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accounting profession. They are all active in the professional community, as well as in their local communities, where many are small business owners and employers.

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**Brett Austin Cooper, CPA- 27**

**Business Strategy Fellow**

**TaroWorks, LLC**

**Kampala, Uganda**

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**What is the name of one book that has been a great influence to you?**

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Nairobi, Kenya, working a fellowship for a social enterprise technology startup.

**In what ways have you contributed to your firm/company to make it better?**

Two weeks ago, I began the next phase of my professional journey. I assumed the role of Business Strategy Fellow at TaroWorks, LLC. This fellowship was arranged by the Grameen Foundation's Bankers without Borders program. In this role I will help develop and refine the overall business strategy of TaroWorks by developing and maintaining critical business KPIs, developing detailed financial models, driving market sizing activities to help evaluate new potential sectors, and helping to identify and cultivate key strategic partners. I endeavor to use the skills and perspectives gained in my accounting career to accomplish these goals.

**In what ways do you participate in the professional community to change/improve the accounting profession?**

When practicing in Pennsylvania I was a member of the statewide business valuation committee and the Philadelphia chapter's young professionals committee. I also organized and oversaw events for the young professionals committee. For these efforts I was recognized with the Pennsylvania Institute of Certified Public Accounts "*Members to Watch: 2013-2014 Young Leaders Award*".

**In what ways do you participate in your local community to help others?**

Before leaving Seattle for India, I was the Treasurer and a member of the board of directors of the Seattle Audubon Society. Seattle Audubon is active in the areas of conservation and environmental education. Their mission statement is to "cultivate and lead a community that values and protects birds and the natural environment."

I also provided advisory services to socially minded technology startups in Seattle. As I progress in my new role in East Africa, I will look for similar volunteer

opportunities.

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leverage this type of technology, practitioners will be able to service more clients at lower price points.

**How do you see yourself participating in shaping the future of the accounting profession?**

There is a great need for accountants and financial professionals in the world of philanthropy, social enterprises, and poverty alleviation. I hope that the trajectory I am currently on can help to pave the way for other financial professionals to utilize their skills in these realms.

**What is your career philosophy?**

One of my personal mantras also applies to my professional life. And that is that "I'd rather be forgotten than remembered for giving in." Admittedly, I borrowed the words from a band that I enjoy. To me, the idea of giving in is failing to reinvent myself, failing to challenge myself, or to say it more succinctly – settle. I want to constantly strive to be both a better person and professional every day. And if I fail to do that – I'd rather be forgotten.

**Describe one person who has been an important mentor to you and how that person helped change your life.**

I have been fortunate to have a number of colleagues, friends, and family that have helped to guide and support me in both my professional and person life. There are a few specifically who helped to support and encourage me as I transitioned out of my successful young career as a valuation practitioner to pursue my dreams of impacting the world of social enterprises. Mom, dad, Z. Dihn, E. Baldwin, T. Montgomery, and B. Windrope I cannot thank you all enough.

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See all of the “40 Under 40” honorees for 2015.

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