

## IMA Has Much to Offer

By Ann Pedersen, CMA, CPA



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I first learned about IMA® and its CMA® (Certified Management Accountant) certification while a sophomore in a cost accounting class at Augustana College in Illinois. The College's curriculum at the time was geared toward financial accounting and the CPA (Certified Public Accountant). Both certifications and career paths interested me. I graduated, worked for one year, studied for my MBA at Northern Illinois University, earned my CPA, and then returned to the work world.

MBAs and CPAs in the finance organization at my employer, Commonwealth Edison Company (ComEd, now Exelon Corporation) were a popular breed, but there were few CMAs working for the company.

In 2001, I began a financial analyst position "in the field," supporting ComEd's Transmission & Distribution (T&D) business unit. I assisted managers and directors in preparing monthly forecasts and annual budgets for their operations. I answered finance questions and offered business guidance. Compared to my jobs in the corporate offices, it was like being on the front line for the company.

This particular position was the push I needed to get my CMA. I wanted to improve my skill set and help the business more. The CMA seemed broader in perspective than the CPA, and I thought it might also set me apart for future job opportunities.

In 2002, I joined IMA's Fox River Valley Chapter. Within one year, I started the four-

part CMA exam. I received my CMA in early 2005. Earning the CMA was quite a personal and professional achievement for me, strengthening my dedication and perseverance skills, as I was working much overtime at that point.

I've remained active in the Fox River Valley Chapter since then. I attend most monthly dinner meetings, learning from our speakers and networking with finance professionals (and retirees) to swap stories and work experiences. I've also stepped up to hold three board positions over the years: Director of Meetings, Director of Public Relations, and Director of Special Activities.

In addition, I've attended meetings at the Northwest Suburban Chicago Chapter, a workshop with the Indianapolis Chapter, and leadership training sessions sponsored by the Mid-America Council. In 2011, I invited our Chapter President Sheryl Elliott and then-IMA Chair-Elect Brian McGuire to a "Lunch and Learn" at my workplace, BP. They made a presentation about IMA and the CMA to BP finance employees.

As you can see, IMA has provided me with various opportunities for continuing education, networking, and leadership. I'll be a member for a long time to come. If you find my IMA/CMA journey interesting or inspiring, take advantage of IMA to grow and enrich yourself—both personally and professionally—by becoming more active in your local chapter today! **SF**