



CPAS & ADVISORS

Building a legacy since 1985

From a humble furnace room office with a single lightbulb on a string to a prestigious accounting firm, the story of Conway, Deuth & Schmiesing is one of growth, vision, and commitment to its core values.

The formation of CDS in November 1985 was inspired by a shared goal of providing exceptional client service and building strong relationships, an idea that emerged during casual conversations among friends and fellow Jaycees. Rick Conway, Roger Deuth, and Milan Schmiesing combined their talents, values, and experiences to establish what has become a full-service CPA firm headquartered in Willmar, Minnesota.

“Over the past 40 years, CDS has been in the ‘People Business!’ Building trusted relationships among our team—and with our valued clients—has been foundational in advancing our growth and success. Our firm’s team has combined their many professional talents and a desire to exceed client expectations, with the power of our core values, in order to create a culture that promotes highly valuable and enjoyable team and client experiences!”



BRETT AAMOT, CPA, CGMA, AND MANAGING PARTNER

Our Humble Beginnings

1978

Rick Conway purchases Roger Nelson's practice

1981

Conway, Deuth & Associates moves into 331 Professional Plaza in Willmar

1973

Rick Conway started working for Roger Nelson

1981

Conway, Deuth & Associates formed

1985

Conway, Deuth & Schmiesing, PLLP formed



Rick and Norma Conway's Early Careers

From College to Willmar, MN: A New Beginning

After graduating from college, Rick's wife, Norma, accepted a teaching job in Willmar, MN, and she and Rick moved to the area. With one year of college left to complete, Rick began applying for part-time tax work, sending out 24 applications. He only received two responses—one from Latham & Parker, CPAs, who had no work, and the other from Roger Nelson, a sole proprietor running a small accounting practice out of his basement. Roger, whose health was failing, needed help with tax work for his \$20,000 gross revenue practice.



“ There is a great deal of trust between all three of us (founding partners) ...still is. ”

RICK CONWAY, CPA AND FOUNDING PARTNER

An Unconventional Opportunity

In the interview, Roger Nelson offered Rick an unusual deal: minimum wage for four years, and if Rick stayed, he'd have the chance to buy the practice once Roger retired. Rick wasn't sure how to present this to Norma, but, sitting on their living room floor eating pizza from Jake's, they decided it was an opportunity worth pursuing. With Norma teaching full-time for \$5,700 per year, they felt, "We got it made."



Rick is really the heart and soul of CDS. Everything started and revolved around him and he is dedicated to the success of CDS.



ROGER DEUTH, CPA AND FOUNDING PARTNER

A Philosophy of Developing Talent from Within

Roger Deuth's Early Career

Roger Deuth's career began with an internship at Latham & Parker during the fall of his senior year at Southwest State University in Marshall, Minnesota. Starting in December 1971 at \$3 per hour, Roger received little formal training, learning instead by examining past work and relying on Milan Schmiesing as a mentor. Manual bookkeeping, general ledgers, and trial balances were all completed by hand, providing Roger with invaluable, hands-on experience that college hadn't fully prepared him for.

Roger's path would eventually cross with Rick Conway through their shared involvement in the Willmar Jaycees, where they built a friendship rooted in mutual respect and professional camaraderie. After a brief stint in the Twin Cities to gain additional experience and a higher salary, Roger returned to Willmar when Rick reached out with an opportunity. Recognizing the potential for growth, the two joined forces, forming Conway, Deuth & Associates in 1981. Their collaboration not only doubled their team but also laid the groundwork for the firm's enduring philosophy of developing talent from within and fostering the next generation of partners.



Built on Collaboration and Shared Values



Milan Schmiesing's Early Career

Milan began his career with Latham & Parker in a somewhat unconventional way. After a casual conversation about sports, Parker offered him a position with a salary of \$500 a month and two weeks' vacation—excluding the busy tax season from January to April. Milan never filled out an application, but he showed up his first day at 7:55 a.m., ready to work.



Over time, Milan envisioned something greater—a true partnership built on collaboration and shared values. In 1985, Milan, a Partner at Latham & Parker, joined Conway, Death & Schmiesing, PLLP as a Partner, bringing along Brett Aamot and Larry Stulen to join the newly formed firm.



I envisioned a partnership built on collaboration and shared values.

