

Jessica Gatzke

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Jessica Gatzke is in the so-called sandwich generation—balancing a career while simultaneously caring for her children and her aging parents. For the wellbeing of all, she is careful to not spread herself too thin.

“Right now, I want to pour as much love and connection into my kids as possible because even though they’re still so young, I already feel like I’m running out of time with them. I really want to make sure they are well-rounded individuals and contributing members of society however they might choose to do that,” said Jessica, who lives in Hales Corners with husband Chris and their children Christopher, 13, and Adeline, 10.

Jessica wants her kids to have the same idyllic childhood she had—growing up on a cul-de-sac in suburban Chicago where kids stayed out playing until the street lights came on and neighbors looked out for each other. Her close-knit extended family, who all lived nearby, had big gatherings for every holiday and both sets of grandparents were longtime friends who worked together running the local VFW hall.

“Our little neighborhood and being in a big, close family was such an important part of my childhood and really formed who I am.”

Intent on being an accountant from an early age, Jessica earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in accounting at Marquette University, where she met Chris, who was employed by the university police department. She went on to earn a master’s degree in taxation from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

“My mom was a bookkeeper and so was her mom. I was good at math and always knew I wanted to be in accounting. I never wavered from that. The courses were easy for me and I just understood the language that is accounting.”



Today, as one of six shareholders in her local, predominantly woman-owned firm located in the heart of downtown Milwaukee, she provides tax consulting and planning for individuals and small businesses.

“I really enjoy helping people through the income tax return process and giving them the tools to understand the crazy world that is our tax code. Understanding how income tax affects your spendable cash gives you a lot more power to be financially successful, and providing that help is the best part of my job.”

Jessica, who won the Young Professional Award from the Wisconsin Institute of Certified Public Accountants (WICPA) early in her career, loves being part owner of her closely held 100-year-old company.

“Every single one of my business partners has taught me something valuable about running a business, how to be a good person and how to treat clients with integrity and trust. Kelly Miller, who is also a Rotarian, has been a great mentor

and guide to me—being able to have those tough conversations because she always keeps both the company and my best interests at heart.”

Other important influences in her life both professionally and personally were her parents, her sister and her academic advisor at Marquette.

“My mom and dad always supported me in everything I did and made lots of sacrifices to help me get through college. They taught me to work hard, to enjoy family time and to look out for others.”

Marquette business professor Cindy (Gruber) Melis guided Jessica through career choices.

“She helped define where I envisioned myself being in my field and career and was so supportive. I knew she truly cared about me, not just as a student, but as an individual and to this day, it still brings me such joy to see her.”

From her sister Kim she gained love and appreciation for music and the arts—marching band, in particular—which was a huge part of their childhood. The two participated in a summer drum corps program, practicing 8-12 hours a day and performing across the country.

“I couldn’t have done that without her,” said Jessica, who played the trumpet while Kim played the mellophone. “It was a great way to learn how to be disciplined, to work hard and to push yourself physically, and it established a lifelong passion.”



When she’s not navigating tax preparation, providing financial advice and dealing with the IRS, Jessica volunteers at her children’s schools and extracurricular activities and champions their sports—rock climbing for Christopher and gymnastics for Adeline. She also enjoys hiking in Wisconsin state parks with Chris and hopes they can one day complete all the segments of the Ice Age Trail. For the past several years, she has worked with a personal trainer for weightlifting, not for competition but “to stay strong so I can keep up with my kids as they get older.”

Along with maintaining a strong involvement in WICPA, Jessica enjoys making professional connections to people and the community through Rotary.

“I joined Rotary to learn what was happening in and around Milwaukee; to be connected with people who are doing good things in the community. The impact Rotary makes locally, nationally and even internationally, is what I really appreciate about being a member.”

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.