



cpas care



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CPAs Care is a special series featured in conjunction with the CPAs Care Advertising Campaign. This year, we are highlighting amazing contributions that our members are making in their communities. Special thanks to the seven CPAs who've agreed to participate in this community service campaign: Steve Bien, CPA, Rhiannon Blawat, CPA, Barry Borchert, CPA, Matt Cody, Randy Dummer, CPA, Julie Kaiserling, CPA and Adam Mueller, CPA.

Borchert blazes a trail of success

By Amy E. Gaeth

CPAs today are actively involved in their communities, working hard to make people's lives better. Take Barry Borchert, CPA for example. When Borchert isn't advising clients at Moy, Borchert, Erbs & Associates, he's volunteering as a firefighter in Reedsburg.

When Borchert's pager sounds, he drops everything and heads to the fire station. Upon arrival, he grabs his gear, assembles an attack team and scurries to the scene. Responding to a call can take 10 minutes to 10 hours, with the average call lasting about 1 hour. Borchert is on call 24/7 and carries a pager.

"If it's a car fire and I'm in a board meeting or bank meeting, I might take my time," he said. "But if it's a structure fire, I respond immediately."

As a volunteer in Reedsburg for 22 years, Borchert has saved hundreds of lives, observed the miracle of new life, and witnessed tragedy and the loss of life.

"The reward is when you can help someone," he said. "You feel good after you've saved someone's life."

Reedsburg, a small town with 9,000 residents, takes great pride in its volunteer fire department. In fact, the community supports local fundraisers, such as the Annual Reedsburg Fire Department Spaghetti Supper and the city's Harvest Fest. Money from both events is used to purchase rescue equipment and trucks. Thirty-eight firefighters currently man the city/rural department and 15 people are waiting to join.

"It's extremely rare," Borchert said about the growing department. "Most neighboring communities are begging for firefighters."

Getting started

Borchert comes from a long line of firefighters. His father served on the Sun Prairie Fire Department for 50 years as a firefighter, inspector and gear checker. His uncle is a firefighter in Marshall; his first cousin is a firefighter for Milwaukee's North Shore Fire Department; and two other cousins are firefighters in Freeport, Ill.

Strong family influence coupled with a commitment to serve his community are what ultimately led to Borchert's decision to join the Reedsburg Fire Department in 1985. Borchert enrolled in Firefighter 1 and Firefighter 2 training and learned how to engineer the equipment and how to extricate people from cars and structure fires. After 120 hours of training, he obtained his certification, enabling him to fight fires.

Borchert attends weekly drills, maintains a physical fitness routine, and stays current on the equipment and stringent regulations that exist in the firefighting environment today. He has logged more than 6,200 volunteer hours since joining the fire department. The department receives about 220 calls per year, Borchert said, adding that he has responded to about 85 percent of them.

Borchert and his colleagues encounter a variety of emergencies, including city fires, rural fires and rescue calls. Most city calls are small fires or false alarms, but there are also major structure fires and rescue calls

to respond to. The rescue calls are usually bad calls, Borchert explains. Rescue is called when the Jaws of Life are needed (usually car accidents) or when EMTs and police can't handle the call alone.

"I have seen some horrible sights, and being in a small town means we usually know the victims," he said.

Borchert said volunteering carries rich rewards, a lesson he learned from his father as a small child.

"I depend on the community for my work and my business, so I feel a sense of obligation to give back," he said. "Besides, if no one cared about being a firefighter, people would try to fight fires that aren't capable of fighting fires and people will get hurt and die."

Professionals are often brought in to help firefighters cope after fatal fires or the loss of a colleague. The job is dangerous, Borchert said.

"It's scary sometimes," he said. "It's scary a lot of times. But we always say, 'when it's not scary anymore, get off, because that's how you get hurt.'"

Borchert said he has no plans to stop volunteering anytime soon. "I will stay on as long as I'm healthy enough to do a good job," he said. "(It's) hard to say, but I will probably make 30 years."

Dedicated CPA

Besides serving as a dedicated volunteer, Borchert also has a rewarding career as a CPA. As managing partner at the firm, Borchert oversees its operations and advises clients in local industries and banking. The firm has 30 employees and offices in Reedsburg, Baraboo, Wisconsin Dells,

Mauston and Sun Prairie. No client has ever complained about Borchert's role as a volunteer firefighter. In fact, they admire him for his commitment.

"I used to hand my clients a card about the importance of volunteering," he said. "At the bottom, I'd tell them, 'If your house was on fire, you'd want me to go because I know we'd put it out.'"

After hours, he's active on several community boards, promoting the accounting profession to local youth and volunteers at Reedsburg High School. A personal trainer, Borchert has operated the weight room at the high school from 5 – 7 a.m. daily for more than 20 years.

"It is fun," he said. "Pretty soon, I'm going to see the kids of the first groups that I trained." ● ● ●

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