

CGFM PROFILE

Accountant Broadens Skills with CGFM

The early days of learning a new job may be the same for everyone — you do things the way they've always been done, sometimes without a complete understanding of why.

When Deborah Davis started her job as an accountant for Hamilton County, TN, it was no different, but nine years of experience combined with obtaining her CGFM credential has given her a far different perspective.

Now she understands the nuances of the tasks she performs every day. Through the CGFM certification process, she gained a greater understanding of her job and how her responsibilities fit into the larger picture of efficient government financial management.

Davis is now able to look at the tasks that were once rote, and thinks about whether the process still produces the desired outcome. The knowledge gained through the studying for the CGFM Examinations has made her more creative, more efficient and more effective, she said.

"That's what I gained more than anything else — a broader knowledge of my job," Davis said. "It's made me a better employee."

Davis, a CPA, is also seeking the Certified Public Finance Officer (CPFO) credential offered by the Government Finance Officers Association. She hopes to complete the five-part exam and earn the CPFO by fall, 2003.

Davis was one of 12 winners of a free CGFM exam during the Professional Development Conference & Exposition in Boston a year ago. She passed the first exam in December of last year, the second in January and the third in March.

Davis, a member of AGA's Chattanooga Chapter, decided to study on her own for the CGFM Examinations, as many of the reading materials for the CPFO and CGFM Exams were similar. She downloaded free materials off the AGA website and took advantage of her department's library, which had many of the books on the reading list. She said it's hard to say how much time she spent studying for the computerized CGFM Exams since she was also studying simultaneously for two of the CPFO exams.

"I do know that when I sat down for the CGFM Exams, I could tell the material was more varied in scope, the CGFM Exam includes more federal accounting and reporting." She said the questions were thought provoking and covered a broad spectrum of knowledge.

"Every time I was ready to press the submit button, I was anxious," she said. "There are so many questions, and I didn't think, 'I just aced this exam,' but when I saw, 'Congratulations Deborah Davis,' at the end I said 'thank you' to a higher being for the courage to attempt this project." Davis believes that one key to success is for CGFM candidates to study the reading materials and try to apply that knowledge to what they do for their government entity. "It just seems to make it more real and easier to retain," she said.

Davis did not receive a raise or bonus for her achievement, but that wasn't her motivation. "I didn't do it for the money," she said. "I did it because I wanted to see how much my knowledge had grown during my career. It was a way to test myself about what I had been doing. It was more for personal gratification and to expand my horizons."

Davis also learned to become more disciplined. "You have to be very disciplined to make yourself study," she said. It helps her in her day-to-day work, and will help her fulfill the required 80-hour CPE requirement every two years.

"It has been a very good experience for me," Davis said. "It's taught me a lot and it's given me greater confidence in myself."