



## E-News | March 2021



### Interview with Cathie Gifford

Certification Program Associate

*Cathie had already retired as both a public school music teacher and an administrative assistant at the School of Social Welfare, UAlbany when the ASAP-NYCB opportunity came her way. She had also spent over 25 years as proprietor of a one-person, home-based business offering a range of computer services; an experience that helped prepare her for when Covid hit, one year ago.*

*A former classical singer, she enjoys listening to music, reading and gardening. Did we say gardening?*

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### **You are an integral part of the ASAP-NYCB Certification Team, Cathie! What prompted your interest in the world of certification?**

I came to the New York Certification Board in July 2017 on the recommendation of a former supervisor. I didn't like being retired and fortunately I had the skill set to meet the needs for the Certification Team position. The job, although a challenge with various learning curves, is one that I have enjoyed and learned from. I'm really glad I'm doing what I'm doing!

### **What is the most important part of your job?**

Working with our applicants one-on-one and helping them towards certification is the most important part. It's my job to be there for those who need the explanation, the phone call, a positive word of encouragement. I'm a happy camper when I know someone has their problem solved, understand something better, and ultimately get certified. I'm humbled with the emails thanking me.

### **How has Covid-19 and the "digital pivot" impacted your work?**

Since March of 2020 I have worked from home. I had to remind myself to set appropriate boundaries and expectations, be able to walk away from the job at day's end, realize that not everything can be done in one day, and remember I am only one person and definitely not a robot! Elisabeth Kranson, our Director of Certification, and I Zoom often to review applications together. Definitely a bonus is having a 10-second commute! It has saved a lot of car travel and gas. As well, I can lunch with my husband frequently because we are truly best friends, even after 37 years of marriage!

### **What's the biggest challenge for you in your role?**

This job has a great many details to learn about the various certifications and the certification process. It took me well over a year to have a good basic understanding and be able to help with all aspects of certification. With our new online application program, there was another huge learning curve, and at a really busy time. It meant delays on my end that really stressed me. However, I am catching up, and I feel much more accomplished with the Certemy process.

### **What's your message for existing and prospective certificants?**

When we find incomplete applications, that means certification is delayed. I would encourage prospective certificants to carefully read directions and be sure to meet the requirements. We are here to help, so never hesitate to email us with a question.

I also encourage people to become familiar with our website and visit often. Nothing stays the same, and, like any other organization, we are growing and evolving. New training requirements that impact both initial certification and renewals have also been put in place - so check them out under "Training."

### **How do you relax and unwind?**

I have many interests, but a big one is gardening. My husband and I have created an oasis at our house using a wide variety of plants and shrubs. Gardening chores as well as plants in bloom begin in early March and end in December. It doesn't seem like work so much when you see the progress and watch the beautiful changes during the seasons. Ours is an organic yard, and we encourage birds, bees and butterflies. My husband and I both enjoy cooking, especially when we harvest something from our own garden!

### **A final word of encouragement?**

I send an encouraging message to *keep on keepin' on*. You have important and valuable work to do and people who need you! Our lives have purpose when we give to others. Additionally, I've found you can reinvent yourself and am now probably in my 5<sup>th</sup> career at age 76. Be proud of yourself and go for it!!

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