

Lena Stefoglo

Lena is a VITA Tax Site volunteer who immigrated to Spokane 13 years ago. Back in Lithuania, she was an ambitious student who moved to the United States to get an education and start a family. Life has not always been easy for Lena, but she makes it a priority to give back to the community. She prepares taxes so that she can see the excitement on people's faces when they get a return. Lena said, "It is kind of fun to watch them find out what their refund is, they can't wait!"

When Lena first came to America with her husband and 8-month-old baby, she went to Eastern Washington University to get her bachelor's degree. After graduating from Eastern, she attended Gonzaga University and obtained her Master's Degree in Accounting along with the CPA license to become a certified public accountant. While Lena was in school, she and her husband often struggled to make ends meet. Lena worked part-time jobs during college and after graduation, Lena worked at a public accounting firm where she prepared tax returns and performed consulting services. That experience prepared her well to provide quality tax return preparation and consulting to Vita Tax clients.

Now, Lena works at Umpqua Bank and volunteers at the Spokane County United Way VITA tax site. Umpqua Bank supports our community in many different ways, and offers its employees 40 hours of paid service time per year. Along with preparing taxes, Lena also likes to volunteer at Second Harvest. "We had some really challenging times," Lena said, "especially during the recession. I used Second Harvest Food Bank services a couple of times myself, and now I volunteer there! It's just really awesome and I'm really happy there are organizations like these that are helping people get back on their feet."

The tax season is a busy and stressful time for many people. Lena always strives to get the maximum refund possible that belongs to each person. So many people depend on that extra money at the beginning of the year, and Lena is passionate about helping people see their bank accounts grow and get food on their table. Lena has also introduced another employee of Umpqua Bank Aimee Scharff to volunteer at the Spokane County United Way who is just as passionate about volunteering in various organizations in the community. Because of many volunteers, this year's tax season was a great success.

Brooke Smith – Story Capture Writer and Photographer
Spokane County United Way