



Please tell AGA members how membership has affected your professional life.

I had a great epiphany early in my career. Despite a successful college education, a recognized professional certification, 'Big Eight' experience, and some early leadership positions... I realized I am not the smartest person in the room! This epiphany, one we should all embrace when we walk 'in the room,' is what makes AGA so very relevant and beneficial in my career, including:

- AGA helps me see the 'big picture,' in government financial management and all the related parts (federal, state, local, budget, performance, systems, programs, etc.). It's like a puzzle with thousands of moving, interrelated pieces, yet in our day-to-day, we only see and touch the few isolated pieces we directly influence. AGA puts the pieces of the puzzle together in one place, providing the big picture understanding, along with the tools, resources and a network of thought leaders to enable us to be more efficient, more effective and more innovative.
- AGA delivers a big return on investment (ROI). AGA is not a one-way relationship. And, if you invest in this relationship with your own personal capital (your time and talents), the benefits are many. AGA has given

Meet AGA's Next National President Mary E. Peterman CGFM, CPA

AGA's National President-Elect, Mary E. Peterman, CGFM, CPA, has covered most of AGA's membership demographics during her 20-plus year career, supporting local governments, as well as state and federal agencies. She started her career in 'the Big 8' and progressed to financial management leadership positions throughout Virginia. From there, Mary's experience expanded to include federal agencies: the Transportation Security Administration and U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). Currently, she continues to support government agencies as Vice President for Savantage Solutions, one of AGA's valued Corporate Partners.

'CONNECTING' within AGA has facilitated Mary's proudest accomplishments — her contributions to AGA's membership and accountability efforts. She has been an ambassador for AGA's Citizen-Centric Reporting (CCR) efforts since the beginning, and developed the first pilot CCR for a locality, published in the winter 2006 *Journal*.

Mary's past AGA leadership positions include Virginia Peninsula Chapter President, Mid-Atlantic Regional Vice President, National Treasurer, and member of the Finance and Budget Committee, PDC Technical Committee, National Executive Committee and the National Nominating Committee. Mary has received a National President's Award, Platinum Chapter Award and multiple chapter recognition awards. In addition to two *Journal* articles, Mary has co-authored articles on economic development. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting from Virginia Commonwealth University and is pursuing her Masters of Public Administration at University of North Carolina – Pembroke.

me the opportunity to meet, learn from and call as friends, some really smart, thoughtful, innovative and influential people in our profession. I immediately realized the blessing and responsibility of this access. I observe and listen to these people, gaining information and strategies that I can directly apply to my life as a leader, and as a financial management professional.

- AGA is about something bigger than our own careers. Public sector servants are just that – servants. No matter the compensation, government

professionals and the private sector organizations supporting them, really [should] do what they do because of the inherent desire to create value for our citizens, 'to make the world a better place.' Our members, whether federal, state, local or our corporate partners, are some of the most thoughtful, caring and giving individuals, who collectively wield tremendous influence on increasing government efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and transparency. I am so proud to have the opportunity to serve this organization, give back and, hopefully, make a positive difference.

What do you see as AGA's greatest challenge, and where do you think AGA can and should impact?

The next generation of leaders and those who follow them, have grown up communicating and working in a very dynamic, electronic environment and, therefore, expect a different value proposition and service delivery from their association membership. This changing demographic, continued rapid injection of technology and the need to demonstrate fiscal efficiency, means AGA has a tremendous opportunity (not a challenge) to leverage this innovation and maximize our own value proposition. The possibilities are exciting!

Our citizens have similar expectations in how they connect with their governments. AGA is in an enviable position because we are able to gather our collective thought leaders and industry partners, and their best practices, across all levels of government. We need to replicate and capitalize on our Citizen-Centric Report (CCR) success and explore more technology and creativity in engaging citizens in a conversation about government financial and performance information

Where do you plan to put the most emphasis in the coming year?

