



CalCPA Recognizes Outstanding Young and Emerging Professionals with the **2012 YEP of the Year Award**

and the **win**ner is...

The future of the profession is in good hands if our recent Young Emerging Professional (YEP) of the Year Award nominees are any indication.

Among six strong candidates, Megan Thompson, CPA, of San Jose, was named YEP of the Year for her volunteer efforts that have helped increase outreach to students and young accountants.

“I’m happy to say we had a difficult time selecting the final honoree,” said CalCPA Chair Johanna Sweaney Salt. “All the candidates demonstrated excellent leadership skills and commitment to organizing activities that will help students and fellow young professionals become successful.”

California CPA spoke with Thompson about her professional life and the award, as well as compiled some information to introduce you to the other award nominees. Watch for all these up and comers in a chapter near you.



2012 YEP of the Year **Megan Thompson, CPA**

How did you get into accounting, and why?

I graduated with a major in psychology and minor in political science. I was planning to go to law school and began studying for and took the LSAT. While studying for the LSAT I mentioned to my father that I really enjoyed the logic games, and he suggested that I take an accounting class since accounting is more logic than math. I took a beginning accounting course at a community college and everything just clicked. It all made sense; if one item goes up another item has to go down. I started taking more advanced classes and, after finishing the CAAP program at Santa Clara University, I took and passed the CPA Exam.

What are the top issues YEPs are concerned about?

How to spend their free time and dealing with the work-life balance. The best thing about our events is that they’re networking events, so you’re able to justify the time spent but they’re also fun. It’s a win-win.

How does it feel to be named CalCPA's YEP of the Year?

I was blown away. I know that there were so many amazing candidates for this award, and I'm honored I was chosen. CalCPA has been a huge part of my life and it has been incredible to be recognized by an organization I care so much about.

How did you get involved with CalCPA?

I got involved with CalCPA by joining the YEP Committee and helping plan events. I started becoming more involved and when one of the chairs decided to move on to a position at the state level we talked to the chapter president at the time about me taking over for him. Since then, along with my co-chair Mark, I've helped plan several networking and educational events to help YEPs in our area become more involved with CalCPA—and have some fun too.

How does CalCPA help you professionally?

I've made priceless contacts through networking events and meeting other accountants involved in CalCPA at committee meetings, board meetings, etc. While we are all CPAs, we have different specialties. It's important to both get your name out there for referrals and build up your own network, and be able to recommend quality people to your clients.

How do you interest your YEP peers in the events you produce?

We try to have a committee meeting twice a year to plan the events for that year. During that meeting we talk about what events have worked for different firms and what the committee members would like to see. When I meet new people who are interested in getting involved with the YEP Committee, I add them to the email list so that they can voice their opinions about what events we should have. When the events are set, CalCPA will send emails about registration and my co-chair Mark and I send emails to our contacts to remind them about the event.

Any favorite events?

It has to be our Dave and Busters event. It's fun and relaxing. Plus it forces you to turn off your "networking" persona a little bit and just talk to people and have fun. I mean, you can't really be 100 percent serious while you're racing cars or shooting zombies. I think our most successful event is our speed-mentoring event, which we held for the first time this year. We received a ton of positive feedback from that event and had great attendance, even though it was during one of the games of the World Series.

How important has mentorship been to you during your career?

I'm in a unique position in that my boss is also my dad. This has impacted me greatly. I've been encouraged and supported from day one, but he has still pushed me to do my best and work even harder. In fact, it was his idea for me to get involved with CalCPA. People always ask, "What's it like working with your dad?" The truth is I love working with my dad. He's the greatest dad in the world and a great boss.

nominee



Megan Boldizar, CPA

Megan's drive to succeed is only surpassed by her desire to help others. Since graduating from CSUF in 2010, Megan has worked in public accounting performing audits of companies in the technology and life science industries. She obtained her CPA license in April 2012 and works for PricewaterhouseCoopers. Outside of work, she is actively involved with the CSUF Alumni Association and the CalCPA Orange County/Long Beach Chapter. She contributes to various charities and enjoys volunteering at the Second Harvest Food Bank and participating in charity races organized by United Way. Megan's short-term goals involve becoming a Certified Fraud Examiner, continuing to develop leadership and technical accounting skills, and organizing successful events as chair of the CalCPA Orange County/Long Beach Chapter Business & Industry Group.

