

Finance director leads by example

BY SHERYL PRENTICE
sprentice@kpcmedia.com

Sarah Schenkel, the director of an audit and assurance group at Katz, Sapper & Miller of Fort Wayne, believes that influence comes from leading by example in a servant-leader role.

“I feel being influential comes from leading by example — investing your time and talents in people and encouraging others to be their personal best,” said Schenkel.

As a director in KSM’s Audit & Assurance Services Group, Schenkel serves clients as a trusted advisor and oversees financial statement assurance work while helping to lead key initiatives within the firm. She serves on the executive committee for KSM’s Fort Wayne office, contributing to strategic decision-making and leadership at the regional level. She mentors and develops the firm’s talent, reflecting her belief that KSM’s people are its greatest asset.

“Public accounting is a challenging and rewarding career which allows me to serve my clients to the best of my abilities and serve as a role model and mentor to my team,” she said. “Days are never boring and I am constantly in a position to learn and grow in the continuous pursuit of progress, not perfection.”

Schenkel also dedicates time to the Fort Wayne community and the public accounting profession through her involvement

with Erin’s House for Grieving Children, the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne and serving on the Indiana Board of Accountancy.

“My involvement with Erin’s House for Grieving Children comes from my own experiences with grief and my understanding of the critical, cost-free support Erin’s House provides — a safe environment for kids who are grieving to learn and develop coping skills as they build hope for their future,” Schenkel said.

“With 1 in 10 children in Indiana experiencing the death of a parent or sibling by age 18, the impact of organizations like Erin’s House is significant,” she continued. “Research has shown a link between the trauma of an unresolved death during childhood and poor school performance, alcohol and drug abuse, depression, anxiety, and an increased risk for suicide.

“The Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne is doing such important work in the community by enhancing the quality of life in Fort Wayne — through focusing on building endowments, effective grantmaking, fostering philanthropy, and supporting donors’ charitable goals — and I feel blessed to have a small role in those efforts.”

Schenkel credits her own mentors as influential in her success.

“I have been fortunate

to have many personal and professional mentors but most notably these women who have achieved high recognition and success in male-dominated industries while paving the way for others,” Schenkel said.

“Sarah Strimmenos has really made an impression on me, personally and professionally, and is someone who I look up to as a mentor, always being a source of encouragement and support. Christine Hootman saw my potential early in my career and taught me so much about serving clients. Amy Lehrman’s passion for our people at KSM and the Fort Wayne community inspires me daily and has influenced me to be the best I can be.”

Schenkel’s servant-leadership has led to professional and personal involvements in Fort Wayne and statewide.

“Appointed by Gov. Eric Holcomb, I serve as the vice chair on the Indiana Board of Accountancy, which oversees the accounting profession in Indiana and influences decisions that impact Indiana CPAs,” Schenkel said. “The board ensures that CPAs maintain professional competence, manage CPA licensing, and uphold the integrity of the profession, safeguarding public interest by enforcing ethical standards and providing continuous education for CPAs.”

“Through Erin’s House, I am actively involved



Sarah Schenkel

in overseeing the Erin’s House capital campaign, which aims to raise \$2.5 million for The Wing — a free-standing, 4,500-square-foot structure behind the existing Erin’s House property,” she continued. “This new facility will increase capacity to serve more teens and young adults, enhance their program experience, and improve participant retention.

She hopes that her influence extends to the young professionals with whom she works, and who are also giving of their time and talents through involvement with their local organizations in the Fort Wayne community. She said more than half of the young professionals she works with are active on boards or committees in

these organizations.

“I place a strong importance on mentoring — encouraging and supporting younger professionals, especially young women, who are growing in their careers,” Schenkel said. “Leading by example and fostering that culture at my firm positions KSM to be the top choice for talent in Fort Wayne.”

“My hope is that I can serve as an example to others that it is possible to have a challenging and rewarding career, while also being a present and dedicated wife and mother,” she added. “Definitely not perfect, but I just try to take each day at a time and do my best each day. My husband and my parents are a huge help and I couldn’t do it without them!”

Register for the LIVE webinar 1 a.m. - 11 a.m. Oct. 31 to hear from the 12 recipients.

Register at influentialwomen2024.eventbrite.com

The recipients will be on at these times:

11 a.m - Noon: - Amy E. Ross - Angel Suttle - Ciara Bolling - Erica Hyatt - Nikki Quintana - Shelly Williams

Noon - 1 p.m.: - Carly Ingalls - Jana DeBusk - Jess Hopkins - Judy Rowe - Kate Miller - Sarah Schenkel