My presidential theme is "CONNECT." I feel this simple, elegant word summarizes what AGA embodies as a professional organization. I will spend the year communicating the tremendous AGA member-value proposition (CGFM, Thought Leadership, CCR, Intergovernmental, CPAG, and so on) and seeking feedback on ways to capitalize on past success and prepare for the future. I see my AGA role simply as 'Head Facilitator' and 'Head Cheerleader.' Our members and stakeholders are the most important part of AGA's vision. AGA is also preparing, well in advance, for a change in executive leadership, as Relmond Van Daniker, DBA, CPA (Van) retires in September 2014. Van leaves big shoes to fill; and AGA's next Executive Director needs to possess even more marketing/business savvy, innovative ideas and professional understanding to lead us successfully through the technological and demographic changes ahead.

What are you most looking forward to as National President?

Recently, I was in Tucson, AZ, where I had the chance to meet with and speak to members of one of AGA's new, and very dynamic, Southern Arizona chapter. Prior to that, I visited with members of the Topeka, KS chapter and witnessed them receive a CGFM proclamation from Topeka's Mayor. I've also been honored to speak with our Mid-Missouri and Virginia Peninsula (my own chapter) members. This personal connection is truly one of the best parts of the National President's term. I am humbled by the brilliance and dedication of our chapter members and leaders — the lifeblood and future of our organization. While good fiscal stewards of AGA member dollars, we will experiment with additional tech-based modes of communication and information sharing this year, possibly making me AGA's first virtual President.

Tell us about your professional career and your AGA career.

Whenever someone introduces me — I wonder if my resume looks like I can't keep a job. I tend to gravitate toward challenging professional opportunities in dynamically changing or startup organizations. My resume also reads like a summation of all of AGA member demographics: federal and local government, and now, corporate partner (higher education may be next?). In college, my goal was not to be an accountant, but rather a television journalist, and my associates degree is in broadcast journalism. I ended up in accounting by accident, but through the support of a mentor CFO, pursued my Bachelor's degree.

After a few years, providing attestation support for Central Virginia local governments, I landed at one of my client locations, Chesterfield County, VA, which was the beginning of a wonderful list of local government financial management positions (followed by Norfolk, VA, Northampton County, VA and Portsmouth, VA). After 9/11 I joined the Transportation Security Administration as it was stood up and then went on to the United States Coast Guard.

About 5 years ago, through an AGA contact, I was presented with the opportunity to serve the government

from a new perspective, and accepted my current position with Savantage. At Savantage and many of my positions, I have been blessed to work with innovative and supportive leaders (thank you Clay, Mary Lou, Lance, John and Lisa!) who have invested in and supported me and my professional organizations.

I joined AGA in the 1990's, but moved from passive to active participation in 2002. After one or two chapter events, I was hooked. I became Virginia Peninsula's Chapter President, a Regional Vice President (RVP), and National Treasurer and then fulfilled my 10-year vision — blessed to serve as AGA's 2013–2014 National President. One of my proudest accomplishments was helping kick-off AGA's CCR program, creating the pilot CCR for the City of Virginia Beach, published in the winter 2006 issue of the *Journal*. Six years later, I am inspired by the number of government agencies producing CCRs and their commitment to communicate with citizens about government financial and performance information. But there is more to do!

Tell us about your personal background and include any information you wish to share about your family.

I currently live in a very small town in North Carolina, with no stoplights and lots of farmland. This is a good thing, since my housemate and I have lots of critters (horses, dogs, cats, etc.) My housemate, Denise, is my best friend (and choir director) and thankfully willing to take care of this menagerie by herself when I am on the road. I also have three beautiful, smart, sensitive, faithful and talented daughters, Dani (21), Sam (17) and Gabe (11) and two very inspiring sisters. I enjoy participating in my church music programs (choir, bells and flute), painting, crochet, writing and reading.

Most of all, I am a person who wakes up every day thankful to God for all of the opportunities I have been given to serve my family, my church, my work and AGA. I am truly blessed to be a 'servant leader' and wish only to inspire all AGA members to invest their personal capital in this dynamic professional organization. Get involved... be leaders! As I can attest, you will be amazed at what happens! 🙌