

## Success Story

# Beck & Company, CPAs Assists Higher Achievement in Reaching their Goals

Higher Achievement is a nonprofit organization offering a rigorous afterschool and summer academic program for underprivileged middle school students in Washington, D.C.; Baltimore, MD; Richmond, VA; and Pittsburgh, PA. Through an additional 650 hours in addition to regular schooling; enrolled students are provided with high-level education, mentoring, skill-building, achievement plans, personal encouragement, and more. This education model, combined with caring support, and a culture of high expectations, results in over 75% of the students becoming college graduates; four times higher than the average rate of their peers. Ultimately, Higher Achievement seeks to have a positive effect on the community at large by breaking the cycle of poverty for families and strengthening the social fabric of communities through assisting children in reaching their fullest potential.



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*-Lynsey Jeffries  
National Chief  
Executive Officer  
Higher Achievement*

### The Path to Higher Ground

As a nonprofit organization, Higher Achievement must adhere to certain financial standards and reporting practices. When their Controller retired in 2011, they needed someone who could come in and effectively fill the position until they could find a permanent replacement. Thankfully they found Beck & Company, Certified Public Accountants, P.C., who specialize in providing accounting and auditing services to companies who desire to outsource CFO, Controllorship, and Accounting functions.

After contracting Beck & Company, CPAs' services for about six months, Higher Achievement hired a permanent Controller. Unfortunately the new Controller did not stay long, and left unexpectedly right before the A-133 audit. "Our organization was going through a transitional period," reflects Lynsey Jeffries, National Chief Executive Officer for Higher Achievement. "In addition to experiencing multiple staff changes, we were following a difficult year where we experienced a decline in donations. It was critical that we keep our finances under control and have a clean audit." Kathy Beck, CPA.CITP, and Managing Partner of Beck & Company, CPAs explains, "The A-133 audit seeks to hold organizations accountable for sound financial management and proper internal controls on an annual basis, by rigorously examining any entity that receives and expends more than \$500,000 in federal funds each year. Organizations receiving





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funding are expected to follow stringent policies and procedures, and to provide documentation showing their adherence to them." In the absence of the new Controller, Higher Achievement once again called upon the expertise and skill of Beck & Company, CPAs who quickly stepped in and provided the assistance they needed. After gathering all of the documentation, verifying the appropriate processes were in place, and effectively managing the auditors; Higher Achievement concluded the audit with flying colors. In fact, thanks to the efficiencies resulting from Beck & Company, CPAs' preparations, the auditors finished in less than a week, though they had budgeted for 10 days. "We were happy to help Higher Achievement during this time," adds Kathy. "We have a tremendous amount of knowledge regarding the audit process, which allows us to essentially serve as an advocate between our nonprofit clients and their auditors." Lynsey adds, "Having Beck & Company, CPAs by our side was a godsend. We received a clean audit both in this instance, and again the following year, thanks to their assistance."

Beck & Company, CPAs offers uniquely personalized services for each client they serve, and possesses the expertise necessary to step into any organization without requiring a lot of training or ramp up time usually required when hiring a new person. Sometimes hiring a new Controller can take weeks or months to find the right person and get them on board. Then, it can take several weeks for the new person to ramp up on the organizations history and style of operations. Depending on the process, hiring a new controller can cost thousands of dollars but the lost time and productivity at the wrong time can be devastating in getting government reports and taxes filed.

"We pride ourselves in being able to do the job without having to ask so many questions that our clients may as well just do it themselves," notes Kathy. "In this case, we assisted a nonprofit organization that was going through a lot of changes in leadership, and needed someone who could partner with them, while simultaneously being self sufficient." In addition to supporting the Controllershship function and helping Higher Achievement pass their A-133 audits; Beck & Company, CPAs assisted them in other areas as well. They provided external payroll processing services, met with the bank to discuss financial statements relating to mortgage financing, and sat in on interviews with prospective Controllers.

## **A Supportive Partnership Leads to Success**

Thanks to the support provided by Beck & Company, CPAs, Higher Achievement's finance records were accurate and organized during their transitional period. This not only put national funders at ease, but it established a solid foundation for the better days ahead. Lynsey concludes, "I have many strengths, but accounting isn't one of them. As a new CEO it was very comforting to know that I could rely on Beck & Company, CPAs and trust them to manage their projects effectively. They have a tremendous talent in finance, and an uncanny ability to communicate accounting principles and functions both to me, as well as to our board and finance committee. Their work ethic is very strong and they continuously seek to achieve a positive result. We are very thankful to them for all they've done for us, and would strongly recommend them to anyone desiring outsourced accounting and auditing services."