



### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NOTE

## Identifying types of stress can make it easier to manage

Did you make any New Year's resolutions? If not, may I suggest one that just might come in handy as another busy season begins?

Recognizing that stress – some good and some bad – is the ocean we all swim in, learn to identify challenges from true threats, separate the controllable from uncontrollable, and anticipate good outcomes rather than worst-case scenarios.

[The Stress Prescription](#) by Dr. Elissa Epel is a quick read offering practical ways to manage the stress that prematurely ages us and can make us sick.

Another way to reduce stress? Lean on the MECPA! We're here for you – for information, advocacy, professional and staff development, new business opportunities, and more.

Good luck with busy season. And, as always, reach out. I love hearing from you.

— Trish Brigham



*This dog seems happy to have Higgins Beach in Scarborough to herself on a late December day. Make time for you in your happy place to combat stress.*

Patricia McCarthy photo.

### BEYOND THE NUMBERS: JAMES A. FASULO

## Finding balance by helping others

**Employer:** Self; Portland, Maine

**Title:** As a sole practitioner, my roles include: tax preparation, tax planning, accounting, Finance Director, and consultant.

**How long in the profession:** 41+ years!

**MECPA member for how long?** 38+ years!

**How has being a member helped you?** It has been a great way to stay informed about what is going on with the profession in Maine. I also regularly use the CPE materials offered through MECPA. I try to connect with other members, such as attending a recent Maine Celtics game, which was very fun!

**What's your volunteer organization and role in it?** I oversee the weekly men's Christian chapel

See **BALANCE**, page 4



Jim Fasulo after completing one of many half-marathons

### COMING ATTRACTIONS

#### JAN. 19 (3-5 p.m.) Dodgeball Tournament

Cheer on the MECPA vs. M&T Bank! Casco Bay Sports, Forest Avenue, Portland.

#### JAN. 31 (new date) State House visit

Tour and meetings with legislators. Interested in taking advantage of this informative, professional development opportunity? [Email Trish Brigham](#).

#### FEB. 28 Award nomination deadline

Each year, we honor individuals who demonstrate exemplary commitment to the accounting profession (stars among stars!). We'll recognize this year's **Rising Above** winners at our Annual Meeting. Go [here](#) to nominate worthy candidates.

#### MAY 18 MECPA Annual Meeting. Stay tuned!

### Update on pipeline efforts

Curious to know how the MECPA is responding to the often-mentioned "pipeline problem?" We've devoted significant space in this issue to fill you in on our efforts to ensure the vibrancy of the accounting profession.

See pages 2 & 3.

## PIPELINE

Solving challenges posed by “pipeline issues”—fewer students pursuing accounting degrees, fewer graduates seeking licensure, and fewer employees sticking with the profession—requires an all-hands-on-deck approach. Here are some of our pipeline efforts. We can do more with your help. [Contact Trish Brigham to join the effort.](#)



### Regional partnership creates profession-boosting videos

New England's CPA Societies recently partnered to create short videos marketing the attractions of an accounting career.

Check out these two samples – [CPAs Help their Communities](#) and [For](#)

#### [CPAs, the Possibilities are Endless!](#)

The videos have been shared on social media and with educators. Feel free to do the same!

Thanks to the MA Society of CPAs for financial support.

### One chat can open a new world for a high schooler

Nick DeBlois and his colleagues at One River CPAs in Brunswick recently hosted a high school senior interested in pursuing an accounting degree.

The visit was arranged by **JMG**, a Maine-based organization that partners with public middle and high schools, community colleges, and the university system. JMG's mission is to strengthen Maine's workforce and improve the economy by giving students the guidance, skills, and opportunities to succeed in their careers.

"After explaining what role the accounting profession plays in the world of finance and our individual client's lives, he seemed much more interested in pursuing a career in this field," Nick said. "I feel it is our responsibility as CPAs to promote the profession and develop the next generation of CPAs."

