#thislittlegirlisme

Welcomes



25 May 2022

For my first President’s page, I would like to tell you a story about the little girl in the picture and about how she ended up as the President of the Chartered Institute of Taxation. Some of this story has never been told before – or at least not publicly.

She struggled at a state school because she couldn’t communicate on paper the things she wanted to say; she picked up some things very quickly, but others were a massive challenge. She could not understand why.

She never wanted to read aloud in front of others. When stressed, even her speech got muddled, whilst her written work didn’t match what her teachers knew she knew. Finally, aged 13, she was told she was dyslexic. Dyslexia wasn’t as well known and recognised then and, as her school didn’t recognise the condition, she continued to hide it from the world. She hated getting schoolwork back with red pen all over it. This made her unhappy and depressed, and gradually her handwriting got worse – making it harder for someone to check the spelling!

She survived in education until A levels and then joined the world of work. She learned how to do the things she wanted and worked hard to achieve them, probably helped by being a type A personality (something Peter mentioned in his last President’s Page in May).

She taught herself ways of coping and how to master some of the things she struggled with – technology helped. She found that working as a team – along with the ‘four eyes’ (i.e. two different people) review processes that are often found in professional firms – helped to fill in the gaps. She realised that she was pretty good at creative thinking and problem solving. When she focused intensely, she could read legislation and once she understood it could quickly apply it to lots of different situations and make connections others sometimes didn’t see. She could also explain it clearly to others.

Why am I sharing this now? Because it is estimated that up to one in ten of us have some degree of dyslexia. The number of neurodivergent people is estimated to be around 20% of the global population. It has also been estimated that 70% of females feel more confident about their futures after hearing from female role models. So sometimes it just feels like the right time to come out and tell people stuff. Plus, this has helped to make me what I am today.

Back in 2007, I had the opportunity to help set up the Institute’s Suffolk branch (with Helen Brookson, Rachel Skells and Andre Roden) and to be one of the first chairs. Then, as now, I thrived on talking tax with like-minded people and found it a great way to cement my knowledge and challenge my own thinking. This led to joining CIOT’s Employment Taxes Forum and Employment Tax Committee, then Council and

finally standing to be a member of the Presidential team. (Thank you in particular to Ray McCann for helping to convince me to stand.)

Which reminds me: Volunteer Week is 1 to 7 June and I would like to personally extend my thanks to all of you who volunteer. Across Council, committees and the branches network, there are more than a thousand of you. Thank you for the tremendous amount of work you've put in. Volunteers deserve immense praise. Being a volunteer is a demanding task, so thank you for contributing so much of your time, energy, and efforts – it all helps the Institute thrive.

So, there you have it. I am very humbled and honoured to be the 57th President of the Chartered Institute of Taxation and the fourth female to take the role. Whilst undoubtedly we could (and hopefully will) improve that statistic, I am immensely proud that I am taking up the role at a time when both the CIOT and ATT have female CEOs in Helen Whiteman and Jane Ashton. I am very much looking forward to meeting as many members as I can over the coming year.

I am also fortunate to have an excellent Presidential Team working with me until May 2023 – Gary Ashford (Deputy President), Charlotte Barbour (Vice President) and Peter Rayney (as immediate Past-President). And before I sign off this piece, a couple more thanks. Firstly to my firm, RSM, for supporting me in taking on the role, and finally thank you to Peter for your support. A huge amount of respect to you, our outgoing President, for your 18 months of service largely in the Covid-19 pandemic, but also for being such a warm, generous and unflappable role model for me to try and follow.

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#MADEBYDYSLEXIA