

## MARGARET D. BUTLER

# *Wants to Ensure Members* GET FULL VALUE

BY ROBERT F. RANDALL

**M**argaret D. Butler, CMA, CPA, a member of the Atlanta Chapter and the Gulf South Council, was installed as president of the Institute of Management Accountants for 2002-03 at the IMA Annual Conference in San Diego last June.

She is the former controller for Bostick Brothers, Inc., of Benoit, Miss. Earlier she was employed at Higher Education Assistance Foundation of St. Paul, Minn., and SuperValu Stores, Inc.; Munford, Inc.; Republic Airlines; and Coca-Cola, all of Atlanta, Ga.



PHOTOGRAPH: GEOFFREY GROSS

President Butler says she hopes to help make the organization more member-focused. "Perhaps the things our newer members, our younger professionals, are looking for are not the same things professionals of my generation were looking for when we joined IMA. We were looking not only for education but also for those networking and personal contact opportunities. While those are still important, it seems that more of our new members are looking for quicker and easier ways to get their continuing education through uses of modern technology, the Internet, self-study, and a variety of other mediums."

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She continues, "I would like to think that IMA is able to provide for all members the things that are meaningful to them. If what is meaningful to them is the chapter experience, I'd like them to find growing, vibrant chapters. If what is meaningful to them is member interest groups, Internet contact, listservs, or 'virtual chapters,' these are available through IMA. If it's online education or access to library information they need, we should have it available whenever and wherever our members need it. And if members come to us for certification, we

should provide them a clear path to their goal.

"For our members," she says, "IMA can provide career enhancement, and that can take lots of forms in addition to the education gained from going to seminars or chapter meetings." She adds, "IMA provides people the opportunity to learn to lead in a nonthreatening environment. I can tell you from my own experience I would never have thought I could stand in front of a group of people and speak. I was petrified. But through IMA you learn to lead committee meetings, you learn to lead chapter meetings, you learn to be 'on stage,' and you 'graduate' from one level to the next. I think IMA offers professionals that kind of learning opportunity."

The Institute's certification programs are very valuable to young job seekers, she maintains, "but have not been marketed as extensively as we would like. I have a passion for certification. I did not seek certification when I graduated from college because, quite frankly, I wasn't planning to go into public accounting. CPA was by far the best-known credential at the time, but I wasn't planning to quit my career in corporate America. I didn't think I needed certification. As time went along, though, I changed jobs and found myself in the marketplace.

"I had worked hard and made good grades in school, graduated with honors, and had some excellent work experience to my credit. To me, that seemed like a pretty good résumé. But I couldn't get interviews for certain jobs because the employers specified, 'CPA preferred.' So I said, 'By George, this isn't going to happen to me again.' I have never regretted the effort I put into earning my CPA and CMA certifications. I believe certification has opened many doors for me. And that has been important with all our moves and having to change jobs each time we moved. So I try to encourage young people coming out of college to pursue their certification(s) right away."

She believes that the Certified Management Accountant (CMA) and the Certified in Financial Management (CFM) designations are "every bit as valid and valuable to financial professionals in corporate America as the CPA is to public accountants. I took both the CPA and the CMA exams, and I've got to tell you that the CMA was every bit as challenging as the CPA was. It tests some different areas of knowledge than the CPA does, but I consider it an equally valid exam. And I think if corporate America recognized the competencies that are tested on the CMA/CFM, you would have companies requesting CMAs and CFMs more often in their ads. That's who we've got to get to—corporate America. We can preach to the professors and the students all we want, but until corporate

# Executive Committee—2002-2003

Under the Bylaws of the Institute, "The Executive Committee of the Board of Directors shall consist of the President, who shall act as chair of the committee, President-elect, Chair, Executive Director, and the chairs of the Standing Committees." The Executive Committee for 2002-2003 includes:

**President Margaret D. Butler, CMA, CPA,** former controller of Bostick Brothers, Inc., Douglasville, Ga.

**President-elect Kim R. Wallin, CMA, CFM, CPA,** president, D K Wallin Ltd., Las Vegas, Nev.

**Chair Robert E. Bell, Jr., CMA, CPA,** chief executive officer of Hickory Brands, Inc., Hickory, N.C.

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**Professional Development Chair Kenneth M. Riley,** controller, PSC Metals Inc., Canton, Ohio.

