

## My IMA Family

By V. Marcine Johnson, CPA



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**W**hy do I call IMA® my family? No matter where I have been or what I've been doing, I have found IMA close by and in several instances have found an IMA member who could help with my latest work challenge.

I joined IMA in 1986 in Chattanooga, Tenn., through my employer when I started my junior year in college as a nontraditional student. I went to local chapter meetings to meet other accounting “people” and learn about accounting via someone’s work experience.

My employer provided education relevant to its needs, and my college degree would satisfy my opportunities for growth with the company. Yet neither was 100% of what I felt I needed for job performance. The local chapter’s continuing education satisfied that gap. I also wanted to deepen my accounting knowledge and strengthen other skills in case something happened with my current employer or position.

Something did happen. I left the company to complete my accounting degree in six months instead of three more years of night school based on course availability. My next job and the ones after that took me to new cities. How did I get over being a stranger and quickly become competent with my new job and surroundings? I found a local IMA chapter. IMA members were my first friends outside work. In addition, the insight they provided about my new environment was invaluable and helped me feel I belonged.

During these moves, I was introduced to chapter boards and board governance and

became a volunteer board member. When I attended my first Annual Conference in 1996, the larger IMA community became my extended family. The people I met provided words of encouragement and knowledge of a greater IMA world. At that point, I consciously started networking and looking for additional ways to experience leadership and make a contribution to my community and the accounting profession.

IMA council leaders exposed me to teaching what you know or mentoring and paying it forward. Several years later I had the opportunity to become a part of the IMA Global Board.

Each stage of involvement in IMA has enhanced my career and contributed to my own personal growth. As a direct result of IMA, my work challenges have been easier, and all supervisory roles have been smoother for me and those I supervised.

Now I am an accounting “professional” and not an accounting “person.” I participate in the IMA Leadership Academy, SCMS, the new mentoring program available to all members, and my local chapter and council.

Given my experiences, I suggest you invite someone you know to attend a meeting, regardless of current education level. Consider participating on your local chapter board. You may be surprised by what contributes to growth and morale, sparks new passions and interests, encourages supportive risk taking, and gives comfort and familiarity with any new experience just by knowing about IMA and being a member. **SF**