MILAN SCHMIESING, CPA AND FOUNDING PARTNER



The Power of Early Community Involvement



Building Community, Building CDS

When Rick, Roger, and Milan moved to Willmar, they quickly immersed themselves in the community, becoming active in organizations such as their church, the Jaycees, Rotary, Willmar Municipal Utilities, and Rice Memorial Hospital. Their dedication to local involvement not only built meaningful relationships but also laid the foundation for the growth of the firm. They were particularly active in the Willmar Jaycees, where they bonded over shared commitments to the community and their growing families. Whether playing softball or discussing ideas on Joe Tjaden's porch after games, these connections sparked conversations about collaboration and joining forces—conversations that ultimately contributed to shaping the future of CDS.



“ There have been so many memorable moments since I joined the CDS family 14 years ago, and all of them come back to the people—from staff accountants and internal team members to colleagues in other departments, offices, and the Partners. I am extremely proud to be part of such a dedicated group, working alongside those who consistently provide quality service and meet our clients' expectations.

Some of my favorite memories include working with the government audit team—sharing car rides and lunches during out-of-town audits, collaborating in one-on-one meetings to tackle complex accounting issues, and attending conferences and trade shows together. Firm-wide events like the annual golf outing, CDS family nights, April 15th parties, holiday celebrations, and the many bridal and baby showers we have hosted for one another have also been highlights. I am truly grateful for my CDS team and everyone I have worked with over the years, and I look forward to many more years of serving our clients and making lasting memories with this wonderful group of people.



KARI STEINBEISSER, CPA, CPE, AND PARTNER

A Grateful Reflection on 40+ Years with CDS



I'm deeply thankful to Rick and Roger for giving me my start at Conway, Deuth & Associates in 1983, when we were a team of just 10 in Willmar. Forty-two years later, I'm still here, grateful for the journey and the many memories we've created together.

Some of my favorite moments include late nights at the Skylark Mall office assembling tax returns, sharing space (and a calculator) with Marlene Worm, learning new technology as it emerged, and weathering challenges like re-entering weeks of lost work. I remember the move to our current building, April 15th parties, Mary Kaye's birthday bus trip, and countless laughs (and even some friendly irritation over uneven paper edges).

Over the years, I've grown through many roles—from tax processor to manager and, most proudly, becoming CDS's first female partner. The relationships, lessons, and values shared here—sometimes with actual family—have truly shaped my life.

We've also faced loss, and I'm proud of the strength and compassion our team has shown in those moments, remembering colleagues who are no longer with us. Thank you again to Rick and Roger for your mentorship and for laying the foundation that guides CDS forward. Cheers to 40 years!



ANNETTE BENSON, CPA, CFE, AND PARTNER



It's hard to believe it has been 24 years since I started at CDS! What began as a job opportunity in 2001 has grown into a truly rewarding career—and so much more. CDS has become like family to me! I'm thankful for the unwavering support and influence CDS has provided throughout my career, as well as the lasting friendships and memories built along the way. I've had the privilege of witnessing—and contributing to—significant changes, from our transition from paper to a paperless environment, to helping partners and team members navigate technology, software implementations, and process improvements. I smile thinking about teaching Rick and Milan how to text, the pub crawl for Mary Kaye's 70th birthday party, and the hugs Milan would offer when I would walk into work in tears on the first day of kindergarten for my kiddos! How about Norma's caramel rolls—how she would put them on the United Way auction for staff to purchase as birthday treats! Annual events such as our Christmas parties, United Way week, golf outings, grill outs at Mark's, and lake parties at Brett's have truly brought our team together and created so many fun memories. Most of all, I appreciate being able to help our partners and team members through change, and witnessing firsthand how our team consistently rallies around one another (personally and professionally)—both in times of joy and in times of challenge. Here's to the memories we've made and the many more to come!



MANDY STARK, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

CDS Reflections

“ When I moved to Willmar from the Twin Cities, I worried about finding the right career fit. Thanks to a recommendation from one of Roger's clients-whom my parents met by chance in Florida-I reached out to Roger. After meeting with Brett and Val, I was offered the Marketing Coordinator position. That same week, I attended a Willmar Cardinals football game and everyone I mentioned CDS to had positive things to say about the integrity, professionalism, and reputation of the firm, the Partners, and the team. Over twenty years later, I can confirm those things are true-I've experienced the caring and collaborative culture firsthand. During my time at CDS, I've always felt valued, and have been provided with mentoring, opportunities to learn, and the chance to work on meaningful projects with exceptional colleagues—while having a schedule that provides flexibility for my family. Recently, I sat in on the recording of our founding Partners sharing their vision for CDS when they started the firm. Their goals of exceeding clients' expectations, providing meaningful careers, and a workplace culture that feels like a family is still true today. Our team supports each other through everything from challenges to celebrations, and genuinely cares about one another. CDS feels like home to me. ”

HEATHER THOMPSON, PAFM, FIRM ADMINSTRATOR AND PARTNER

CDS feels like home to me.

