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COVER STORY:

Gaines Kriner Elliott LLP

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Gaines Kriner Elliott LLP

Whether just beginning your career in public accounting, or an experienced veteran, you know the importance of finding a company that fits your professional and personal needs. Gaines Kriner Elliott understands that for one to have a long, successful and fulfilling career this balance must be met.

"It is no secret that all firms are competing for quality candidates," said Human Resources Director Tom Lis. "What you try to do is differentiate yourself and appeal to the things that are most important to new graduates, or those looking for a change. We have been very successful in attracting and retaining high quality candidates in an industry where turnover can be 20 percent or higher. We provide an environment and culture conducive to having a great career while still balancing personal lives and needs."

The firm offers solutions to meet the demands and stresses associated with public accounting and is attuned to quality of life issues in today's workplace. Partners and management are continually looking for ways to support employees through flexible work hours, flexible days off policies and alternative work arrangements. Senior Associate Angela Larratta and Staff Associate Jamie Golding agree that, "one of the best things about work-

ing at GKE is the flexibility." At GKE, the most important thing is not what exact time you start your day, more important is the quality of your work on that day and every day. "Having this flexibility with hours allows us to create a better balance with our professional and personal lives."

GKE encourages its professionals to take the initiative in directing their careers. The firm helps associates achieve their goals in terms of professional satisfaction, career progression, and personal development through continuing education and mentorships. Said Nicole Patti, MBA and recent graduate of Niagara University, "Even as an intern I knew that GKE understood that I wanted to accept a position that would fit both my professional and personal needs." Patti was impressed with GKE's personal development plans for each new employee and the training provided throughout the year.

"We provide our employees with cutting-edge technology, continual training and support, and the opportunity to work initially in both audit and tax, rather than being locked into one or the other," said Lis. "This allows them to gain a broad foundation in skills needed to service our clients as well as to let them experience all aspects of public accounting."

A majority of the firm's professionals are licensed CPAs. Recent college graduates joining the firm have a primary

professional goal of meeting the rigorous qualifications necessary to obtain their CPA licensure. GKE encourages and rewards its associates for obtaining licensure by offering bonus incentives for those who pass the exam within three years of his or her start date.

The past two years have been full of exciting changes for Gaines Kriner Elliott. In the fall of 2006, the firm celebrated the opening of its new southtowns office in East Aurora. The following spring, GKE's Williamsville and Buffalo offices merged into one office in Amherst.

In April 2008 GKE announced the election of four partners: Michael T. Vanderwerf, Michael D. Jozwiak, Jeffrey H. Couchman and Denise M. Neamon. Couchman and Neamon came to the firm as interns in 1995 and are today partners in Western New York's sixth largest certified public accounting firm. "Their vast experience and long-standing commitment to our clients, along with their belief in the firm's guiding principle, all added up to obvious choices for partnership," said Rocco Surace, managing partner of the firm.

GKE professionals are encouraged to develop a specialty, whether it is one of the firm's focus industries (manufacturing, construction, legal or professional) or one of its service areas (tax, auditing and consulting services). GKE believes that by developing extensive experience and knowledge of issues specific

to a client's industry, an associate can more effectively service clients.

GKE takes great care in finding employees that have not only demonstrated superior academic success and involvement in their schools, but also have the right personality fit and attitude that the firm is looking for. "Our firm environment is characterized as work hard, play hard," said Lis. "Exceptional clients, challenging work and the opportunity for employees to learn and progress quickly in a variety of career paths, help make GKE an exciting place to be."

To that end, members of the firm get to know prospective employees through "Meet the Accountants" nights on college campuses and through lunches and happy hours with staff. "We not only want candidates to be a great fit for our firm but also want them to feel that this is the place they want to be," said Lis. "If you would like to become part of a successful team, develop professionally, set and reach goals for your career, know that we will guide you each step of the way, because our employees are our first responsibility."

Resumes can be mailed to: Tom Lis, HR Director, Gaines Kriner Elliott LLP, 100 Corporate Parkway, Suite 200, Amherst, NY 14226, or e-mailed to: tlis@gkecpa.com.

Featured on the cover: Partner Michael T. Vanderwerf and Tracy Pytlik.