

ERIN RUFLEDT



# The Latvian Connection

**As a young boy growing up in Soviet Latvia, Peteris “Peter” Zeltins never imagined that by the age of 39 he would be telecommuting for an international firm headquartered in the United States or crisscrossing the globe to bring financial services to people living in poverty.**

Peteris wasn't committed to serving developing countries when he became an information technology consultant to WOCCU's Latvia program in 2000, but becoming part of the organization's commitment to global credit union development sparked his interest and ignited in him a passion for serving credit unions and their members worldwide. Peteris is the primary developer and support for the PEARLS Monitoring System, WOCCU's financial performance assessment tool used by the association's members and development programs worldwide. He currently works for WOCCU's information technology (IT) team from his homeland of Latvia.

“The PEARLS system works well,” said Peteris, who holds a Bachelors degree in computer science and Masters degree in economics and finance from the University of Latvia in Riga. “We find it even has application with some of the more ‘exotic’ lending methodologies we support.”

Peteris is humble, often failing to acknowledge the effort and creativity he invests adapting PEARLS to work in any country environment, not to mention the late-night support calls he receives from other staff in the process.

PEARLS is an analytical tool that measures the strengths and weaknesses of a credit union's financial position and compares the data with WOCCU's model credit union standards. The emergence of PEARLS Web, currently in beta testing, transforms the locally installed application to a true Web-based tool, available and adaptable to diverse systems worldwide thanks in large part to Peteris' efforts.

“PEARLS Web's centralization capabilities make both data storage and software installation unnecessary, converting it to a more accessible system with fail-safe applications for many credit



*Peteris Zeltins visits the House of Blackheads in Riga's Old Town neighborhood.*

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unions,” Peteris explained.

While he may be far away from the rest of his team, Peteris' Eastern European location is ideally situated for many of WOCCU's IT projects. He's traveled to various WOCCU program countries, most recently to the Philippines and Thailand, to support credit unions using PEARLS. He's also given considerable support to WOCCU's growing efforts in Afghanistan, one of many programs tapping into the advantages of PEARLS Web.

“We're seeing a lot of PEARLS applications in Russia right now too, particularly to collect and evaluate data from unregulated credit unions,” Peteris said.

Peteris isn't only about work. In his off-hours he windsurfs, especially when the waves and winds are high, and spends time outdoors. He's a talented photographer and you'll see his photos in WOCCU publications from time to time.

He's fan of the sardonic humor of “The Simpsons” and likes to spend time with his family. Peteris and wife Inga have a three-year-old daughter, Eva, and Peteris has a 15-year-old son, Reinis, from an earlier marriage.

With a father who telecommutes across continents as part of a larger effort to make the world a better place through credit unions, Peteris' children are certainly growing up with very different perspectives than the one he had as a young boy. Those efforts are something of which Peteris' family—and WOCCU—are justifiably proud. 🌐