“ One of our most cherished memories at CDS is how colleagues truly became friends and family—something we experienced deeply during Larry's illness and after his passing. The team's support was remarkable, from rallying around Larry in the hospital with cards, funny videos, visits, care packages, photo books, and after his passing at the funeral and with team lunches in his memory featuring his favorite foods.

Larry has a MNCPA logo on his headstone that reflected how much he loved his work and the people at CDS! ”

BETH (WEPPL) GOBLIRSCH, CLIENT RELATIONS SPECIALIST

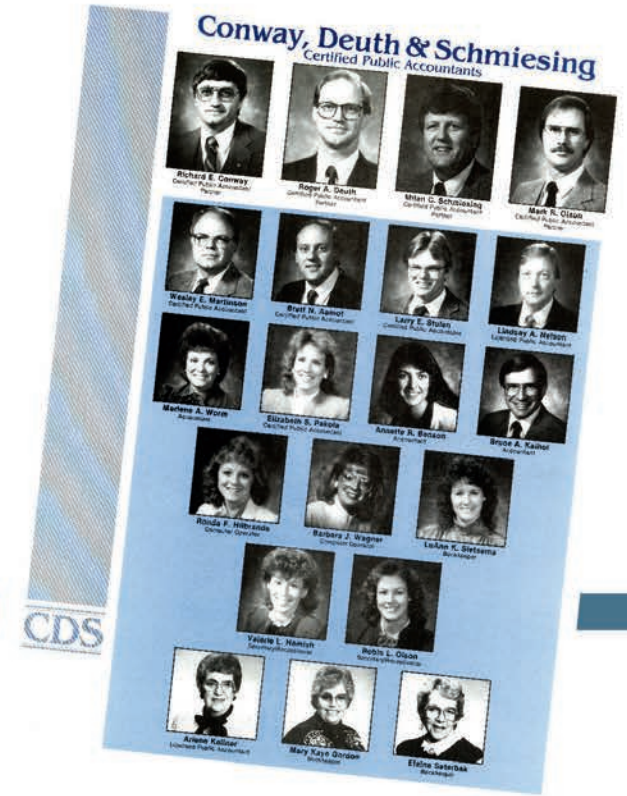
Benson Acquisition

1987

Benson office purchased

1988-1989

Team photo flyer



Our First Merger

CDS was experiencing significant growth but recognized limitations on how quickly it could expand. To accelerate this growth, the firm explored acquisitions and mergers under Rick's leadership. After evaluating several firms, their first acquisition occurred in 1987 with the Benson office, which has seen substantial growth since then.



Expanding our Service Line

1994

CDSA founded in 1994

CDSA

CDS ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

CDS Administrative Services, LLC (CDSA) was founded in 1994 as a division of CDS to expand client services, initially focusing on cafeteria and retirement plan administration. As client needs evolved, CDSA diversified its offerings. Val joined early and, as Partner, played a key role in operations and growth. Today, CDS Employee Benefits Administration remains dedicated to providing quality, innovative employee benefit plan administration solutions.



2010



Jen and Nicholle at B3 - 2019

“ As one of the first employees of Conway, Deuth & Associates in 1981, back when our small office was in the Skylark Mall, it’s incredible to see how much the firm has grown into a leading accounting practice. I still remember my first interview with Rick and Roger, fresh out of Willmar Vo-Tech and nervous—everything was done on a typewriter and fax machine, as computers weren’t yet in use. Four years later, our merger with Milan Schmiesing’s office doubled our size.



In 1995, I had the privilege of helping launch the Employee Benefits Division, a proud milestone in my career. The opportunities and mentorship I received—especially from Rick Conway and Annette Benson, our first female partner—shaped me professionally and personally.

I will always cherish the relationships, growth, and experiences gained from serving our clients. I’m proud to have been part of a firm that values advancement, integrity, and excellence. The memories I’ve made at CDS will always be treasured.



VAL AMBERG, CDSA RETIRED PARTNER

Morris Acquisition

Next, the Partners explored acquiring a practice in Morris after conducting substantial due diligence.



