

2005

Alumni Profile

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Recommended Citation

Davis, Laura (2005) "Alumni Profile," *Linfield Magazine*: Vol. 2: Iss. 2, Article 18.
Available at: http://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine/vol2/iss2/18

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Fast-paced finance good fit for CFO

Mike Yonker '80 is the first to admit he's an over-achiever.

Sitting in his top-floor Wilsonville office, surrounded by family photos and outdoor scenes, he drinks from a water bottle, hydrating himself for the coming weekend's Hood to Coast relay.

"I'm a play-hard work-hard person," he said. "Whatever it is, I go at it with 150 percent effort to be the best at it."

So it came as no surprise when, as a Linfield College sophomore, Yonker discovered a passion for accounting and buckled down to complete his college coursework early.

The only thing left to do was begin his career, which he did with a vengeance during his senior year.

Now, Yonker is executive vice president and chief financial officer for InFocus Systems Inc., a multimedia projector maker with 700 employees and offices worldwide. He's been with InFocus since 1993, save for a three-year stint as CFO for Wieden & Kennedy. He spent his first 14 years out of college rocketing to partner status with Arthur Andersen & Company.

The son of Thomas Yonker, Linfield education professor from 1970 to 1988, Mike grew up enveloped in Linfield's collegiate atmosphere. He developed a love of education and an interest in communication, recognizing early that people take different action as a result of how they understand something.

"That's always fascinated me," he said. "I love being in front of people. I love teaching. I love interacting. And I think a lot of that came from my father and growing up around Linfield. Enrolling there was the natural, next thing for me to do."

Yonker's initial interest in marine biology and forestry was short lived. Prompted by his sister, Kathy (Yonker) Bernards '76, a business major, Yonker enrolled in an accounting class taught by Mike Jones, professor of accounting. For both Yonker and Jones, it was their first accounting class at Linfield – Yonker as a student and Jones as professor.

"He really took me under his wing," Yonker said of Jones. "He saw in me what I didn't realize I had. Had he not taken that level of interest in me, I doubt I would have taken the track I have."

Under Jones' guidance, Yonker interviewed and secured an internship with Arthur Andersen & Company, setting into motion the now successful Linfield accounting student recruiting program.



Mike Yonker '80 combines his enthusiasm for finance and high technology as CFO for InFocus Systems Inc., a multimedia projector maker based in Wilsonville.

"Mike had a spark that was evident even when he was a sophomore," Jones remembered. "I've always appreciated how he paved the way for a lot of later generations of students. He was a tip top student. I'm not surprised at his success."

"As the people I work with achieve greatness, it raises all the boats in the company, including mine."

While Yonker is fascinated with the fast-paced work and advanced technologies central to InFocus products, his favorite part of his job is drawing out the best in the people around him. As CFO, he works with employees in all departments.

"I do everything I can to help them achieve way beyond what they think they're capable of doing," said Yonker. "As the people I work with achieve greatness, it raises all the boats in the company, including mine."

Yonker, who married Robin (Haun) '83, is a strong proponent of a liberal arts education. He encourages students, including his own three children, to step outside their comfort zones by studying abroad.

"It broadens you as an individual," he said. "The market today is a worldwide market and you have to be chameleon-like in your ability to step into multiple cultures and environments, and be effective in your communications so that you can get business done."

— Laura Davis