

# 2005 WORLD CREDIT UNION CONFERENCE

## ROME, ITALY

A city that seamlessly blends the best of the past and the present, Rome was the ideal location for World Council of Credit Unions' (WOCCU) inaugural World Credit Union Conference, July 24-27. The conference combined WOCCU's International Leadership Institute and the triennial Forum, and offered the event's 1,200 attendees the chance to experience the best elements of the industry's most popular meetings in one venue.

With a nod to the past, opening ceremonies included the traditional Flag Ceremony and International Welcome Reception. WOCCU board chairman L.R. (Bobby) McVeigh gave the official welcome, and was joined by two of the event's hosts, Alessandro Azzi, president of FEDERCASSE, and Luigi Dante, general manager of ICCREA. Other launch day highlights included the WOCCU Young Credit Union People (WYCUP) Program and the third annual Regulator's Roundtable.

The Conference opened officially with a rousing address by new WOCCU CEO Pete Crear. He shared a summary of 2004 successes and challenges, and touched on WOCCU's work in post-conflict nations as well as his conviction that World Council cannot abandon these areas when "our ability to affect social change is clear."

Keynote speaker Sherron Watkins, best known as the Enron whistleblower and a *Time Magazine* "Person of the Year," spoke about the importance of good governance and individual responsibility. "An Enron doesn't happen but for the rationalizations of the many."

A lively debate between Jim Blaine, president of the State Employees Credit Union of the U.S., and Rob Nicholls, CEO of the Australian National Credit Union, Ltd., was a day three highlight. These two long-time credit union advocates led a joint discussion, "Credit Union Values: A Discussion that Needs to Happen." Blaine argued that credit unions are "a cause, not a business;" Nicholls insisted credit unions are essentially customer-friendly banks.


A number of long-time credit union leaders were honored during the Annual General Meeting: David L. Chatfield, president and CEO of the California and Nevada Credit Union Leagues, who will retire as of April, 2006; L.R. (Bobby) McVeigh, WOCCU board chairman, just finishing

his two-year term; and retiring WOCCU director Neville Parsons of Australia. McVeigh took this opportunity to praise the International Partnerships Program, which announced a new partnership between Texas Credit Union League and the Jamaica Co-operative Credit Union League, as well as Credit Union Central of British Columbia and Hong Kong Credit Union League's intention to form a partnership.

The last day included break-out sessions on PEARLS, financial education, international governance and money laundering. During the general session former WOCCU chairman Gerry Foley led the Board of Directors' installation of officers: Gary Plank, CEO of the Arizona Credit Union League, was sworn in as WOCCU's new board chairman; Melvin Edwards of St. Kitts and Nevis became 1st vice chair; Barry Jolette of the U.S. became 2nd vice chair; Manuel Rabines of Peru became treasurer and Gzegorz Biereski of Poland was voted as secretary.

Keynote speaker, Jaime Caruana, governor of the Bank of Spain and chairman of the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision, provided an informative presentation of the recently drafted Basel II Capital Accord and its impact on credit unions. He was followed by Erik Klein, president of Dharma Consulting, and four former WYCUP award winners who inspired attendees to take the best of the conference back to their credit unions.

The conference ended with an awards ceremony and cultural night. Gerry Foley, a former WOCCU board chairman and Irish League of Credit Unions delegate, received the Distinguished Service Award as did the Roman Catholic Church, and the five WYCUP Award winners were announced: Sherri Fogwill, Newfoundland & Labrador Credit Union (Canada); Tina Hall, Verity Credit Union (U.S.); Karla Herrera, FENACOAC (Guatemala); Michael Mack, WAW Credit Union Cooperative, Ltd. (Australia); and Sandra Phillips, Powell River Credit Union Financial Group (Canada).

"We're very pleased with the success of the conference, and look forward to future opportunities for the international credit union family to come together," said Crear. 

—by Kimberly Johnston, Marketing & Communications Manager, WOCCU