1999

Morris office purchased

1999-2000

Team photo flyer



Some of my favorite memories from my time at CDS include dressing up for the recognition dinner when the firm was named one of the 100 Best Companies to Work For in Minnesota, and going to Kenny Chesney concerts with the CDS ladies. I fondly recall the late nights in the bullpen as a new accountant, surrounded by fun, hilarious, smart, and supportive mentors. Over the years, I built lifelong friendships with co-workers who feel more like family. And of course, the end-of-tax-season celebrations, dinners, and the unforgettable "running of the bulls" made all the hard work worthwhile.



TONYA RATHS, EA AND MANAGER

Brett Aamot Named Managing Partner



2000

Brett Aamot, CPA named
Managing Partner

2000-2001

Team photo flyer



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR 2000

- Celebrated Roger's 50th and Brett's 40th birthdays
- Experienced the first tax season in the 'new bullpen'
- Team members enjoyed a Saints game
- Staffing reached an all-time high
- Baby boom in the office with seven new babies



2000: Rick and Roger

“ I have thoroughly appreciated the countless friendships with colleagues at CDS that I have experienced over the past 40 years . . . so many amazing people who have crossed my path, supported and mentored me, and invested in my career. I am also grateful for the many delightful clients who trusted me, and became good friends over the years . . . these relationships are a source of great enjoyment and gratification! ”

BRETT AAMOT, CPA, CGMA, AND MANAGING PARTNER

The CDS Family



Rick's Best and Worst Day

The story behind Exceeding Expectations

“ The story of our tagline, Exceeding Expectations, comes from one of my best—and worst—days. Years ago, two clients walked into my office on a Friday, urgently needing to form a partnership. Without internet back then, I promised to get them answers by ‘next week,’ thinking Friday at 5 p.m. But they expected Monday at 8 a.m. When I called back on Wednesday, they had already gone to another firm.

That day felt like my worst—but it also became one of my best. It taught me a valuable lesson: always understand your client’s expectations and work to exceed them. Since then, I’ve lived by this model. I commit to clear timelines, aim to deliver early, and if I’m unable to meet a promise, I communicate immediately and set a new one. That experience shaped not only me but also the culture of our firm. To this day, Exceeding Expectations remains our guiding principle. ”

RICK CONWAY, CPA, AND FOUNDING PARTNER

MENTOR PROGRAM

CDS Launches Mentor Program

The CDS Mentor Program, launched in 2008, enhances personal and professional growth by developing skills, fostering relationships, and promoting knowledge sharing. Mentees gain guidance and encouragement, while Mentors enjoy fresh perspectives and fulfillment, strengthening team bonds and improving client service.



“ Sometime in your career, someone will influence the impact of your career path. ”

RICK CONWAY, CPA AND FOUNDING PARTNER

Rick Conway credits St. Cloud State track coach, Bob Waxlax, as the reason he graduated college. During a tough time between his sophomore and junior years, Rick decided to quit school due to financial struggles. When he shared his decision with Coach Waxlax, Bob asked for a week to find a solution. He then introduced Rick to Sports Information Director Bob Peterson, who offered Rick a 20-hour-per-week paid job managing stats and relaying scores to newspapers. Additionally, Bob arranged free housing in exchange for Rick managing a house of athletes and offered him a partial track scholarship. These opportunities not only helped Rick stay in school but also shaped his career path. To this day, Rick shakes Bob's hand and thanks him for taking a chance on him. This story is a powerful reminder of the meaningful impact our Partners and leadership can have on shaping the lives and careers of our team members.

Expansion into Litchfield

2003

Merger with Fawcett, Young, and Associates, Ltd. in Litchfield

2003-2004

Team photo flyer



A Strategic Acquisition

The Partners continued to explore new opportunities, leading to the acquisition of Fawcett, Young, and Associates in Litchfield. This was a deliberate move to expand CDS's governmental audit practice for school districts and municipalities. At the time, CDS faced challenges being recognized as experts in this area, even with competitive bids. By bringing on Partners Paul Harvego and Cecil Fawcett, the firm increased its governmental audits from 5 to 20. This acquisition successfully strengthened the team's expertise and reputation in the field.



