



Photo by Duane Tinkley

Partners at West Des Moines-based McGowen, Hurst, Clark & Smith P.C. include: (front) from left, Dave Hurst, Jim Smith, Mike McNichols, Bob McGowen, Kathi Koenig, Tom Pflanz, and (back) Dan Schwarz, John Schmidt and Mike Brinker.

## Despite stress, employees push McGowen to top

By Jason Hancock

For an accounting firm, there is no more stressful time of year than the end of tax season.

"Everyone puts in long hours and works incredibly hard," said Rose Breuss, marketing director for McGowen, Hurst, Clark & Smith P.C., an accounting firm in West Des Moines. "There is a lot of pressure to get things done on deadline, and it can be very stressful. So it probably wasn't the best time for those surveys to show up."

The surveys in question are the "Best Place to Work in Central Iowa" employee surveys. However, tax season apparently didn't take too great a toll, as McGowen, Hurst, Clark & Smith's employees rated it highly enough for the firm to place first in the survey among medium-sized businesses.

"The partners are easy to work for, even during those stressful times," Breuss said. "They make people feel valued and always let you know they really do appreciate your work. It real-

ly is a great place to work."

MHC&S, which also has an office in Winterset, is one of the oldest and largest local accounting firms in Central Iowa. Founded in 1946, it will celebrate its 60th anniversary June 6. In that time, it has grown from three to 51 full- and part-time employees.

"Everyone is very excited about the anniversary," Breuss said. "We recently made a TV commercial to spread the word about the anniversary, and we used our employees as the actors. That isn't very traditional for a firm like this, but everyone really enjoyed the experience."

One thing that makes MHC&S a great place to work is its unique mission statement, Breuss said.

"While most mission statements are directed to clients and customers, ours is a two-part, with the second part directed to firm members," she said. "It reads, 'To provide a work environment that enables our firm members to achieve their personal and profession-

al goals.' Our partners try earnestly to create an environment that will provide growth and balance for firm members."

They do this, she said, by empowering employees to participate in decisions and to voice opinions.

Breuss said one reason stressful times don't affect the firm as much is the bond the employees share with one another. Teamwork, she said, is something the firm really believes in, and that can lighten the load on any one employee.

"We are very close-knit," she said. "People do their best work in a fun and friendly environment."

Activities, like an end-of-tax season luau or a group trip to the Iowa State Fair, also help bring the staff closer together and allow the partners to show their appreciation.

"We schedule golf during the summer and a breakfast halfway through tax season," Breuss said. "There are a lot of activities we schedule to keep

things fun."

The firm also sponsors "Every Day's a Sundae at MHC&S," in which an ice cream vendor comes on-site to make ice cream sundaes for all the staff members. The firm also purchases treats to celebrate employee birthdays, with the honoree making the selection.

Flexible schedules are another thing Breuss cites, saying there has been an "explosion of babies" recently among the younger members of the firm. So to help out the new families, MHC&S works with staff members to ensure they can get the family time off when it is needed.

"The benefits are very generous," Breuss said. "And it is a very family-friendly business. They recognize that family comes first and before an employee can be successful at work, they need to be successful at home. In addition, there is a great level of trust and respect for all members throughout the firm." ■