

2015 Best Firm



“Surround yourself
WITH THE PEOPLE
who you admire and
ASPIRE TO BE LIKE.”

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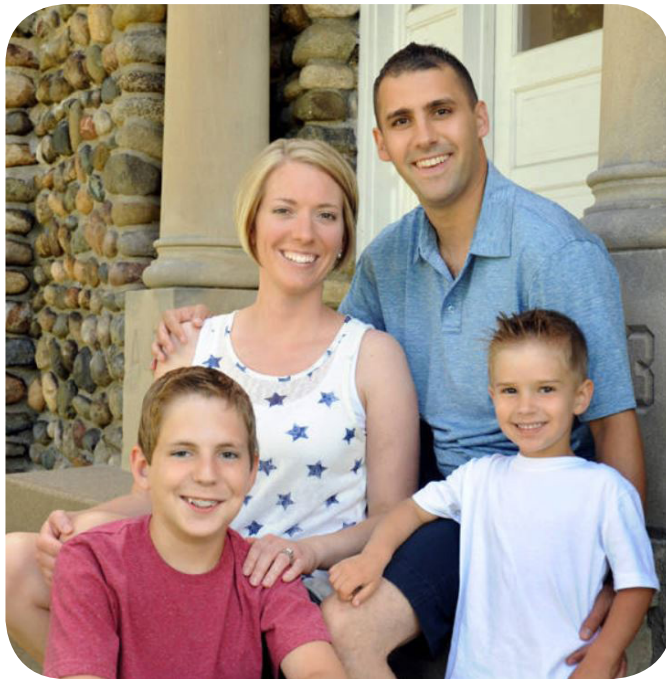
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BEST CPA FIRM FOR WOMEN 2015

Ali Barnes

Women Leaders in Accounting



Meet Ali

I grew up on a farm in a rural Michigan. Hard work, integrity and doing right by others are values that have been instilled in me from a young age. I graduated from Saginaw Valley State University and started at Yeo & Yeo as an intern during my final semester. I have a wonderful husband and two energetic boys. As a family, we love to travel, and have committed to traveling outside of Michigan at least once a year. It's a great opportunity for all of us to expand our horizons and learn more about the global world we live in.

Tell us about your career with Yeo & Yeo.

Entering college, accounting was not my initial major. I knew that I loved education, math and politics. Near the beginning of my college career, the job market for educators was starting to diminish, and I decided to steer my ship away from becoming a math teacher. I had previously spent time working in the U.S House of Representatives which ignited my passion for politics. Communication is essential in the political arena, and thus, I delved into communication courses. I subsequently earned a minor in communications. Somewhere along the line I took my first accounting course and, thanks to Dr. Mark McCartney at Saginaw Valley State University, I fell in love with the world of debits and credits.

I never thought that my love for education, math and politics would collide and be so present in the awesome career that I have today auditing municipalities. I am fortunate to have the opportunity to teach staff, clients, and conference goers, use my mathematical skills, and work with local governmental entities.



Best Advice Ever Received?

“Don’t sweat the small stuff.”

Ali, describe a time where Yeo & Yeo’s work-life flexibility positively impacted you.

Just recently I came across a post of someone sharing their thoughts on work-life balance. The author eluded to the fact that many of us get bent out of shape because we feel like we don’t have work-life balance. Many of us, especially accountants, want our time blocked off for specific activities. Once one event ends, we’re ready to move on to the next. The thing is, life wasn’t meant to be boxed up and stacked neatly like cereal boxes at the grocery store. I have had to adjust my expectations for life as a working mom to accept that not every day, is going to be the same.

I believe that Yeo & Yeo is cognizant of the importance of work-life integration, but ultimately it’s up to each individual to work towards the right integration for them. I have missed very few of my children’s events because of work. I choose to take the time off during the day because I know that with Yeo & Yeo’s flexibility, I can integrate the work that needs to get done into a different part of my day.

How does Yeo & Yeo encourage the advancement of your career and how do you develop future leaders?

Yeo & Yeo has provided mentors who listen and opportunities to strengthen my abilities. Mentors have shed light on both the history of our company and the path to the future. Management overall has increased transparency into the financial well-being of our company, and continually seeks out ways to personally develop staff. Training opportunities and the ability to take on new and challenging work are ever-present.

I am a formal mentor at Yeo & Yeo, and I do my best to be an informal mentor to all who seek my advice. The present-day challenge for many professionals is melding the needs and wants of the millennial generation starting out in the work force with those of the generation currently in upper management. The millennial generation needs to know how important they are to Yeo & Yeo, and that a place truly does exist here for them. The firm understands how skilled the upcoming generations are with technology, and welcomes their innovative ideas. Yeo & Yeo believes that its services are only as strong as its employees and therefore is doing everything possible to adapt and connect these generations to invest in the success of its professionals and the company.

What challenges have you faced as a woman in accounting and how have you overcome them?

Many women, myself included, feel it necessary to “do it all.” To some degree, there is still a perception that women need to prove themselves in the working world. In addition, women are expected to have a family, keep a clean house, spend time with friends, and keep up on hobbies. Some days, or let’s face it, some hours, that seems impossible. We need to focus on what brings us joy. One of my clients always says, “If you’re going to do something, do it with joy.” I try to focus on doing what brings me joy.

What advice do you have for women new to the accounting profession?

Surround yourself with the people who you admire and aspire to be like. Find a mentor, whether inside or out of your organization, and spend quality time with that person, learning how it is that they became admirable in the first place.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

“Don’t sweat the small stuff.”

Yeo & Yeo is among 10 firms named to the 2015 Accounting MOVE Project Best Public Accounting Firms for Women list, conducted by Wilson Taylor, www.wilson-taylorassoc.com. Follow Yeo & Yeo on LinkedIn and Facebook as we profile women leaders within our firm through September.