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For Immediate Release

ICUL chapter officials get "green" at annual conference

Naperville, IL., September 15, 2009 – Nearly 70 chapter leaders representing 17 of the Illinois Credit Union League's (ICUL) 25 chapters recently descended upon the annual Chapter Leaders Conference, which was hosted by ICUL and the Illinois Quad Cities Chapter.

In light of on-going efforts to increase environmental awareness among businesses and citizens, this year's theme was "CUs...Naturally Better." Topics centered around promoting chapter activities and events as they relate to environmental issues.

On the agenda was a presentation by Chad Pregracke, who in 1998 founded Living Lands & Waters to help clean up the Mississippi River. He was determined to take up this mission after noticing that the condition of the rivers was getting worse due to the accumulation of trash on the shorelines while working as a commercial shell diver, a commercial fisherman, and barge hand during the summers.

Pregracke, who was also joined for the presentation by his mother, KeeKee, reflected on his journey, from when it started with a small loan from a credit union in the Quad Cities to where it is today as a \$1.3 million relief organization that travels all over the country with several employees and a fleet of several barges and workboats. Thousands of volunteers have cooperated to help with the community cleanups, Riverbottom Forest Restoration, and Adopt-a-Mississippi River Mile programs. Pregracke was also presented with a \$500 donation by Illinois Quad Cities Chapter Chairman Ray Rogers on behalf of the chapter and ICUL.

The second presentation of the day was facilitated by members of the local business community on "How Credit Unions can help their Communities Go Green." Included on the panel were the former mayor and current staff of the City of Rock Island, Illinois, the manager of a local grocery store chain, and the editor of a local consumer-focused environmental publication. Each panelist discussed the green initiatives their organizations are involved in and how credit unions can get involved in discussing these projects with their local communities.

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After finishing up the first day of the conference with a tour of a local botanical garden and a dinner dance, the second day's activities kicked off with a nature walk along the Mississippi River and networking. The attendees worked to generate "90 ideas in 90 minutes" based on questions that rotated from table to table and then shared those results with the larger group.

The conference closed out with awards given to recognize winners of the Credit Union Political Action Council's (CUPAC) annual chapter fundraising competition, the Eagle Award to honor a chapter for an exemplary program or initiative, and the Illinois Youth Involvement Council (IYIC) and iBelong chapter representatives of the year.

Lastly, during the course of the conference, a silent auction took place on baskets created and donated by many of the chapters. As a result, a total of \$1,565 was raised, the proceeds of which were split among, and donated to, CUPAC, the Illinois Credit Union Foundation, and the iBelong campaign in Illinois.

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Note: The Illinois Credit Union League (ICUL) is the primary trade association for credit unions in Illinois, which provides members with information, legislation and education. Membership is open to any credit union operating in accordance with the Illinois Credit Union Act or the Federal Credit Union Act. There are 416 credit unions in Illinois with more than 2.7 million members.