

FOCUS e-newsletter: Headliner
A textbook example of partnership
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 in collaboration with Malia Peel, Economic Development Specialist

"Credit Unions Unite for Good: A Better Way," was the theme for this year's observance of International Credit Union Day, on October 17. The theme emphasized the benefits of cooperation among credit unions. As this month's headliner, we highlight the cooperative relationship among a group of small credit unions that embody this theme.

How did it begin?

In 2010, Ted Wordlaw of Cosmopolitan FCU reasoned that area small, faith-based credit unions should collaborate for support, especially during the U.S. economic recession that began in December 2007. Wordlaw engaged Drs. Hiram and Joronda Crawford of Israel Methcomm FCU. For additional support, the group contacted Regional Director Joyce Jackson of the Illinois Credit Union League (ICUL) and Economic Development Specialist (EDS) Malia Peel of NCUA's OSCUI. The Faith Based Credit Union Alliance (FBCUA) of Illinois was formed in September 2010 with the group's first meeting.




FBCUA members pose with student interns at a group meeting. Pictured from left to right are LaTricia Asbury Price, Hiram Crawford, Gwen Hudson, ICUL's Joyce Jackson, two interns and Sanetta Jackson. Photo provided by the ICUL.

FBCUA's member credit unions include:

- Berean Credit Union
- CTAFC FCU
- Cosmopolitan FCU
- Fellowship Baptist Church CU
- Greater Institutional Credit Union
- Imperial CU
- Israel Methcomm FCU
- My Choice FCU
- Park Manor Christian Church CU
- Pilgrim Credit Union
- St Elizabeth's CU
- St. Helena of The Cross CU
- St. Mark CU
- Shiloh Englewood FCU
- South Side Community FCU
(an associate non-faith based member)

What is its purpose and how does it operate?

FBCUA's purpose is to provide support, networking, resources, solutions and partnership opportunities for its member credit unions. In addition to their credit union responsibilities, the representatives from each credit union volunteer his/her services and support to the



administration of the alliance. Hiram Crawford is the chairperson, Joronda Crawford is the secretary/communicator, Sanetta George Jackson completed the by-laws and worked with Ted Wordlaw to develop a marketing plan, Ruth Goodwin supplied name badges, Gwen Hudson coordinates a student internship program and Dr. Winifred French and Shirley Trotter manage a store of shared office supplies purchased in bulk to economize expenses for the member credit unions.

Training is a key benefit of the periodic group meetings. FBCUA has sponsored numerous trainings on topics such as: elder abuse, minor accounts, participation loans, supervisory committee responsibilities and prepaid credit and debit cards. The alliance often hosts guest speakers or rotates assignments for presentations among the member credit unions. Non-faith based credit unions are occasionally invited to attend the trainings.

Some FBCUA members do not have their own web site. Through the alliance's website, www.fbcua.org, each credit union has a page on which it can post information and announce events. Maintenance for the website is covered by a nominal annual membership fee.

What assistance do they receive?

Officials of FBCUA maintain and use their contacts to support the group's goals. Both OSCUI and the ICUL continue to be resources for the group. EDS Peel and ICUL's Jackson frequently attend the group meetings. The FBCUA provides efficiency for the member credit unions as well as the ICUL and OSCUI because they can serve several credit unions at once.

In a short period, the FBCUA has grown from only 2 to 15 credit unions. During that time, through Peel's assistance, several members have obtained NCUA's low income designation (LID) status. As a result, now all member credit unions are eligible for OSCUI's services. EDS Peel also conducted a grant writing clinic to help members understand OSCUI's grant program. As the group's membership has increased, Peel has suggested committee assignments and reports to help formalize its structure.

The ICUL has had a significant role supporting the alliance. It has sponsored several training events with Regional Director Jackson coordinating various presentations and trainings by ICUL subject matter experts. The League Foundation funds office supplies to the members, partly subsidized by South Division Credit Union. The Crawfords credit Jackson with frequently researching products and services that may benefit FBCUA.

"Both of these people's resources and input have been invaluable," said Joronda Crawford. "They have led training sessions, provided information, helped guide our group, and been liaisons to other groups and credit unions. Without them, our group would not have had the success we have experienced."

What have been the results?

"Most of all we network and share information among ourselves," said FBCUA Chairman Crawford. "It is now common for members to communicate with each other between meetings about questions and concerns [they face with their credit union]."

In addition to the accomplishments described above, FBCUA also sponsored internships for college students who were placed with the members. This provided valuable work experience and exposure to the benefits of credit union membership and employment for the students, and human resource support to the credit unions.

These credit unions have demonstrated that by leveraging their collective resources, small credit unions can enhance their individual progress and service to their members.

To learn more about:

- **the FBCUA, contact Dr. Joronda Crawford at drjcrowfor@aol.com or 773-450-1532;**
- **the Illinois Credit Union League, contact Regional Director Joyce Jackson at 708-712-6520;**
- **OSCUI's Consulting services, email us at oscuiConsulting@ncua.gov.**