One of my fondest memories is attending a Gopher's football game with several CDS colleagues, enjoying tailgating and meeting interesting fans, including Jane Bond. Our former Litchfield office, once housed in a charming older home, had its quirks—whenever a milk truck drove by, the windows would rattle, and once, a window even popped out into the yard! Despite these quirks, our Litchfield team made the most of every day, sharing memorable 10 a.m. breaks filled with great conversation and camaraderie.



DAVE CORNIEL, CPA, CVA, AND PARTNER

Expansion into St. Cloud

2005

Office opened in the St. Cloud area

2006

Merger with Michael A. Johnson, Ltd. in Sartell

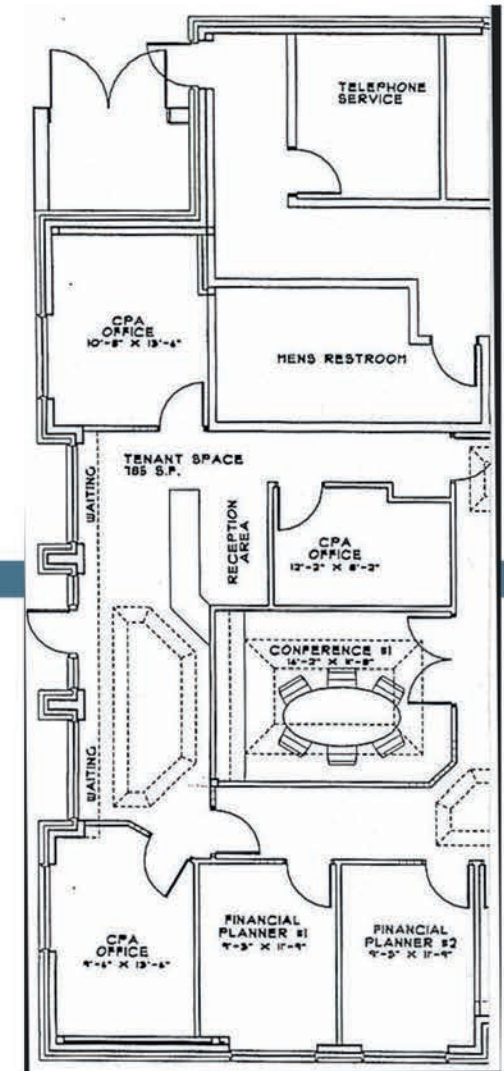


St. Cloud Expansion and Sartell Merger

In 2005, CDS expanded by opening a new office in St. Cloud, with the hope of attracting new clients and talent. Progress was initially slow, prompting the firm to seek advice from Steve Kutscheid at the law firm Gray Plant Mooty. CDS inquired about local accounting firms that might be a good fit for a potential merger.

This outreach led to a meeting with Mike Johnson of Michael A. Johnson, Ltd. in Sartell. The initial discussions focused primarily on organizational culture and the shared values of both firms, rather than financials or business details. The partners soon realized they had a common vision for client service and team member development.

In 2006, CDS merged with Michael A. Johnson, Ltd. Mike Johnson has since retired, but several members of his team remain valued members of CDS. The merger proved to be an excellent fit and a significant milestone in the firm's history.



Waite Park office



It's hard to believe it's been 20 years since I joined CDS in 2005—time has truly flown by. I've seen the firm grow and have been fortunate to work with excellent mentors and colleagues. From late nights meeting deadlines to golf outings, Gopher games, summer parties, and community events, we've made lasting memories together. CDS has always felt like a second family, and I'm grateful for the opportunities and support I've received. I look forward to contributing to our continued growth and success.

JEFF RISLOV, CPA AND PARTNER



CDS Financial Services

2011

CDS Partners start CDS Financial Services, LLC



“It’s been a privilege to support our clients, building lasting relationships and witnessing the positive impact we bring to their financial lives. Being part of the CDS family has truly been a rewarding experience.”

KARI REUVERS, OFFICE MANAGER

Responding to the needs of our clients, in 2011, several of the partners of CDS expanded our financial advisory practice by creating the wealth management company, CDS Financial Services, LLC (CDSF) to deliver investment and comprehensive wealth management solutions for our clients. Growing out of a CPA firm, our innovative solutions combine sound investment principles with tax-advantaged strategies.



