

FANIMATION



EXPRESS



YOUR STYLE



Buy Your Style Today at



4030 Colonial Boulevard, Fort Myers
 239.277.0333
 Mon.-Fri. 10am-6pm Sat. 10am-4pm
 www.brotherslighting.net

grand | FACES

YOUNG AND *wittina*

Nicole McGinnis and other members of the Next Generation Board have made commitments to the community early in their careers

STORY BY KIRA LEWIS | PHOTO BY KINFAY MOROTI

Nicole McGinnis' family ties to Naples run deep. Her grandparents had visited the Naples area since the 1960s and chose to make it their home in 1982.

Born in Naples, Nicole attended St. Elizabeth Seton and St. John Neumann Catholic schools. And though she moved to Deland to earn business and accounting degrees at Stetson University, "even when I went away to college, it felt like I never really left."

After completing Stetson's five-year master's degree in accounting, she returned to Naples, where she worked for Ernst and Young and then moved to her current position as senior accountant for Davidson & Nick CPAs.

As Nicole established herself professionally in Naples, she began meeting others at a similar life stage who were helping out in the community in a very hands-on way. Their influence led her to begin seeking out local opportunities for involvement.

Charity organizations have always relied heavily on those with such deep ties to their communities, because those people are the very ones who are invested and who see the needs of their communities ebb and flow through time. But it can be a challenge for charities to recruit busy young professionals — and that's where Leadership Collier GAIN (Growing Associates in Naples) made a difference for Nicole — and many others like her.

GAIN is a Leadership Collier Foundation program that's designed for emerging leaders and professionals in Collier County who are ages 21-40. Participants learn about Collier County history, local government and election structures, charitable foundations and other resources so that graduates can become effective contributors in the community.

The program runs from February through March and includes eight, two-hour sessions focused on professional development and peer networking. Nicole graduated from the program in 2012.

Nicole was not familiar with the Naples charity Hope for Haiti. But when a fellow GAIN graduate reached out to recruit her for the charity's Next Generation Board — yet another innovative way of investing in intelligent support and leadership for the future — she was intrigued.

"The idea was really attractive," says Nicole. "The existing board wanted to involve and mentor more up-and-coming young professionals who had ties to the community but weren't connected to a cause."

Nicole made an ideal candidate, and when the position on Hope for Haiti's Next Generation Board presented itself, it didn't take much to convince Nicole to lend her talents and connections.

"Haiti is a poor country that is not that far from South Florida, with many immigrants who live here. Helping them, since they are so close to home, makes sense. "Plus, I liked knowing that 95 cents of every dollar raised is sent directly to Haiti."

Hope for Haiti was founded 25 years ago by local philanthropist Joanne Kuehner, who initially focused on making a difference in the lives of



Nicole McGinnis poses in the Hope for Haiti office in Naples.

young Haitian children through education. In 1997, she joined forces with Dr. Keith Hussey and the mission expanded to include nutrition and health care.

As Nicole explains, "It started with building schools, but then they had a new idea of sustaining the whole community with gardens and farmer's markets. It was smart and very forward-thinking. They are taking what they learned and then setting up the same model in other communities."

The organization put its newest supporters to work immediately. The Next

Generation Board chose the yearly emergency food packing event as its primary focus. The event will be held this year Dec. 7 at Gulf Coast High School.

"Our goal is to pack and send 100,000 meals to Haiti," Nicole says. "We make the work fun. Last year we had a deejay and the FGCU volleyball team as well as other local high school athletes came out to help. It was exciting to see how much food can get packed so fast."

In addition to the stewardship the Next Generation Board members are

providing for events, there are other areas where their youth is proving to be an asset. Nicole has taken on the social media committee chair role, which is a crucial component of the organization's ongoing strategy.

Stephanie Jepsen, director of development at Hope for Haiti explains, "Our regular board; has been a more governing board, the Next Generation Board will be expected to focus more on social media and other emerging ideas that are shaping the future of philanthropy." **G**

Nicole McGinnis

» **Age:** 30 » **Birthplace:** Naples
» **Current Residence:** Naples »
Education: Stetson University, bachelor of science degree in business administration and a master's degree in accounting. She also completed the certified public accounting exam and received her Florida license in 2010. » **Career:** Senior accountant with Davidson & Nick CPAs in Naples » **Family:** Single
» **Personal interests:** Playing golf, going to the beach and spending time with her family