

FROM THE GROUND UP:

MICPA MEMBER STEVEN McCARTY SHARES HIS JOURNEY FROM STAFF ACCOUNTANT TO CEO

The youngest of eight boys, MICPA member Steven McCarty, CPA, CEO, UHY LLP, hails from a large family of accountants, including three of his older brothers and his mother. Despite the overwhelming presence of the profession throughout his childhood, Steven's earliest intentions were law enforcement. "I wanted to do what my dad did," he recalls. "He was a police officer in the city, but he wasn't really excited about any of his boys wanting to follow in his footsteps. He wanted all of us to go to college and find opportunities he didn't have." Despite this fact, for a long time, Steven says his mission was to become a cop, right up until his older brother, Danny, intervened. "He took me under his wing and guided me into accounting." He adds, "He was the guy that told me to stay in public accounting and be a partner, and it sounds simple but...this can be a tough business. I can understand why, in this profession, a lot of people start in public and then go to private, but his simple challenge to me to stay in public changed my life."

Not only did Steven heed Danny's advice about staying in public accounting, but he also remained with the same firm for the majority of his career, steadily advancing through the ranks, though never with the expectation of becoming its CEO. "As I grew here at the firm, starting out in tax and then moving into our assurance practice, then creating our corporate finance practice, which got me onto the

Board of Directors, my perspective evolved." He explains, "We were going through some leadership changes at the time and, while I didn't aspire to become CEO, I thought that if I didn't at least share what I wanted to do and how I saw our firm transforming that I might regret it. I felt it was an incredible opportunity to serve great people and, frankly, do something legendary."

Center: Steven at the Sterling Heights UHY Headquarters.
Right: Steven and his father.



For Steven, legacy is more than something one leaves behind; it is a form of ethos that he embraces. "My very first year in the role of CEO, I hosted my first leadership conference, and it was all about legacy," he recalls. "The purpose was to make sure our partners understood the incredible opportunity we have, with every colleague interaction, to constantly improve our legacy and our culture." He adds, "Our mission is to grow people, and we want as many partners as we can get. In public accounting, at least from my perspective, there isn't a ceiling."

Indeed, since taking up the role, UHY has become among one of the fastest growing accounting firms in the U.S. and Steven has been recognized as visionary, listed among *Forbes'* first ever Top 200 CPAs list in 2024 and named among *Accounting Today's* Managing Partners Elite in 2025. Likewise, UHY landed on *Accounting Today's* Top 100 Accounting Firms list as well as the *Crain's Detroit Business* Fast 50, which recognizes 50 of the fastest growing companies based in metro Detroit. Crucially, however, while rapid expansion can sometimes result in organizational upheaval, Steven has been focused on ensuring the same culture he experienced along his journey endures. "Our relationships and engagement with colleagues drive a people first culture, and that's our number one priority – to always lead with people." He explains, "If you have great people, you're going to get great clients and when we get great clients, that attracts more great people – it's a self-fulfilling prophecy. Our firm, historically, has always had this perspective on serving clients, called the next level of service, and so we've turned that part of our culture inward, to deliver the next level of service to our colleagues also."

Part of that service to colleagues is helping them advance their career through an initiative he helped design called the Emerging Leader Program (ELP). "In the Emerging Leader Program, we focus on growing softer skills, like how to have courageous conversations with colleagues and clients, how to coach and mentor colleagues and the art of serving." Steven shares that the program delivers the kind of nuanced insights that are typically gathered over years, drastically accelerating team members toward partner. "They master these soft skills to complement the incredible talent and quality that

they deliver every day, and then, they're unstoppable! We started the program in 2021 with ten participants and now it has a run rate of 50 high-performing colleagues each year, and we actually have to limit the class." Steven says he would love to increase the program's capacity, but he wants to maintain the meaningful one-on-one time with each participant. The ELP is not the only initiative Steven has undertaken to bolster the talent within the profession in Michigan. UHY's Junior Connect Program launched as the result of a simple

inquiry. "Again, had my brother not taken me under his wing, I may not have taken this path all those years ago," Steven says, "and the number of folks coming into the CPA arena and accounting has been dwindling for years. I was thinking about that, and what we could do." As it turns out, it was decided that Steven would pay a visit to a high school that happens to be located near his neighborhood. "I asked if there was an opportunity to talk to their accounting classes, and that was where it started. It was an opportunity to share what accounting means to me, what we do, all the cool businesses we serve, some of which build parts for space exploration and others build products that protect our country." The program has been running long enough now that Steven and UHY are beginning to see the impacts of those interactions unfold in real time. "These kids, they go off to college, but they come back home and we're in their neighborhood and we've now received people that went through our program in Junior Connect and now they're part of UHY." He adds, "I'd like to think we're making a little bit of a difference."

Beyond making a difference, Steven's dedication to growing the professionals in his organization and community is what legacies are built upon. Humble, and a firm believer in the power of gratitude, Steven is quick to express his appreciation for those around him. "I couldn't do this without the support of my family, my wife and daughters," he says. "And I'm certainly grateful for the incredible team we have at UHY, all of my colleagues around the country, and all of our clients." He says, "This is the hardest job I've ever had, but it's very fulfilling. And I like to think my brother Danny is there on my shoulder, when I tell these talented people to stay in public accounting and become a partner." He adds, "I always say, public accounting can change your life – if you just give it a chance."