and CUDEs cultivate and grow this vitally important element of credit union success. Trust this process.