Chance Hooper
CPA, CFP®, PFSSM, AAMS®
Director of Financial Services



Alec Saunders
CFP®, CRPC, EA
LPL Financial Advisor



Kari Reuvers
Office Manager




CDSF wins Best of the Best in 2021, 2024, and 2025 and Runner-Up in 2022 and 2023

thank you

The Partners at CDS would like to thank all who voted for us in the West Central Tribune’s Best of the Best contest for:

- » Best Accounting Firm
- » Best Financial Advisor

LOCATIONS Willmar | Benson | Litchfield | Morris | St. Cloud-Sartell
cfs.cpa

2025

Over \$200 million in Funds Under Management

“I am deeply grateful to the Partners of CDS for the incredible opportunities and trust they have extended to me over the years. Their vision and support have allowed me to grow both personally and professionally.”

CHANCE HOOPER, CPA, CFP®, PFSSM, AAMS®, DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

Merger with Kenneth HT Olson, Ltd.

2015

Merger with Kenneth HT Olson, Ltd. in Sartell



2017

CDS named 100 Best Companies To Work For in Minnesota



Conway, Death & Schmiesing, PLLP Kenneth HT Olson, Ltd Announce Merger

The accounting and tax firm of Kenneth HT Olson, Ltd has merged its practice into the public accounting firm of Conway, Death & Schmiesing (CDS). Kenneth HT Olson's team has moved into the CDS-Sartell offices located in the Northwest Professional Center. With 30 CPAs and 75 personnel, CDS is ranked among the top 25 CPA firms in Minnesota.



2351 Connecticut Avenue, Ste. 110
Sartell, MN 56377

OUR SERVICES

- » Accounting
- » Auditing
- » Business Valuations
- » Consulting and Planning
- » Employee Benefits Administration
- » Estates and Trusts
- » Forensic Accounting
- » Health Care Reform
- » Payroll
- » QuickBooks
- » Tax

For more information, call us at (320) 252-7565.

CDS www.cdscpa.com

CONWAY, DEATH & SCHMIESING

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS
AND CONSULTANTS

LOCATIONS

Sartell | Willmar | Benson | Morris | Litchfield

2017

CDS volunteers at Destination Playground community build at Robbins Island in Willmar



The Destination Playground project was a powerful reminder of what we can accomplish when we come together. Building alongside coworkers, clients, and neighbors was an unforgettable experience.

HEATHER THOMPSON, PAFM, FIRM ADMINISTRATOR AND PARTNER



2021

CDSA merges with CDS

Michelle's **Shining Light**
finding light in a dark diagnosis

2023

Launched Michelle's Shining Light Project, an ongoing gratitude initiative honoring the Willmar Cancer Center care team, continuing Michelle's legacy.



The merger of CDSA into CDS as the Benefit Plan Administration department brought significant advantages to our clients. They continue to rely on the trusted relationships they've built with our administrative team, while also benefiting from the expanded depth of staff and expertise that comes with combining our teams. The integration enhanced overall performance efficiencies, ensuring that we deliver even higher-quality administrative services. We remain committed to providing our clients with the exemplary support they deserve.



JEN BURNETT, PARTNER AND BENEFIT PLAN DIRECTOR



2017

CDS named the WACF Community Builder Award

2022 - 2025

CDS receives Best of the Best Accounting Firm honors from West Central Tribune



The CDS Family



CDS Reflections

It's hard to pick just one favorite memory—most of my favorite CDS moments come from our firm and community events. Whether it's golfing with colleagues, cleaning up our community, or celebrating staff milestones, these experiences highlight the strength of our CDS family. I'm often reminded of how we rally behind those through tough times and celebrate even louder!

ERIN MARCOTTE, SENIOR ACCOUNTANT

The CDS Family Fun Night at Big Kahuna Fun Park was a fantastic experience for my family and me. We had a great time meeting other CDS families and enjoyed driving go-karts, riding bumper boats, and playing mini golf together.

JUSTIN MCGRAW, CPA AND PARTNER

Starting my career in the Willmar "bullpen," I was surrounded by colleagues at a similar stage of life and career. This environment made it easy to collaborate on projects, power through busy seasons together, and enjoy weekly happy hours, birthday celebrations, and our "running of the bulls" tradition. It's been amazing to watch everyone grow in their careers—both within and beyond CDS—and to grow alongside them. These connections have turned into lasting friendships beyond the office.

WENDY HOLLE, CPA AND MANAGER

From building playgrounds to sinking putts, splashing at lake parties to swapping Secret Santa gifts, we've made more than deadlines—we've made memories. Our culture is built on fun, friendship, and family.