**Strategic Planning Chair Kim R. Wallin, CMA, CFM, CPA.**

**Students Chair Sandra B. Richtermeyer, CPA,** professor, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyo.



## KIM WALLIN IS IMA PRESIDENT-ELECT

Kim R. Wallin, CMA, CFM, CPA, was nominated from the floor and elected President-elect for 2002-03 at the IMA Annual Meeting of members at the Annual Conference in San Diego, Calif., last June. Ms. Wallin has her own accounting firm, D K Wallin Ltd., in Las Vegas, Nev. Beginning in 1981 as president of the Las Vegas Chapter, she has served in various regional and national offices of the Institute and was co-chair of the Operations Committee of the 1996 Annual Conference in Las Vegas. ■

America demands those certifications—that demand pull, if you will—the incentives for financial professionals to become CMAs/CFMs won't be there.”

IMA has a unique opportunity to make the public and the corporate sector aware of the value of the CMA/CFM, she says, “so that they have something to look for besides a public accountant when, in fact, the CPA certification concentrates more on auditing, tax, and related disciplines than on management, finance, economics, and information management—the things that corporate management accountants do.”

Certification, she believes, is the key to IMA expansion internationally. “I believe IMA's certification programs offer us a unique opportunity to partner with organizations overseas and to provide service to other countries. I'd like to see IMA become much more global.”

### **MATH AND MUSIC**

IMA's new president got into accounting by accident, she says. At Snead State Junior College (Alabama), she carried a double major in math and music. “I was a piano major.” But when she went to work at Coca-Cola, the managers determined that she had accounting talent and put her in the accounting department as an entry-level clerk, “and I loved it.”

“I had a great boss who encouraged me to finish my education because I couldn't promote without it. So I went to school. I was a nontraditional student and finished my degree program at night.” She has a bachelor's degree in business administration from Georgia State.

As she pursued her career, President Butler was exposed to almost every facet of corporate accounting. She moved from general accounting to property accounting, to payroll accounting, and then to financial reporting, doing statement consolidations and SEC reporting. During 1994-99, she served Bostick Brothers as chief financial officer and corporate secretary/treasurer before she and her husband were transferred back to Atlanta. “Since then,” she says, “I have not worked except for IMA.”

The educational opportunities were the main purpose of her joining an IMA chapter, but she says one of the most satisfying things about her IMA membership was the camaraderie that she shared. “Some of the best friends I've ever had I've gotten through IMA. And I think that's meaningful.”

While employed at different companies around the country, President Butler also joined a number of different chapters. Beginning in 1973 with the Atlanta Central

Chapter, she also has been a member of the Jackson, Miss., and Minneapolis Viking Chapters, and she served the Northern Lights and Mid-America Councils as well as the Gulf South Council.

She served several terms as national director and has been on the Regional Operations, Academic Relations, Nominating, and Strategic Planning Committees. She was chair of the Regional Operations Committee and president of the Foundation for Applied Research, area vice president, and program chair for the 2001 Annual Conference in New Orleans.

Ms. Butler and her husband, Dennis, live in Douglasville, Ga. She has a son, Eric Baker; a daughter, Karen Baker; two stepdaughters, Kelly Oehmke and Tammy Kneemiller; and three (adorable, of course!) granddaughters. She relaxes listening to music and at one time was a church organist. She also has accompanied her daughter, who played the oboe. “I did piano accompaniments for her, which was a lot of fun. I love music and still attend symphonies and musical productions whenever I can.”

This fiscal year she plans to devote full-time to IMA leadership responsibilities. “I'd like to know that every member of IMA is receiving full value for their membership dollar. And whatever that value is to that member, I'd like to know they're getting what they're looking for. I'd like to see IMA in a growth position again. Achieving that won't be easy because of current conditions in the economy and in corporate America. Possibly our best vehicle for growth is promoting certification, bringing new people into the organization. I do think certification is one of our greatest assets. I'd like to see us do a lot more with our certifications—promoting, growing those certifications. I think that's valuable.”

Even though President Butler encourages certification, she emphasizes, “We cannot overlook the extensive benefits IMA also has to offer those professionals who choose not to pursue certification. There are professional development opportunities at local, regional, and national levels. There's the networking and camaraderie. There's the emphasis on ethics and the availability of ethics counseling. There's the new Lifelong Learning Center that offers an abundance of choices for continuing education. That, to me, is what IMA is all about—choices—something of value for every financial professional.” ■

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