

# Ready to Ride?

By **Jim Oliver, CPA, CGMA**, 2017-2018 TSCPA Chairman



In August of my year as chairman-elect, I spotted a sign with this saying that may be familiar to you, but was new to me: “If you climb in the saddle, be ready for the ride.” When I spoke at the chapter presidents-elect orientation a few weeks later, I borrowed that expression to apply to the importance of our being prepared to lead during our year.

At the time, I recalled summer vacation trail rides with my girls in which every horse seemingly had its own personality. Some stuck to the well-worn trail at an unchanging, plodding pace; another might bolt in its own direction; and the most stubborn would simply refuse to move. Occasionally, we might even get a horse that would go exactly where we wanted at the pace we desired. We never knew what to expect, so each ride was different, but thankfully, we always arrived safely back at the stables.

Looking back at this past year in the saddle, what a ride it has been ... and, as with those trail rides, not exactly what I expected. As it should be, my early, tentative plans yielded not only to a new strategic plan, but also to events that I could not anticipate. Hurricane Harvey brought devastation to areas where 9,000 TSCPA members live. While what many had to endure was heartbreaking, the heartwarming response of Society and Houston Chapter staff and volunteers showed just how strong the CPA sense of community is.

This past year brought strategic changes to TSCPA as we adopted TSCPA 2020 as our new strategic plan with a vision to empower our members to lead and succeed. We addressed needed governance changes with a major Bylaws revision and an updated volunteer policies and procedures manual.

We saw, among others, the following new initiatives start in support of reaching the goals of TSCPA 2020:

- Technology assessment to identify where we must improve operationally to support and empower our members;
- Chapter audit to gain an overview of chapter operations to see how the Society may assist;
- Brand audit to determine how we can best communicate the value that we offer our current and future members;
- Dues investment/structure review to determine if our current approach best serves our members;
- TSCPA Exchange to provide an online platform for an active member community that shares knowledge and resources with one another.

In my chapter visits, I met vibrant, devoted leaders and saw young, energetic and diverse volunteers with big hopes for tomorrow. I reconnected with some “old” friends with whom I had served years ago still faithfully active in their chapters. Chapter volunteers are our



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boots on the ground to connect with the local university accounting professors and students, engage new and longstanding members, provide community service opportunities, advocate before their local legislators and do work that can only be done locally.

Our cover story in *Today's CPA* this month “TSCPA’s 2017-2018 Year in Review” highlights some of this year’s activity. However, Coach John Wooden once said, “Don’t confuse activity with achievement.” Those trail rides with my girls certainly qualified as activity, but what we achieved together in our common experience was community – being a family. From my view in the saddle this year, I saw that same sense of connection and community achieved through various TSCPA and chapter activities. Our committee and chapter volunteers work hard for all of us to meet our needs, often working under the radar. Without our volunteers, we would not succeed. We are stronger together as a result, just like a family.

I am grateful to you for the opportunity and privilege to be where I could witness the dedicated work of your TSCPA and chapter staff and our volunteer leaders at all levels. I appreciate my partners and other team members at CalvettiFerguson for supporting me and caring for clients when I was unavailable. To Tavia, my wife, best friend and the love of my life, I owe more than I can repay. Lastly, I recognize that only by God’s grace and provision could I have served this year, especially in those times when I saw my own inadequacies and imperfections.

Unlike the old movie cowboys, I will not ride off into the sunset ...but into an amazing sunrise. A bright future lies ahead for our profession, TSCPA and our chapters, in the capable hands of talented and committed staff, enthusiastic volunteers, an engaged executive board and upcoming chairmen whom I know and trust.

You can join and mold that future by volunteering for and connecting with the TSCPA community. You just never know where that trail might lead you. Are you ready for the ride? ■

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