What advice would you pass on to YEPs in accounting?

The piece of advice I give out most often to YEPs is don't underestimate the value of networking with your peers. Everyone wants to go to the big ABC events or only attend the events where they can meet partners. I think that is a mistake. While those are important events to attend, the YEP events are where you're going to make friends who will also become business contacts. That connection is invaluable.

How about to students considering becoming a CPA?

I would remind them that you don't have to work at a large corporation, and that being a CPA isn't only about taxes and audits. Students who are looking to get their CPA license should explore what their interests are and what opportunities are available. They may enjoy working at a large firm, or a small boutique firm may be more their speed. It's all about what works best for you.

What's next for Ms. Thompson?

I'm growing my forensic accounting business. I hope to hone my skills as an expert witness and become more involved with the CalCPA's Forensic Services Section. I'd also like to help grow the YEP program and expand our committee to continue to provide great events for the YEP community.



Nicole Bueno

Nicole is a staff accountant at Kern Machinery, Inc. and co-chair of the CalCPA Bakersfield Chapter's Young & Emerging Professionals Group. Her enthusiasm for the betterment of the accounting industry shines through contributions to her firm, CalCPA and the community, and she sees the leadership and growth potential in colleagues. At her previous employer, she was head of the "Fun Committee" and involved in recruiting activities and planning YEP networking events. Most recently, Nicole was named her chapter's YEP of the Year.



nominee

nominee



Charles Burak, CPA, ABV, CFF, CVA, CFE

A partner at Glenn, Dawson & Burak, Charlie is an Advanced Family Law Workshop instructor and planner, and a speaker for multiple statewide conferences. He's also a director of the CalCPA East Bay Chapter and chair of the chapter's Technology Committee. He's testified as an accounting expert around the Bay Area and is a published author on forensic topics, including co-authoring a chapter in the Family Law Services Handbook. Active with the Walnut Creek Chamber of Commerce, Charlie graduated from the Leadership Contra Costa program. He is a three-time volunteer faculty for the ABA's national Family Law Trial Advocacy Institute. An advocate for the profession with an ability to teach financial concepts, Charlie has been a speaker at local colleges, and professional and public service groups. He's married with two sons, and is active in sports as captain of a local basketball team and coach for children's baseball and soccer.

(2012 YEP of the Year Nominees)

nominee



Kelly Wallace, CPA

Kelly is the secretary of the CalCPA San Diego Chapter board and a senior staff accounting analyst at Illumina, Inc. Since becoming a CPA and joining CalCPA, Kelly has pursued a path of service and leadership, regularly volunteering and representing CalCPA at local student and financial literacy events. Kelly is also a key member of the Exploratory Scholarship Committee, tasked with reviewing the chapter's program and procedures. Last year, Kelly graduated from the CalCPA Emerging Leaders Certificate Program. Continuing that leadership journey, she is a recent graduate of the CalCPA Leadership Institute. A natural guide, Kelly makes herself available to CalCPA student and candidate members, helping refine their résumés and better understand job search strategies.

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piece of advice I give most often to YEPs is don't underestimate the value of networking with your peers ... YEP events are where you're going to make friends who will also become business contacts.”

Megan Thompson, CPA

Nick Leach, CPA

Nick found accounting a little later than the average CPA as he played professional baseball for nearly six years in the Yankees and Dodgers organizations. As a client manager at Torosian & Walter, LLP, Nick is helping mentor many younger team members to navigate their way through challenging technical projects. Through his varying life experiences, Nick is able to articulate difficult concepts, making him a natural at developing and teaching many of the firm's training courses and staff orientations. An active CalCPA Fresno Chapter YEP, Nick brings a feeling of togetherness and excitement to the group and its events. Nick also finds time for his wife and kids, organized church activities, coaching youth sports and the community organization Kicks 4 Kids.



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