



## Lisa Thouin

**T**he perception of most Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) is that they live in a very orderly world. Figures get shifted from one column to another so that eventually, two sums are equal. But for Lisa Thouin, it is the work her clients do, and the work she does for them, that equals more than the sum of a balance sheet.

Thouin is a Director at Mercadien P.C., Certified Public Accountants, the Hamilton-based firm specializing in accounting, auditing, tax and consulting services. As a CPA, she performs audit and tax duties. But her specialty is advising not-for-profit and tax-exempt organizations. This specialization has helped her embrace a greater sense of purpose; the work she does helps the people who help others.

"Everyone at a non-profit cares about a good cause," Lisa said. "And for me to help them is very rewarding. So when it comes to giving of my skills, it feels very natural to give back."

Lisa helps not-for-profits learn more about financial intricacy and getting through audits smoothly. But her expertise in advising such clients has enhanced her perspective on the other side of the books – as an officer, board member or volunteer at four Mercer County-based organizations.

Lisa is active with the Millhill Child and Family Development Corporation in Trenton, Mercer County Dress for Success, the Notre Dame High School Harvest Moon Auction, and the Mercer County chapter of the New Jersey Society of CPAs. Additionally, she has been an adjunct

instructor at The Center for Continuing Studies at Mercer County Community College (MCCC), where she taught the Certified Bookkeeper Program.

An interest in helping kids and their parents led to her involvement with Millhill. She became aware of the organization while with a previous employer. When Millhill reached out to Mercadien with a request for a CPA to join its corporate board, she jumped at the opportunity.

Millhill is a full service daycare for infants through pre-kindergarten. It has classes to strengthen basic skills for three- and four-year olds. It provides before and after school care, parent counseling, outpatient and behavioral health clinics, and teen peer groups to stem the tide of gang violence and drug abuse.

With concern for the organization's future, Lisa has also taken on a new role—strategic planning committee member.

"I like that Millhill takes a very holistic approach to help the entire family," Lisa said. "But I've worked with enough not-for-profit clients to know that they really need a business plan to survive. In my role I can interpret the financial aspects of those plans for other board members."

Lisa has used her financial expertise in another educational setting. After her son, Ryan, entered Notre Dame High School four years ago, she joined the Harvest Moon Auction committee and has been its business manager. The auction is an annual event that raises money to buy technology for Notre Dame classrooms.

As for Lisa's involvement with Dress For Success-Mercer, that came after her cousin Maria Imbalzano, who is a board member, discovered that Lisa was familiar with non-profits.

Dress For Success-Mercer's goal is to help women in need dress well for job interviews and maintain dress standards after being hired. The chapter also offers job counseling and a professional women's networking group (PWG). The PWG has monthly meetings on employee-related topics.

But her work for the organization goes beyond financial capacities. She's staffed its Hamilton boutique and has collected clothing. She has also helped produce and sell Mother's Day cards as a fundraiser toward the goal of creating a career-counseling center.

Lisa is a past-president of the NJSCPA's Mercer chapter and has held several other posts with the group. Her current assignment there is with the scholarship committee that provides grants for students at MCCC who are studying accounting and who plan to continue those studies at a four-year school.

"NJSCPA was my first board experience where I was standing out in front of people," Lisa said. "It helped me get over any nervousness. I've gone on to learn a lot about successful event planning. At the same time I feel like I'm giving back to my peers by serving the profession."

Lisa is the type of person who looks at her weekly calendar and remarks, "Ah, only three board meetings." Those are the weeks she is grateful to spend more time with her husband, Gary, taking walks and watching TV or movies. And if there's any time left, a little shopping feels good. ■