### Fear of leaving an audience bleary-eyed is real – we want to help with this!



The need to encourage more people to enter the accounting field is clear, but actually doing this can be a daunting proposition for many.

Maybe they feel their public-speaking skills are insufficient, or they're just not confident in their ability to effectively sing accounting's praises.

All understandable! Which is why the MECPA will be

working – while you're in the throes of busy season – to develop a course aimed at building skills to ensure a CPA's enthusiasm for their career can easily shine through in a compelling way.

Bonus: These confidence-boosting communication and competency skills help with business development, too.

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## Trying to fill jobs? Consider these student experiences!

*The MECPA Board added two Student Representatives last year to learn more about student perspectives. Here's what these reps revealed about their experiences when interviewing for jobs:*

### ANGELICA HARTEL

I'm a non-traditional senior accounting student at Husson University. I'm married and have two sons.

Last fall, I had the challenging task of securing an internship for the spring semester, as this is a graduation requirement. At the start, I was super excited and confident that I wouldn't have a problem getting an internship. My GPA is 3.24, and I'm on a variety of committees.

What I didn't count on was my location being an issue and my GPA being considered too low. (Prioritizing my family led to not-so-stellar grades for two classes.)

Another hindrance was that most firms offering internships are in Southern



Maine, and they want in-person interns.

But since I have a family, I needed an internship in the Bangor/Brewer area. After interviews with two firms, one sent a "thank you, but" email two weeks later, and the other sent ... nothing. I was left wondering for weeks until a peer told me the firm had sent out its internship offers.

By then, I had lost confidence and was starting to doubt my chosen career path.

Thankfully, at the last moment, I found another firm looking for an intern. A week after the interview, I received an internship offer at BBSC, an accounting firm in Brewer, five minutes from where I live.

### LIZ FLYNN

Preparing for an interview today looks a lot different than it did 20 years ago. Companies are no longer just looking for someone skilled. In my opinion, companies today care more about the individual's character and emotional intelli-



gence than experience and skill level.

It's why so many organizations conduct behavioral, stress, and situational interviews instead of traditional structured interviews where each candidate is asked the same set of questions. For this reason, it's essential that interviewees come prepared for any interview style.

To be prepared for that, it's important to research the organization ahead of time and bring a list of questions to ask the interviewer about their own experience working for the company. Asking questions related to your research shows the interviewer that you came prepared, and asking them questions about their personal experience shows your interest in learning about the company's culture.

What interviewees often forget is that while the purpose of the meeting is to interview you for the job, it's also a chance for you to gain insight on the organization from a full-time employee.

Once you realize that an interview is more of an opportunity for you than a test, the entire process becomes a lot less stressful.



## We're teaming with JA to spread the good word about accounting

We're excited to work with [Junior Achievement of Maine](#), whose mission to inspire and prepare young people to succeed involves career and financial education.

We're partnering to create JA's first-ever Accounting Industry Panel presentation. JA will help us spread the word about the tremendous opportunities an accounting career can offer.

## Dubious about the impact of promotional efforts? Read this:

The collective actions outlined on these pages can make more of a difference than you might imagine.

### How do we know this?

National surveys from the AICPA and other sources support the kinds of efforts we are undertaking. But just ask Nick DeBlois of One River CPAs. (*See page 2, too.*) He has seen first hand how impactful personal contact is on influencing students deciding to study accounting.

Several years ago, Nick spoke to a high school class about our great profession.

And today ... one of the students in that class is interning with his firm!

**How can you help?**  
**Make an effort to be a proud ambassador for the career you love.**

## MEMBER NEWS

### BALANCE –

#### Continued from page 1

service at the Maine Correctional Center in Windham.

#### How did you get involved?

I was asked by a woman who led the men's and women's chapel services at MCC eight or nine years ago. I said yes, and have been involved ever since. I love it, and now, my wife and I go in to serve together. It's so rewarding.

#### What is gratifying about this?

As a Christian, I believe that Jesus loves us all unconditionally, and He wants us to share His love with others. And, it's been such a blessing to get to know many of the residents there.

