



## CPAs embrace the volunteer

# Spirit

BY CYNTHIA M. HODNETT

Bart Adams, CPA serves as a board member of the Waukesha Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America, helping many boys learn self-confidence, citizenship and outdoorsmanship. Dawn Yarrington, CPA is a member of Young Professionals of Chippewa Valley, which serves meals several times a year and collects donations to buy Christmas gifts for low-income families.

These two CPAs represent an increasing number of accounting professionals who are using their talents and skills to help others. They volunteer in activities such as coaching youth sports teams, tutoring elementary school students, renovating houses and fundraising to provide affordable child care for low-income families.

For many of them, volunteering is a way to enhance their networking, leadership and communication skills. But for others, the reward that comes from helping others is priceless.

Adams, a senior shareholder at Kolb+Co. in Brookfield, volunteered as a scoutmaster for the Milwaukee County Council of the Boy Scouts of America from 2000-2002.

“When I was working with the Boy Scouts as a scoutmaster, I was involved sometimes in situations where you have a child whose father isn’t involved in his life or there’s a parent who is involved in their child’s life but they don’t live with them in the home,” Adams said. “You’re able to provide an opportunity to a boy to have an experience that they probably didn’t have with their own father.”

### *Nonprofits seek* CPAS' EXPERTISE

Most volunteers tend to be college educated and highly-skilled, said Julie Cunningham, volunteer network coordinator with the United Way’s Volunteer Network of Janesville.

Although the United Way doesn’t keep statistics on how many of its volunteers work in accounting positions, a significant number of them work in the financial industry and are leaders in their communities, Cunningham said. Because of their financial expertise, they are sought by nonprofit organizations to help them with fundraising, creating budgets, grant writing and to serve as board members.

“They (CPAs) have so many skills to handle complicated matters, such as those dealing with money,” she said. “They require a lot of expertise and knowledge that many people just don’t have.”

Sue Denzine, CPA, shareholder and health care consultant at Kolb+Co. in Brookfield, has used her expertise in health care and accounting as a volunteer



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for a number of organizations including one that provided breast cancer awareness and mammograms to women in Milwaukee.

She currently serves on St. Francis Foundation's Board of Directors, which raises funds to support an assisted living center and a child development center.

Having a passion for improving the quality of life for women, children and the elderly is what keeps Denzine motivated as a volunteer.

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them...to see the elderly and how content they are in their environment. It's a good feeling to know you can help make someone else's life better."

Some CPAs choose to volunteer in activities that don't involve accounting. For them, it's a way to focus on a personal interest or learn something new.

Yarrington, a senior CPA at LarsonAllen LLP in Altoona, has helped feed the homeless and collect funds to provide Christmas gifts for those in need.

"I see (volunteering) as a way to gain an opportunity to learn more about what our origination does for the community and meet other young professionals in the area," she said. "Without it, I don't think I would have the chance to."

## *Volunteering complements*

### WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Some businesses highlight volunteer opportunities when recruiting interns and new full-time employees.

"More young people have grown up with the Internet and have gained a better understanding of what's going on globally when it comes to social issues," said Shannon Schuyler, national managing director-corporate social responsibility at PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP. "A lot of them were involved in community service in college or had parents who were involved in it while they were growing up. So for many of them, a natural next step is to remain involved as they begin in their careers."

Finding the time to volunteer can be difficult, but the key is to find something that you enjoy doing, said Jody A. Petry,

CPA, assistant director of assurance services at Clifton Gunderson LLP in Milwaukee.

Petry is currently treasurer for a national dog club and is involved with the Junior Achievement program at her son's elementary school.

She said volunteering with the Junior Achievement program allows her to "meet all the teachers and learn about all of the things that my son is involved in at school."

Many companies set aside time for their employees to volunteer, creating a culture of community service and work-life balance. Several employees at Ritz, Holman, Butala, Fine LLP in Milwaukee mentor students at Cass Street Elementary School.

Andrew Holman, CPA, and partner at the firm, said employers can play an intricate role in helping their employees see the personal and professional gains that come from volunteering.

"Over the course of someone's career, nothing equals in importance in what you can give back to the community, besides being a CPA," Holman said. "Employees get an enhanced reputation for what they know and what they do in the community."



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**For information about volunteer opportunities in your area, visit the Volunteer Center Association of Wisconsin's Web site at [www.volunteerwisconsin.org](http://www.volunteerwisconsin.org).**