

Financial Specialist Becomes First in Idaho to Pass CGFM Exams

It didn't take Rachel Martinen long to learn about the important differences between governmental accounting and the world of tax returns and bookkeeping.

When Martinen moved from public accounting to her current position as a financial specialist for the Idaho Department of Agriculture in Boise this past July, she discovered a strict protocol of procedures to follow, sensitive political considerations and multiple layers of financial controls. Gaining the CGFM certification answered her question, "Why in the world do you have to do all that stuff?" After passing the three exams, she understood more clearly how the additional controls create a tightly secure environment that allows many different people to deal with financial information while attempting to prevent fraud and abuse.

Martinen, who is also a CPA, recently became the first professional in the state of Idaho to pass the CGFM Exams.

"This gives me more credibility in the governmental accounting field," she said. "This is something that shows that I do know the nuts and bolts of governmental accounting. It's broadened the span of what I can do."

Martinen's degree is in economics and her accounting classroom experience amounts to 21 hours. For a handful of years, she was employed in public accounting, where she didn't have to work with the fund accounting procedures used in the governmental arena.

When she started working for the State of Idaho government, she looked to the CGFM Program as a good way to get up to speed while boosting her credibility among her colleagues and other government accountants.

Martinen said the CGFM training has done this for her, and she believes that as more people pass the CGFM Exams, the certification will gain even more prestige among government financial managers. "It's another way to become credible in each other's eyes."

To prepare for the exams, her employer paid for her to attend AGA's three Government Financial Management courses put on by Management Concepts, Inc. She raved about her instructor, Pete Rose, CGFM. "I absolutely adored him. He's dynamite," she said.

Martinen dedicated six weeks to preparing for and passing the exams. She received three binders from the AGA courses, one for each section of the test. She studied these binders after work and on the weekends and took the chapter quizzes. She said she was very focused, but she also admits that she did not read any of the additional referenced materials.

"I did study. I did focus myself, but I did pass so it was a good payoff," she said. "This is a doable test. Don't be afraid to take a crack at it. For those willing to commit some time and money, I believe it is a good vehicle to enhance an accounting career."