

Chris Marschka

Market Leader/Senior Vice President, PNC Bank
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No matter where you end up in the world, your hometown is an indelible part of who you are.

That's especially true for Chris Marschka. In fact, the ties that bind Chris to Lancaster, Pennsylvania—the places, the people, the experiences—inform every aspect of his life.

"It's one of those places," said Chris, whose wife Melissa also hails from Lancaster. "We left home for this opportunity here but we really appreciate the identity of Lancaster and who we are because of it."



Chris, a high-energy, independent kid who loved sports and being outside, first lived in a rented house on a farmstead before moving to the suburbs. His parents, both artists, taught him an appreciation of the arts and typical family weekends were spent drawing together and going to museums. At an early age, Chris also embraced the strong work ethic for which Lancaster residents are known.

"I took over my sister's paper route when I was 11 and have been employed ever since. I worked on a tobacco farm and then in a plant nursery—full-time during college. I learned that if I really wanted something—good grades or money in a savings account—it was up to me to make it happen."

Chris and Melissa, whose roots are deeply embedded in Lancaster, met when they were 4 because their grandparents knew each other. They dated off and on in high school but the relationship didn't click until they were both students at Millersville University in Lancaster. Chris majored in economics with a double minor in studio art and coaching and later earned his MBA from Villanova.

Connecting a major in economics to a job can be challenging, Chris said, but all the stars aligned for him. He was able to pursue an internship at the plant nursery and presented his findings at the university's annual seminar. At the networking banquet, he was seated next to the chairman and CEO of a regional bank—the bank his family had done business with for generations. Days later, he went to cash a check at the bank and long story short, Chris found himself in CEO's office for a final interview and was offered a job one week before graduation.



Today, Chris heads PNC Commercial Banking, with a team he built from scratch over the course of a decade and is, without doubt, his proudest professional accomplishment so far. Recruited to the market by mentor and veteran banking executive Chris Goller, he easily transitioned to a role that suits his personality: an achiever who starts every day at zero and measures success by how much he accomplishes that day—a quality he describes as both a blessing and a curse.

"I like my work so much because it gives me a chance to fuel that fire. There's always new opportunities with new clients and something to get excited about every day. The other part I really enjoy is that I get to run my own business vertical. I set the strategy. I set the direction for the team. I'm able to think more broadly and long term. My work feeds both parts of my brain—the achiever and the strategist."

Although clearly self-motivated, Chris is inspired by people and experiences in his life.

“I find inspiration almost anywhere, especially in nature. I’m inspired by people I work with and by my clients’ entrepreneurship. But the person I’m most inspired by is Melissa. She puts so much energy and passion into everything she does—being a mom, volunteerism, her work with Rotary.”

Along with his boss at the nursery, his soccer coach and his parents, Chris’s paternal grandparents were a huge influence. They joined the Peace Corps and moved to Africa the year they retired, which Chris says perfectly encapsulates who they were.



“They were such an impressive couple—incredibly worldly, dynamic, active socially, involved in volunteerism on an international and local scale. That’s where I got my hardwired need for civic involvement and volunteerism.”



That list includes serving on the board of First Stage Children’s Theater for 10 years and 9 years with the annual Cream City 5K benefiting organ donation, an event he helped a friend organize nine years ago and has raised over \$100,000 for local organizations.

In his free time, Chris loves participating in his favorite activities—camping, hiking, mountain biking, triathlons and traveling—with Melissa and their two girls, Audrey, (named for his grandmother, now 99) and Janice (named after Melissa’s grandmother).

He also enjoys connecting with people at Rotary.

“Rotary is such a unique combination of community impact and finding shared interests among a group of people from all kinds of backgrounds. There is such a variety of programs with multiple viewpoints represented in the room. I place so much value in that.”

NOTE: Chris is married to Melissa Marschka, Rotary Club of Milwaukee Scholarship Coordinator.

Editor’s Note: *Rotary People of Action is a bi-monthly series written by a group of Rotarians. This feature was written by Mary Bolich*