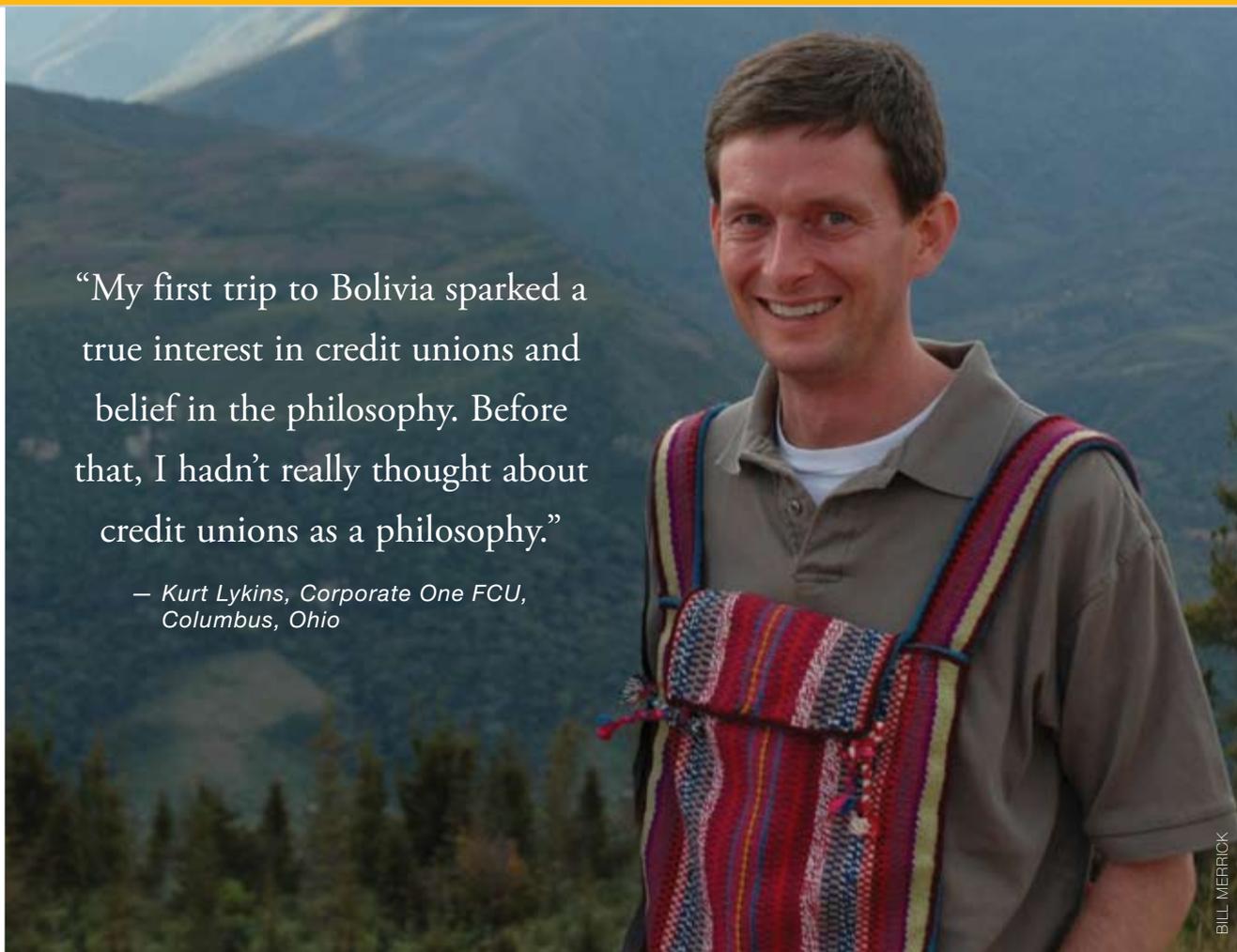


“My first trip to Bolivia sparked a true interest in credit unions and belief in the philosophy. Before that, I hadn’t really thought about credit unions as a philosophy.”

— Kurt Lykins, Corporate One FCU,  
Columbus, Ohio



BILL MERRICK

**K**urt Lykins isn’t your average IT guy. In addition to being a master at financial technology management, he looks at what people are doing, discusses their hopes and needs, then helps them identify solutions so they can achieve their goals.

When Kurt joined Corporate One Federal Credit Union in Columbus, Ohio, in 1993, he hadn’t thought much about credit unions, or what differentiated them from other financial institutions. Since then, not only has he been a critical driver of Corporate One’s growth in the United States, but he’s also led the development of a national shared branching network among credit unions in Bolivia.

Volunteered by others to go to Bolivia, Kurt went for the adventure. He walked off an overnight flight from Miami to La Paz, climbed aboard a minivan and traveled down a road known as one of the Western Hemisphere’s most dangerous. Ten hours later, still reeling from the high altitude, he arrived at his small hotel to find there was no water.

Later that same week, Kurt rode a rickety five-seater plane above Bolivia’s Amazon region to the small town of San Ignacio, where he landed in a field to find a community the rainy season had cut off from the rest of the country, indeed from the rest of the world.

“In San Ignacio, we asked a woman standing in a credit union line why she was there,” said Kurt, describing his defining credit union moment. “I was expecting a response

about savings or loan rates. Instead, she told us how she came to town once a week to sell her goods. Since there was nothing really to buy in the small town, she deposited her earnings in the credit union so that she wouldn’t have to risk being robbed in the boat back to her small village.”

Kurt returned to Columbus determined. He rallied his Corporate One colleagues and drove the Bolivia initiative from consensus to installation in 10 months.

Today, Bolivia’s credit unions are connected via a national network that offers nationwide points of service, accepts international remittances and, most importantly, has one central data location that will help provide more sophisticated services in the future.

Where to next? Kurt is keeping an eye on Bolivia, but he’s also working to engage more U.S. credit unions and corporates in international initiatives. “It took me 10 years,” he said. “I want others to have those defining moments sooner.”

Kurt will be hosting the 2008 Corporate Operations Forum in Mexico (a first), and continues to volunteer with WOCCU throughout the world.

Not your average IT guy, not by a long shot. ■

*Do you know an everyday hero? Let us know for a future profile. Email: [mmuckian@woccu.org](mailto:mmuckian@woccu.org).*