

# don't just be another

What began as an excuse to get out of the office to speak at a high school about the accounting profession years ago turned into an interest of promoting the rewards and challenges of the profession. I was genuinely surprised to learn that there is little public awareness about our profession.

Many students have an old-fashioned, stereotypical view of accountants. They think we are quiet individuals who just sit in our cubicles with our calculators, have limited interaction with others and work too much. You and I know this is not true, but we need to let others know about this. The Accounting Careers Committee is doing just that, and it's the reason I agreed to become its chair for the upcoming year.

The goal of the Accounting Careers Committee is to promote, educate and excite students about the CPA's changing role and unlimited career opportunities. Students are fascinated when they learn that the accounting profession can be for everyone, from a parent wishing to work part-time to the ambitious individual who plans to become chief executive officer. They don't seem to appreciate that the accounting profession is one of the most diverse professions and that it can be a stepping-stone to almost any business career. The committee collaborates with WICPA staff to create programs that promote this message.

Our committee is currently made up of CPAs from public and private industry and education, and our experiences range greatly. While all of us are CPAs, the diversity of our group is the backbone of our success. We are very excited for the upcoming year as we are brainstorming new initiatives such as:

- Recruiting high school teachers to join our committee
- Being more proactive in building relationships with colleges across the state
- High School Student Symposium

These programs are in the infancy stage and would welcome anyone's ideas and input. Visit <http://www.wicpa.org/Boards/acccar.html> for more information. As accountants, it is in our best

interest to promote the truth about the profession. Many students are making career choices in high school, which could determine which college they attend. In addition, high schools are becoming more sophisticated by offering beginning to advanced accounting courses, which give students a jump start on their college courses.

Having students make informed decisions early makes them prepared and ready to obtain accounting degrees. It goes without saying that we personally need talented new CPAs to ensure the future of the profession. One of my final thoughts that I leave with the students is "do what you are passionate about." It's one of the main reasons I chose this profession and got involved with the committee. While I can talk about my career path, my story is only one of many. The more individuals who get involved and share their unique stories, the more students we will reach.



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## WICPA'S ACCOUNTING AWARENESS PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

- **100 CPAS FOR 100 SCHOOLS:** This consists of CPAs speaking to high school business classes across the entire state. Last year, 99 CPAs spoke at more than 80 Wisconsin schools.
- **SPEED NETWORKING:** These networking events enable college students to meet a number of CPAs with a variety of career backgrounds within a short time frame for a fun, on-campus activity. To date, we have done this successively on two campuses with more than 380 students.
- **HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS SYMPOSIUM:** This symposium provides business and accounting teachers with innovative tools to enhance curriculum. Teachers can also make connections with CPAs, college professors and college students. The next one is scheduled for Friday, Nov. 14 in Madison.



# Get involved with the Accounting Careers Committee

By Renee M. Johnson, CPA