#### What are your hopes for the future of our profession?

I would really like to see more accountants be able to achieve a better work/life

balance. Also, I hope accountants would increasingly realize they have so much more to offer their clients than just numbers!

#### How do you relieve work stress?

Staying active physically is important to me. I really enjoy running, walking, and going to the gym. And spending time with my wife, children and grandchildren is an incredible joy!

#### Little known facts about you:

I have run at least 20 half-marathons in Maine. I love the arts, which has included me leading the drama and puppet ministries at my church for many years, and I have also sung in a few choirs. I spent my junior year of college in Ireland, which was absolutely amazing, and it included a trip to Italy on Christmas break to spend with relatives! Also, I was honored to be a Brown Medal recipient when I graduated from Portland High School.

## BOARD PRESIDENT LETTER

### Year of progress leads to promising 2023 to-do list

Wow! Just like that 2022 is in the rear-view mirror. Looking back, it was such an impressive year for the Maine Society of CPAs. I'm so proud of our team and collective ability to "think outside the box."



David Stone

In May, we held another successful Annual Meeting, which saw us celebrate the service of two longstanding Board members – Karla Brannen and Maria Gwinn and welcome two others – Barbara Belik and Jake Black. And for the first time, we welcomed two student representatives to the Board – Elizabeth Flynn and Angelica Hartel. These young women have participated in our Student Representative Mentor Program, where they have one-on-one meetings with MECPA Board members. We've learned so much from our student reps and appreciate their time and commitment to the MECPA. I'm excited that you'll hear from both in this newsletter. (See page 3.)

After years of careful planning, we launched our new website. The new design is sleek, modern, and much easier to navigate. The website now offers a "Forum" feature that allows MECPA members to communicate in an exclusive online community, making it easier than ever to collaborate and share ideas across the Maine accounting profession.

We continue to be very active in planning events

and have offered an array of activities for members. Our 'Hit the Links' golf tournament with the Maine State Bar and Maine Medical Associations definitely was a hit, and our cornhole tournament powered on for yet another year.

We also caught a Maine Celtics game and recently held a virtual "Firm Leaders" forum, where leaders from around Maine discussed the state of the local accounting profession.

We have plenty of additional great activities in the works so, stay tuned, and check the website often!

We've also been on the frontlines of the profession's pipeline challenge. MECPA members have hit classrooms full force, presenting to middle school, high school, and college classes to spread the word about our outstanding profession.

We also partnered with other state societies to create a series of videos promoting the profession. These videos have been shared statewide, with the hopes that teachers and professors will share them with students.

These are just a few of the MECPA's accomplishments in 2022. And the list of "to-do" items is even longer! I hope this update finds you well, and I look forward to sharing future accomplishments with you.

— David Stone,  
Board president

## ListenUp! Meet a member inspiring new accountants

What better way to offset the stress of a controllership than running a 5K on the streets of Disney World!

Alison Jacobs is a runner and voracious reader



Alison Jacobs

who offers some inspiring words to aspiring and new accountants.

She's the latest MECPA member featured in our periodic interview series, **ListenUp!**

[Listen here.](#)

## Care to connect? We'd love to get to know you!

Want to be our next member featured in **Beyond the Numbers**?

Or be interviewed by

Executive Director Trish Brigham in an upcoming **ListenUP!** segment?

[Just drop Trish a line!](#)



## Our advocacy efforts kick into higher gear with seating of Maine Legislature



LEGISLATIVE  
ADVOCACY  
UPDATE

As a member, you enjoy the benefit of periodic **Legislative Advocacy Updates**. Watch for these informative summaries over the coming weeks.

The Maine legislative committees that most impact the accounting profession include **Appropriations, Taxation and IDEA** (Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement & Business).

[Here](#) is a handy list of committee members.

At the federal level, you're likely aware that the Internal Revenue Service delayed implementation of the lower threshold for Form 1099K reporting requirements in response to joint advocacy efforts by the AICPA and state CPA Societies.

