



It all adds up

Accountant finds balance, good working relationships at ASWB



The latest licensed professional on the ASWB staff isn't an LCSW or an LSW or even an LISW-C. Jacqueline Ashby, CPA, joined the ASWB staff in August, after 20 years in public accounting, most recently as partner in a local accounting firm.

"I wanted to be a doctor, a lawyer, or an accountant" as a child, says Ashby. After a year as a pre-med student, she took time away from college to figure out where she wanted to go. "I kind of fell into accounting... I started off as a receptionist, and then I started doing data entry. I liked doing that—it was an introduction to accounting and [accounting] made sense. It was a puzzle, it was logical and I liked that."

After being laid off from an in-house accounting job at a small business, Ashby decided to finish her degree. "I thought, 'I need to go back to school!' So I put myself through school," at George Mason University. This time, college was a good fit. "It was a couple years of maturity and paying for it myself. I found something I liked!"

Her first accounting job after graduation was with what was then the largest accounting firm in the world, Arthur Andersen. As a first year, "inexperienced" employee, she was assigned to a team that

was auditing a major shipbuilder. "I found an adjustment, which was absolutely unheard of," she says. The shipbuilder had been depreciating equipment that was actually sitting idle; it turns out that's against the rules, and Ashby was the one who caught it. "When I was putting myself through school," she says, "I worked for a CPA, so I knew what I was doing, even though I hadn't been there very long."

After she left Andersen, Ashby worked for a smaller, regional firm, Hill, Barth & King. She first got to know ASWB in 1999 when she was assigned to conduct the association's financial audit. Ashby has been combing through the ASWB finances ever since, conducting the annual audit for 15 years, even after she became a partner at another firm, Scheulen, Patchett & Edwards.

The decision to come to work for the association was an easy one for Ashby. "I have great working relationships with Pat [Olinger, director of Examination Services] and Christine [Breedon, director of operations], and I feel like I knew the organization very well," she says.

Ashby stepped into the position of accounting specialist in early August and has her first major

project under her belt already: moving all of ASWB's financial record keeping over to a new software system. She spent her first several weeks "getting the new system up and running, buying the software and setting up the chart of accounts, payroll, historical information...making sure all of that information matched the most recent financial statements."

Ashby is pleased with the transition, especially because ASWB has used the prior system for more than 20 years. Why change something that's worked reliably for so long? Ashby explains that the new software will actually replace three systems: check writing, financial reporting, and payroll. Previously, checks were written, deposited, and recorded in one piece of software; payroll was handled by another system; and all records were exported into a program that generated financial reports. While this process worked relatively smoothly, the new system incorporates all three functions, plus has budgeting

features and will allow Ashby to customize financial reports. Ashby will be "making the financial statements more useful, without making drastic changes."

As a licensed CPA, Ashby will also file the association's tax returns. Even though ASWB is a tax-exempt organization, there are still 990s, 5500s, sales tax, and payroll tax filings to be done. She also anticipates taking on some human resources responsibilities and looks forward to learning more about that aspect of operations at an organization like ASWB. "I'm hoping to take training and get a certification [for that work]," she says.

The biggest transition for Ashby has been the difference in work culture from public accounting to a nonprofit. Ashby explains that part of her childhood ambition was "to wear a business suit" every day of the week, and now she finds herself in a decidedly business-casual office. Regardless of the dress code, she finds ASWB a good fit.