ISCPA
Young CPA spotlight
Ben Hansen
Dunlap

Hometown: Dunlap, Iowa

Alma Mater/Degree: Buena Vista University – Bachelors degree in accounting with a finance emphasis

Where do you work and what do you do in your current position? I work at Gross & Company PLLC in Dunlap where by title I am a Member and CPA. The question "what do you do" is somewhat tricky because we are a small firm in Western Iowa. I do just about everything from tax returns to compilations to payroll to taking out the trash and re-placing light bulbs. Somedays it seems like I just talk on the phone, and the people in our office will attest to that. The majority of my time and our firm's time is spent in the tax area (planning and preparation).

What can we find you doing when you're not a work? You would find me doing one of three things if I'm having fun: 1) playing golf 2) boating on Lake Okoboji or 3) out to eat with my wife and some friends. If not doing any of these things, I'm probably working out, playing my wife in basketball or working on some of our rental properties.

What's your favorite vacation spot? My wife and I absolutely love Nashville. I wish we could just make it a little bit closer. However, if we can't go to Nashville we do enjoy the Okoboji area.

What's playing on your iPod/Pandora/radio these days? I really like church music...Eric Church that is! I went to a concert when I was 19 and have never turned back. He has really hit his stride and its been pretty fun to follow him through the years.

What's one thing you can't live without? This might be kind of sappy, but I'm okay with that. My wife Margo. She's my best friend and makes sure I'm on the right track–most of the time. We have a great time traveling together and just being around each other. We are both CPAs so it's tough not to bring our work home at times, but it's nice when you can talk to someone outside of the office and they understand what you're saying; it helps with the stress factor.

What projects/events/committees have you been involved in at ISCPA and how have they benefited you? I am new to serving on the Financial Institution Committee, which I know will benefit me and my bank clients in the future. Additionally, I am the ISCPA Key Person for Senate District 9. This is an area I never thought I'd get into (complaining) I mean informing a politician on how their decisions or inability to make decisions is affecting my business and my clients' businesses.

What made you want to become a CPA? That's a tough one, I'd say there is a gamut of things. My dad worked outside in the elements when I was growing up and he always worked hard, but as he got older he wasn't able to continue to do the same manual labor so I knew I needed to have a job that I could do for a long time. I also had a BVU alumni tell me accounting was the language of business and if you want to go a long way in life you better understand how to speak the language. The financial benefit might have been some motivation as well.

What's your best piece of advice for a college student thinking about becoming a CPA? Pass the test, break the mold and don't be afraid to work hard. The time that you spend studying for that test may seem like a waste of time or there could be some better/more fun things you could be doing, but in the big scheme of things, the small sacrifice (or should I say investment) you make will reap large dividends in the future. If you are debating on whether you should take the test all at, just take the test. Break the mold, just because your parent's accountant has a green visor and a pocket protector doesn't mean that you have to be that same person. Any more, clients want to be able to interact with their CPA/trusted advisor. I think our industry is really changing and there will be an immense amount of opportunity for young CPAs. With every opportunity comes a lot of work. If you aren't going to do the work, someone else will have to. So roll up your sleeves and dig in. It may not always be fun, but there will be plenty of fun to be had when the work is done.