



ISCPA

IOWA SOCIETY OF CPAs

Young Iowa CPA spotlight Kristin Clayton West Des Moines

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Hometown: Iowa City

Alma Mater/Degree: University of Northern Iowa, bachelor's degree in Accounting

Where do you work and what's your role? Director and not-for-profit industry lead at McGowen Hurst Clark Smith PC (MHCS) in West Des Moines.

What can we find you doing when you're not a work? When it's nice weather - I can be found at the park with my kids. When it is not so nice - watching a movie (picked by the kids).

What's one thing you can't make it through the day without? Diet Coke.

What has been the most challenging so far during the COVID-19 pandemic? Not being able to see my grandparents. I am already planning a trip for when my vaccinations are complete!

You're leading your firm's diversity equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts. Why is it important to you and what advice would you give fellow CPAs about DEI initiatives in the profession? I want to leave the world a better place for my children. I think changes we make in the workplace greatly affect the larger community around us. If CEOs take the lead and create change, others will follow. Educate yourself. Then take what you learn and do better, educate others, speak up. Seek perspectives that are different than your own and be willing to change your mind, learn and grow. Be mindful that it is a journey and not a destination. It's not somewhere you arrive or a checklist you accomplish, but rather a lifelong learning and improvement process. Maya Angelou said, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."

What ways have you been involved in ISCPA and how have they benefited you? My first introduction to ISCPA was through the "buddy program" as part of the Annual Meeting. I was provided a "buddy" upon arriving to sit with and to introduce me to others. I was only about a year out of school, so it was a relief to not have to walk into a large room of strangers by myself. I have also been part of the Membership Task Force, the LEAP group, the Nonprofit Committee, and the DEI working group as part of the Career Awareness Committee. It is great to meet CPAs in all industries and to give back to the profession and help build a pipeline of CPAs for the future.

What made you want to become a CPA? My dad is a CPA and growing up I didn't find it all that desirable or glamorous. I went to UNI and started in the business college but didn't pick a major right away. After taking my core classes, accounting is just what made the most sense to me. I knew getting my CPA would open more opportunities down the road, so once I picked accounting, getting the CPA seemed natural.

What's your best piece of advice for a college student thinking about becoming a CPA? Do it! Also, reach out to ISCPA for help in connecting you to current CPAs. I have met so many amazing people through ISCPA and any one of them will tell you how rewarding their career has been no matter what industry they ended up in. Every business needs an accountant and getting the CPA will only enhance those opportunities.