JEN BURNETT, BENEFIT PLAN DIRECTOR AND PARTNER

One of my favorite memories at CDS is our annual golf outing. No matter your skill level, it's always a blast to come together as a team and have fun!

KARLA HEMMESCH, EA AND MANAGER

One favorite memory at CDS was celebrating Mary Kaye's 75th birthday with a memorable pub crawl. The entire team boarded a coach bus and spent the evening visiting local spots, sharing laughs, and making lasting memories together.

Another standout recollection comes from the late nights spent with the "bullpen crew." As we worked through busy weeks, we built a pyramid out of empty Mountain Dew cans and occasionally broke up the routine with spirited Nerf gun wars. These moments of camaraderie and fun highlight the unique and supportive culture that has always set CDS apart.

In 2016, a job change for my husband led us to moving out of state. Rather than leaving CDS and starting over, I was given the opportunity to try working remotely. I successfully became the first full-time remote employee, and am still here nearly 9 years later.

HEATHER LEHR, SENIOR ACCOUNTANT

The Partners

FOUNDING PARTNERS



Rick Conway
Retired from
partnership in 2019



Roger Deuth
Retired from
partnership in 2016



Milan Schmiesing
Retired from
partnership in 2010

CURRENT PARTNERS



Brett Aamot
1989 - current



Annette Benson
1997 - current



Jen Burnett
2015 - current



David Corneil
2008 - current



Jennifer Lownsbury
2012 - current



Justin McGraw
2021 - current



Jeff Rislov
2016 - current



Jim Rudnick
2003 - current



Stacey Seviola
2023 - current



Kari Steinbeisser
2021 - current



Larry Stulen
1991 - current



Heather Thompson
2018 - current



Cecil Fawcett
2003 - 2006



Michael A. Johnson
2006 - 2013



Jim Gilman
1995 - 2017



Paul Harvego
2003 - 2019



Val Amberg
CDSA: 2002 - 2019



Mike Zager
2012 - 2019



Kelly O'Farrell
2019 - 2025



Larry Wepplo
2001 - 2011



Mark Olson
1986 - 2018



Darrin Ogdahl
2003 - 2019



Michelle Hanson
2018 - 2023



Milan Schmiesing
1985 - 2010

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Growth Through the Years

1986

3 partners
1 office location
20 team members
6 CPAs
3 certifications

2025

12 partners
5 office locations
95+ team members
28 CPAs
66 certifications

The Evolution of our Logos



1985

**Conway, Deuth &
Schmiesing, PLLP**
Certified Public Accountants

1990



2004



2016



2018

Giving Back to the Community



“

At CDS, volunteerism and giving back to the community are integral to our core values. The Partners at CDS believe that supporting our team members in their volunteer efforts not only strengthens our community, but also helps us grow as more well-rounded individuals and professionals. By encouraging community involvement, we reaffirm our commitment to making a positive impact—both inside and outside the firm.

”

BRETT AAMOT, CPA, CGMA, AND MANAGING PARTNER

CDS Reflections

Celebrating 40 years of CDS gives me chance to reflect on the growth, history, and resilience since the beginning. One of my favorite memories is when Jennifer Lownsbury, Heather Thompson and I attended a continuing education event in Portland, Maine. One evening featured a networking dinner with other firms, centered around a traditional lobster meal- served whole, of course. It must have been entertaining to watch three Minnesotans figure out how to tackle it (or, in my case, carefully analyze the meal before diving in). While this is a fun memory from the past, what truly defines CDS is its culture of kindness and collaboration, which sets it apart far beyond any project or deadline.

STACEY SEVOILA, CPA AND PARTNER



“ Since starting here at CDS, one of my favorite things has to be the way team members collaborate, share knowledge, and interact with one another. Everyone has always been willing to help and care for our clients. I can’t even count the number of times I’d walk over to Mark Olson for help, and he’d always be willing to give it, and teach me along the way. He’d usually conclude with a good joke, and some Kickapoo Joy Juice! The culture that the partners have created and fostered truly makes CDS an amazing place to work. ”

MITCHELL ERICKSON, CPA AND MANAGER

“ A couple of my favorite memories at CDS include the time Dave and Justin dressed up in dinosaur costumes while the rest of the office dressed as Jurassic Park characters—we took pictures in the parking lot, and the dinosaurs waved at passing cars, which was hilarious. Staffing the CDS tent at the Chamber golf outing has always been a highlight; one year, I wore a free soft cooler as a hat to stay warm, and another year I brought a pool so Kaitlyn and I could soak our feet to keep cool. Decorating the Chamber window with Bobbi has always been a fun adventure, especially coming up with new themes each year and making sure she doesn’t fall out of the window. I’ve always loved the Secret Santa gathering. There was also a year we held a bean bag tournament for United Way week in the hallway by the entryway—beanbags went flying into the bathrooms, knocked down pictures, and even hit the ceiling tiles. ”