Given the rancor on display at the U.S. House of Representatives in early January, issues will likely arise that require advocacy work on behalf of the profession.

We will keep you informed!

## We're partnering to create a New England ESG Consortium

ESG – the keynote topic at the MECPA's 2022 Annual Meeting – is an area that presents opportunities in the client advisory space.

The MECPA is working with the New Hampshire and Connecticut state CPA Societies to assist members in developing skills and competencies in this area through the creation of a New England ESG Consortium.

The Consortium will help raise awareness of corporate social responsi-



bility, environmental stewardship, health and safety, organizational governance,

and sustainability, and serve as a forum for discussing sustainability reporting issues encountered in practice.

Consortium membership will be drawn from members or professional affiliates of participating state CPA Societies.

The Maine and New Hampshire Societies will host an ESG Panel followed by a social hour on June 8, in Portsmouth, N.H. Details coming soon.

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## AICPA, NASBA still supporting 150-hour licensure requirement

A recent *Wall Street Journal* article included a reference to the 150-hour requirement as a factor in the reduced numbers of students/new professionals pursuing CPA licensure.

Minnesota's Legislature is considering measures that ease these requirements.

Leadership at the the AICPA and NASBA issued a joint letter expressing opposition to

such efforts.

[Read the letter here.](#)

To support students and new professionals currently subject to the 150-hour requirement, employers are getting creative.

Larger firms are subsidizing tuition costs, while others seek to have credit awarded for hours worked, similar to an internship.

## Add value by earning CITP credential

**By Michael Winer, CPA, CITP,  
CGMA, CMA, CFM, CTP, FPA  
President, Wyndham  
Accounting & Advisory, LLC**

One way to distinguish yourself to clients and employers is to demonstrate higher-level skills and preparation by earning advanced professional certifications. The AICPA offers members many certifications to accomplish this.

Credentials that demonstrate preparation or experience in an area that helps you stand out from others or that overcome stereotypical perceptions add the most value. One such certification is the AICPA's Certified Information Technology Professional credential.

Obtaining the CITP shows that you embrace technology and thrive in efficient environments. The AICPA lists these areas in the CITP's Body of Knowledge:

- Information Management
- Information Governance

- Accounting Operations
- Technology Services
- Information Technology
- Risk and Advisory Services
- Engagement Compliance
- IT Controls and Assessment

For me, the CITP has been exceptionally helpful in preparing for and pitching myself into Interim CFO assignments, particularly as the world went remote. Clients are looking for interim financial leaders who can lead teams seamlessly in remote environments, who can assess technology deficiencies quickly, and who will bring the right tools to bear without oversight or guidance.

The CITP, coupled with my past assignment experience, confirms my systems affinity and capability – as an accountant – to prospective clients. It's an edge up on my competitors who don't have that professional attribution.

[Go here](#) to learn more about the CITP credential.

## Check out CAS line survey highlights

A new report from CPA.com and the AICPA shows firms are seeing double-digit growth in their client advisory services (CAS) practices – demonstrat-

ing the value of this growing service line.

[Go here](#) to see key trends, insights and best practices to grow your practice.



## Maine's new rules for retirement plans take effect April 1

In 2021, Maine joined six other states in mandating retirement savings programs for employers with at least five employees.

These programs are designed to spur retirement savings for an aging population that has inadequate personal financial resources and a Social Security system stretched to the limit.

Maine's program will be phased in during 2023 and 2024, with larger employers – those with more than 25 employees – required to offer some sort of retirement savings program beginning this April.

[Go here](#) for more information about the rules.

## Board of Accountancy is back to work

The Board of Accountancy welcomes two new members approved by Gov. Janet Mills. Before these appointments, the Board had lost all but one member to retirement.

### GRAHAM SMITH

Graham Smith, CPA, CGMA, is a partner in Wipfli's South Portland office and is the Northeast Regional Leader.

He provides advisory and tax services to distributors, wholesalers, and retailers, as well as service organization examinations, which include an audit of internal controls and information technology processes. Graham has worked in public accounting since 1984 and earned his CPA certificate in 1989.



