

## Interview with AHIA Chair Mark Eddy

*New Perspectives* recently had the opportunity to interview Mark Eddy, CPA, Vice President, HCA Internal Audit



and the 2009 Chair of the AHIA Board of Directors about the progress the Association is making, opportunities for personal growth through leadership, as well as obtaining some personal

insights on the person our members elected to head the Association this year.

**NP:** Mark, you are more than half way through your term as AHIA Chair. How is AHIA progressing against the goals you set for this year?

**Eddy:** I am very pleased with our progress to-date. We have new, energetic Board members and our returning members have stayed focused on strategic goal achievement. This Board understands the importance of meeting our teammates' needs. We are always brainstorming as to how we can provide new or better services for the membership. The Education and Technology Committees have pursued webinars as a new, cost-effective benefit for members. The Annual Conference Committee continues to do a bang-up job designing our national conference. The Education Committee is expanding opportunities through Chief Audit Executive Roundtables and regional seminars. The Technology Committee continues to market the web Library, updating and expanding content through contests. Through the Editorial Committee, we publish this professionally recognized *New Perspectives* quarterly

journal. Plus, the Finance Committee is watching closely during these challenging economic times to keep our Association fiscally strong.

The area I'd like to see us improve upon is to get more of our teammates involved in the AHIA. I'd like to gain access to their ideas to improve the organization today and train them for the leadership positions of tomorrow.

**NP:** Within the past year the AHIA Board held a planning meeting to consider its strategic plans. What parts of those plans are underway at this time and when will members see the results?

**Eddy:** At the January Board of Directors meeting, we revisited and challenged our strategic plan. The plan, when written, was intended to direct efforts for approximately 5 years and we believe it remains relevant for that purpose. We did not propose any changes to the plan but discussed each component to ensure we stay focused.

**NP:** Finish this sentence: If I could start my life over again I would....

**Eddy:** I haven't finished what I set out to accomplish but I wouldn't make any significant changes in the road I've traveled thus far. I am lucky to have experienced what I have but "I have miles to go before I sleep."

**NP:** Mark, what would you do if you won the lottery?

**Eddy:** It depends how large of a payout. Winning anything less than the "Powerball" would likely be invested for retirement. If I won the "Powerball," I would retire. I never thought I would retire, but I have a few more years under my belt now and the "Powerball" pay-off would provide enough to live comfortably. Wendy and I want to travel throughout Europe when we retire and

doing it while we are young would be nice.

**NP:** Everyone is working under constrained budgets these days. As the Chair, can you speak to how AHIA provides value for the dollars expended?

**Eddy:** Our annual membership fee is a great value when compared to other organizations/associations. \$200 (or less) per year gets you access to the website audit library, a very active list serve accessible to over 1,200 members, the professionally recognized *New Perspectives* quarterly journal, and discounted fees for educational offerings. The cost per hour for CPE offered by AHIA is as cost-effective as you'll find, plus it is focused on issues associated with our industry and profession.

**NP:** What plans does AHIA have or is it considering for extending new value to its members?

**Eddy:** In 2009, we have begun offering webinars. These provide inexpensive CPE on a variety of topics for which no travel is required, further keeping costs down. The Library continues to be updated and expanded by our members who've taken AHIA's motto to heart: "Excellence through Sharing." Through our strategic partnering, our members may attend AAMAS conferences at their member rates, ACL courses are offered at AHIA educational sessions at excellent rates, and we continue to seek common ground with other potential partners.

**NP:** Mark, what organizations outside of work and AHIA do you belong to?

**Eddy:** Regarding professional organizations, I am a member of the American Institute of CPAs, the Tennessee Society of CPAs, the American Management Association, and the Healthcare Compliance Association.

Regarding charitable organizations, I recently completed a 6-year term on the Special Olympics Tennessee Board of Directors where I served as Treasurer, Chair-elect, Chairman (2 years), and Past-chair; also, I am a mason.

*NP: What would you say is the best way for someone to begin to make a professional commitment to AHIA, or to another professional organization?*

**Eddy:** Take the first step. Volunteer to help with something small at first, then progress from there. Time management is so important. I've seen many people spread themselves too thin, they get tired, and drop-out. Remember your family (and work to support them) should be your first priority. The excess time and resources are what you have to give back. Prioritize and choose wisely where you share.