ANDREA WIMMER, CPA AND MANAGER

CDS Reflections

I've been around the firm since I was born, so I've seen firsthand how much the Firm values teamwork and collaboration. What I appreciate most is that my opinion matters—I feel heard and respected. There's always variety in the work, and the leadership team has recognized my strengths, even creating a role specifically for me. I also appreciate that leadership consistently looks out for what's best for the team. Over the years, I've built strong, lasting friendships with colleagues I trust, which makes my work here even more meaningful.

ASHLEE FADER, SENIOR OPERATIONS COORDINATOR

“ I joined CDS during a time when the founding partners still walked the halls every day, their presence a quiet but powerful reminder of what it means to build something with purpose. Watching their unwavering commitment to the firm, their clients, and every member of the team was more than inspiring — it set the tone for everything that followed.

Over the past 10 years, I've had the privilege of working closely with Rick Conway. He's been more than a mentor — he's been a compass. Among many things, Rick taught me to trust my instincts, to believe in the depth of my knowledge, and to always double-check my work... not because he didn't trust me, but because he didn't trust computers. That kind of old-school wisdom sticks with you.

As a firm, we've shared laughter and tears. We've rallied when teammates needed support, and we've stepped up when our community called. The bonds here go far beyond the walls of the office.

I'll never forget the day I came home to find my apartment building had caught fire. I had to evacuate immediately. One phone call — just one — and within hours, 10 to 15 coworkers showed up to help me move my belongings to a new place. No hesitation. No questions. Just action. That moment solidified something I'd always felt: CDS isn't just a workplace. It's a family. And when life throws you a curveball, this team doesn't just stand by — they show up.

”

CAROLYN HALVERSON, EA AND MANAGER



I got my love of accounting from my dad. I started working for Latham & Parker as a kid. As part of my education at St. Cloud State, I did an internship at CDS. When I went back to St. Cloud to finish my degree, I envisioned working in accounting somewhere in the metro area. Shortly before graduation, CDS called to offer me a position. I thought I could live with my dad and start repaying my school loans while I looked for a job in Minneapolis. I enjoyed working for Rick, Roger, and Milan so much that, thirty-four years later, I am still here.

JILL HEDMAN, CPA AND MANAGER

When I started working for Robert Chevalier in 1975, our office was just two rooms and a storeroom in the upstairs of the building we are currently in. In 1985, the business was acquired by Jerry Wangsness, CPA. CDS purchased his practice in 1987. At that time, our services included payroll, accounts payable, and bookkeeping, but not tax. When it was under Chevalier, we were known for having the first computer in the area and had clients all over western Minnesota because of it. The Benson office of CDS still handles payroll and bookkeeping, but has grown to include over 800 tax clients.

MARY KAYE GORDON, OFFICE MANAGER

“ I have been fortunate and proud to be a part of CDS for our entire 40 years, beginning as a staff accountant and serving as a partner for the past 34 years. As the firm has grown, I too have experienced incredible opportunities, as well as personal and professional growth. In addition to being a great place to spend my career, the partners and staff have become like family to me. There have been many good and memorable times at partner retreats, golf events, and other office gatherings. We work hard and sometimes have to put in long hours to meet deadlines, but we are a team and truly enjoy working—and celebrating—together.

One of CDS's core values is kindness, and my family experienced this firsthand a few years ago during our son Troy's illness and passing. We felt immense love, generosity, and kindness from the CDS family through cards, care packages, well wishes, and financial support. I have always been proud to call myself a partner at CDS, and I wish continued success for the future of the firm.

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LARRY STULEN, CPA AND PARTNER

“ One of my first client service memories at the firm is working alongside Rick Conway to assist a client in selling their executive home with a yacht dock. Witnessing Rick's dedication to exceeding client expectations reminded me of the power of leading by example—a trait shared by all of our Partners. Through collaboration and creative problem-solving, we were able to address the client's needs. This experience reinforced for me how a proactive, team-based approach can make a meaningful difference for the clients we serve.

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JEAN GESELIUS, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING



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