### TODD DESJARDINS

Todd Desjardins, CPA, CFE, is a principal in BerryDunn's Financial Services Practice Group, providing audit and consulting services to banks, credit unions, employee benefit plans and broker dealers.



Todd is also a Certified Fraud Examiner, lending his expertise on his firm's forensic accounting and fraud engagements. He also assists clients with internal control implementation.

Todd serves as BerryDunn's Quality Assurance Principal, coordinating the firm's audit and accounting technical resources.

The next Board meeting is set for May 9.

Have you checked out the [FORUM page](#) for members at [MECPA.org](#) yet?

## Maine's Retirement Savings Program

- ✓ Requirement of Maine businesses with 5 or more employees.
- ✓ Must offer an employer-sponsored retirement plan or enroll employees in State-run retirement plan.
- ✓ Implementing in phases beginning April 2023.

Learn more or download your guide to compliance at [papertrails.com/retirement](https://papertrails.com/retirement)



Maine's  
Retirement  
Savings  
Program

A guide to compliance



## Looking for new adventures? Be a leader in the MECPA

The MECPA is seeking nominations for its Board of Governors for three-year terms that begin June 1. FMI or to nominate someone, [email Trish Brigham](#).

The MECPA Board provides strategic guidance and professional leadership for the organization and profession in Maine and beyond. MECPA committees engage

members and volunteers in the Society's hands-on work, offering "insider" connections and access to professional development and social opportunities.

The MECPA has refocused its committees to proactively address key issues facing the accounting profession. Please consider getting involved. [Go here](#) FMI or [contact Trish](#).

## Wrapping up a fine 2022

The MECPA closed out its 2022 events with a Maine Celtics game outing. Portland was able to pull off a win! Thanks again to ADP and UWorld for donating raffle prizes.

Also 'wrapped up' were gifts and supplies for members of Maine's immigrant and refugee community.

Led by Sam Hornblower of Dufour Tax, LLC and Cheryl Sommer of Albin Randall &

Bennett, our Difference Makers Committee collected hundreds of items for Catholic Charities' Refugee and Immigration Services. Other participating firms included One River CPAs and BerryDunn.



*Dufour team members with donations for Maine refugees and immigrants.*

## Maine's accounting industry leaders discuss solutions to common challenges

The MECPA hosted accounting leaders from education, public and private industry in November to brainstorm solutions for myriad challenges dogging the profession.

No surprise ... pipeline and talent recruitment rose to the surface as the most pressing issues.

Proposed action steps include summer internship programs, community college/technical school connections, marketing videos and promotional materials.

Similar periodic meetings are being scheduled for 2023.

If interested in participating, [email Trish Brigham](#).

## Find great volunteer opps at MECPA.org

Interested in using your CPA skills to make an impact in your community? Involved in a nonprofit that needs volunteer assistance? We love supporting you by listing [volunteer opportunities on the MECPA website](#).

## Many thanks to these outstanding volunteers

We appreciate members who volunteer for the benefit of all members and CPAs in Maine:

2022 Maine Legislators Guide:

Bob Grieshaber of Robert Grieshaber, CPA, and Karla Brannen of Brannen Associates

Maine Consensus Economic Forecasting Commission:

Mike Santo of Wipfli for providing perspective at the Commission's fall [Information Gathering Session](#)

Holiday Giving Effort:

Cheryl Sommer of Albin Randall & Bennett, Sam Hornblower of Dufour Tax LLC, and Nick DeBlois of One River CPAs

High School Student Connectors:

Jake Black of BerryDunn and Donna Oxley of BBSC CPAs

- Nick DeBlois of One River CPAs for hosting a high school senior for a Job Shadow Day

**Looking past busy season ...  
What should we give you in 2023?**

We're curating a collection of pertinent, engaging education programs. If you have particular needs/areas of interest, please reach out to Trish. And remember, CPE webinars are always available on our website.