*NP: What encouragement would you offer to those of our members who may be considering becoming involved in AHIA leadership endeavors?*

**Eddy:** At some point in everyone's life, they will come to believe they need to give back. We've been helped along the way by many people, often not realizing it at the time. Obtaining a leadership position in church/synagogue/mosque, at work, in a professional organization, or in a charitable organization provides the greatest opportunity to give back to our society. However, no one starts in a leadership position. It has to be earned. So get involved. From AHIA's standpoint, that means volunteering for a task force or committee, depending how much time you have. Get to know the people, learn how the organization functions. The leadership position will come if you want it and maintain your energy and commitment. There are plenty of associates, including each Board member, who will help you if you express an interest. We are all looking to be better teammates.

*NP: Where did you go to college, what was your major? When you graduated did you see internal auditing as being your career?*

**Eddy:** I started out wanting to be a lawyer and received a congressional appointment to West Point; however, I discovered

pursuing the law was not likely so I left to attend the University of Michigan. I spent two years in Ann Arbor. My older brother talked me into pursuing an undergraduate accounting degree as a basis for becoming a corporate lawyer. I was admitted to the U-M business school, but transferred to Eastern Michigan University due to their accounting program reputation. I received my BBA with an accounting major from EMU in 1980. I interned for a public accounting firm in Detroit during the summer and winter recess of 1979. I loved the audit work but felt I could make a bigger difference as an internal auditor than as an external auditor. So, I pursued my career in internal audit. It's funny, I never made it to Law School but have the opportunity to work with lawyers almost daily.

*NP: Tell us about your time with HCA. How long have you been with them and what led to you signing on with HCA?*

**Eddy:** I joined HCA Internal Audit in 1980. My older brother worked here in the mid-1970s before transferring as a hospital Controller. I'd met the HCA Vice President of Internal Audit at my older brother's Nashville wedding and was invited to interview with HCA when I graduated. I interned in public accounting in 1979 and learned I loved auditing but realized I wanted to work in industry rather than with a firm. I also wanted to move to a warmer southern state.

In 1987, HCA spun-off 104 hospitals to a new company: HealthTrust, Inc. I was invited by the Internal Audit Director to help him start the Internal Audit Department at HTI. In 1995, HealthTrust, Inc. was acquired by Columbia/HCA which subsequently resumed the name HCA.

The nice thing about my movements via divestitures and acquisitions is that all my work counts as one employer regarding retirement—not a bad deal. In my 29 years, I've never been bored because something new has popped-up every few years that has allowed me to learn new aspects of business, auditing and regulations.

*NP: Mark, what famous person—living or dead—would you like to meet and why?*

**Eddy:** Thomas Jefferson. He was a true renaissance man. He appreciated different cultures (serving as Ambassador to France), was an architect and inventor (visit Monticello if you've never been), a farmer, a man of letters (Declaration of Independence), an educator (founder of University of Virginia), a politician (House of Burgesses, Vice President, President), and a visionary (the Louisiana Purchase). He also had interesting disagreements with John Adams and Alexander Hamilton. It would be a fascinating discussion!

*NP: Tell us about your family, Mark.*

**Eddy:** I've been married to Wendy for 29 years. She is an accountant, too, but has focused her career more on the manufacturing industry. She is a Certified Management Accountant. We have one son, Matthew. He is twenty-five and got married this last spring. He and his wife live in Knoxville, Tennessee.

*NP: Where did you grow up, Mark, and what is your favorite childhood memory?*

**Eddy:** I grew up in Detroit, Michigan. My mother was a school teacher and my father was a Detroit policeman. Since my mother had "summer vacation" with the students, my father would schedule his work hours so he had the end of one month and the beginning of the next month off. Thus, for one month each summer we would camp and sightsee a new area of the country. I'd been to 44 states before I got out of school. American history classes were a breeze because I had seen and experienced so much of what we were studying.

*NP: What are the titles of last two books you read?*

**Eddy:** *The Snowball: Warren Buffett and the Business of Life* by Alice Schroeder and *Master of the Big Board: The Life, Times, and Business of Jack Massey* by Bill Carey. I highly recommend both books.

*NP: Mark, thanks for taking the time to chat with us about yourself, your views and our association.*

**Eddy:** You are welcome. It has been my pleasure. **NP**