

Vision to Reality

JERRY ROBLES DE MEDINA



Darrell Wilson installs one of the security cameras in front of the Godo Credit Union.

Stepping Up Security in Suriname

by Victor Corro and Michelle Kramer



Marcus Schaefer



John Radebaugh

In their ninth year as World Council of Credit Unions international partners, representatives from the North Carolina Credit Union League have helped counterpart Godo Credit Union, one of the largest credit unions in Suriname, upgrade its security system.

Marcus Schaefer, Truiliant Federal Credit Union president and CEO, and John Radebaugh, North Carolina Credit Union League CEO, visited the small Dutch-speaking country on the east coast of South America in 2005. During that visit, Schaefer and Radebaugh worked with Godo managers to identify a specific niche where the partnership could focus on helping Godo protect its members and their savings.

Godo sent Jerry Robles de Medina, information computer technology manager, to North Carolina to gain insight on information technology systems used in small and large US credit unions. It was at Truiliant that Robles de Medina met Darrell Wilson, Truiliant security director, and told him of his vision to execute a highly advanced digital security system at Godo. Certified in the use of various security technologies, Wilson was uniquely positioned to help Godo make Robles de Medina's vision a reality.

Wilson dedicated himself to the project in Suriname. During the last six months of 2006, he negotiated a US\$27,000 bid for a job estimated at well over US\$100,000. He also helped Godo set up wholesale accounts with security providers in the United States and assisted with the lengthy customs process to ship the equipment overseas.





The international partnership helped Godo, one of the largest credit unions in Suriname, upgrade its information technology and security. Pictured l-r: Darrell Wilson, Satcha Jabbar, Jerry Robles de Medina and Adam Heiks.

Wilson's goal was to make the Godo security team self-sustainable. He traveled to Suriname in February of 2007 to install top-of-the-line digital video cameras and conduct a two-day seminar to train Godo's staff. In preparation, he had written manuals and sent them to Suriname for Dutch translation.

The vision for the equipment truly became reality the first night. Upon reviewing footage, the security team witnessed the guards sleeping six hours of their assigned shift. The advancement in technology will benefit the credit union on many levels. Wilson compared the old system to the new as "having a scooter and someone giving you a jet."

Although the partnership is among Suriname's two largest credit unions, Godo and De Schakel, and the North Carolina Credit Union League, the benefits have also reached the smaller rural credit unions in Suriname. Credit union staff members throughout the country have been invited to numerous seminars and training sessions delivered by the North Carolina partners.

It is apparent how credit unions in Suriname have gained from their colleagues in the United States, but less obvious is that the North Carolina movement also benefits. Cooperative exchange with credit unions abroad gives the US credit union workforce experience working in new cultures and understanding the credit union difference from a new perspective. Schaefer shared, "It's a reaffirmation of what credit unions do, and when you see it in other environments it strengthens your commitment." He has sent various staff members to work with credit unions in Suriname. "They always return home with a renewed sense of their cooperative roots after witnessing the key roles credit unions play in their communities." ■

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