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A professional portrait of Ginnette Clark, CPP, PayrollOrg President. She is a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, wearing black-rimmed glasses and a bright red lipstick. She is smiling and looking directly at the camera. She is wearing a dark blazer over a white patterned blouse. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue and grey.

*Sharing Wisdom
With Payroll's
Next Generation*

**Meet PayrollOrg President
Ginnette Clark, CPP**

Sharing Wisdom With Payroll's Next Generation

Meet PayrollOrg President Ginnette Clark, CPP

BY BRYAN KIRK

Change is something that Ginnette Clark, CPP, learned to accept at a young age. Ironically, the experience of having a parent who was a career soldier may have been exactly what fed this level of resiliency to prepare her for a career in the payroll industry.

"I am an Army brat," she said. "My dad served 22 years in the U.S. Army. We moved all up and down the east coast—North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia—and we did spend a little time in Germany for two years. We either traveled or moved about every two and a half years."

When her father retired from the U.S. Army, the family settled in Ohio where she finished high school, got married, started a family, and eventually started her payroll career.

An Aptitude for Numbers

Moving from one city to the next every two or three years can take a toll on a young child or teenager and impact their ability to make meaningful connections. Children may minimize the difficulty of moving repeatedly by finding comfort in a favorite toy or an activity such as crossword puzzles or counting the number of stars on a clear night.

For Ginnette, it was her fascination with numbers that helped her cope with the stress of moving every few years.

"I have always been curious about numbers, and quite frankly numbers don't lie. One and one is still two," she said. "I have always found numbers comforting, especially when I was growing up."

She reflects on those years of relocating from one Army

post to the next, and how the family adapted amid what seemed like a constant state of change. Numbers came naturally to Ginnette and made her feel grounded.

They also provided her with a pathway to a successful payroll career.

A Foot in the Door

In 2000, Ginnette was hired as the accounts receivable clerk for Interstate Brands Corporation in Toledo, Ohio, which produces and distributes Wonder Bread products. Her job consisted of applying cash that came in from the route drivers, pulling reports for sales managers, and other duties.

"I applied at Wonder Bread because I was on the hunt for a job and since they were new to the area I thought it might be a good fit," she said.

One of the drawbacks to the role was the split days off, which often depended on the position within the organization. Ginnette's scheduled days off fell on Wednesday and Saturday, making it difficult to attend some of her children's activities.

"Suddenly, the payroll job came open, and the payroll job was the only one that was Monday through Friday," she recalled. "I wanted a Monday through Friday job, and that was my only motivation at the time. I wanted weekends off to spend with my children."

The day after the previous payroll clerk left, Ginnette went to the controller's office and asked for the job. She was hired on the spot.

"I didn't really see myself sticking around as an accounts receivable clerk for long—I get bored pretty fast," she said. "So, I was excited when I moved into the payroll clerk position."

Bryan Kirk is the Senior Writer and Editor of Membership Publications for PayrollOrg.



Ginnette loves relaxing at home at her Alabama farm with her two dogs, Magnolia "Maggie" (at left) and Graham (at right).

As with any new position, there were challenges, but payroll checked all the boxes for Ginnette.

To her, payroll was fascinating and fun, and she was engaged in key activities including the company's Kronos project, which she referred to as "pretty thrilling."

"Looking back, I believe that my first payroll job sparked a lifelong passion for this field. Payroll is an interesting blend of simplicity and complexity—while the core principles remain the same, the details are constantly evolving with new regulations, technologies, and best practices," said Ginnette. "That dynamic nature keeps me engaged, always learning and adapting. At the same time, there's a comforting reliability to it; payroll is an essential function that businesses and employees alike depend on. I see it as a steady, yet exciting relationship—one that challenges me, keeps me sharp, and continuously fuels my curiosity and drive for growth."

Finding a Payroll Mentor

In October 2006, Ginnette left Wonder Bread and accepted a new role as Corporate Payroll Specialist with Libbey, Inc., in Toledo. It was here that she learned about PayrollOrg,

and the state and local payroll organizations, and received the mentoring she craved from her new manager, Rolanda Copley, CPP.

"She inspired me to stay in payroll and to do better," Ginnette recalled.

Rolanda, who was pregnant with her second child at the time, believed in Ginnette and asked her to take over her duties as the meeting coordinator for PayrollOrg's Toledo Area Association of Payroll Professionals chapter while she was on maternity leave.

"Rolanda introduced me to PAYO. She is a big proponent of being part of this organization and building that network," she said. "I got my first taste of a little volunteer work, and I was hooked. I have gotten far more out of volunteering and the work that I have done with PAYO than what I have given. I have made great friends, great colleagues, and met

people who I would not have met otherwise. I know people now who I can reach out to."

During those times when doubt would creep in, forcing Ginnette to question herself, Rolanda stepped in with a gentle voice of reason to provide that reassurance to help her stay the course. While Ginnette may have received the payroll mentoring she knew she needed, the benefits of that experience also positively impacted Rolanda.

"I said to Ginnette many years ago that she would do great things for payroll, and she has. Ginnette started with passion and determination, and I can truly say, that has not changed," said Rolanda. "As much as Ginnette may feel that I have inspired her through this journey, she in turn has inspired me as I see her push through almost anything ... Ginnette has a strong faith and a strong will to thrive and reach her goals. Just watching her in action is such an inspiration to me."

Of course, there are other mentors who Ginnette says have positively impacted her payroll career, including Levi Meeske, CPP; Dan Dycus, CPP; Linda Daily, CPP; and PayrollOrg Executive Director Dan Maddux.

"That man has always been an inspiration to me," Ginnette said about Dan Maddux. "He is so super smart. I don't know how he holds all this information in his brain, but he does. I have asked him for advice on things that weren't even payroll related—that were nonprofit related—and he has always been so very gracious."

The Changing Payroll Life

Although there are obvious challenges related to a payroll career—such as compliance with seemingly ever-changing tax laws, updates to federal regulations, and changes in technology—that leave some payroll professionals wondering why they chose such a demanding career path, there are some who just love payroll.

Those who embrace the challenges of problem solving and the complexities of payroll love the idea that payroll is a grand mystery that demands to be solved every day.

"I love that payroll is never the same; it's always different and there's always variety," she said. "There's always change."

She adds that the opportunities to learn something new amid all the changes that some may struggle with are just opportunities for professional and personal growth. Of course, by her own admission, if she's not learning, she gets bored quickly and that is why payroll is exactly where she belongs.

Over the span of her nearly 25 years in payroll, Ginnette has seen her fair share of changes in the payroll industry.

"I am from the era of green bar paper that printed off in three sheets. We printed payroll reports on those three sheets and that's how we distributed the reports," she recalled. "We hand-wrote changes to employee profiles. We didn't have a ticketing system or a shared service system to do that. It all came in manually and was filed in a file folder."

Those paper files were stored away in taped up bankers' boxes and stacked in storage rooms or warehouses. These days, technological upgrades and modern payroll processes, such as direct deposit and earned wage access (EWA), have enabled payroll to become a paperless environment.

"We no longer need to store gobs of information in filing cabinets forever, we don't have to maintain or store microfiche ... new payroll professionals may not even know what this is," she said. "Those have been the biggest advances. Not having these manual processes has enabled payroll professionals to become true professionals, not data entry people."



Nuggets of Wisdom

It's not uncommon for young people to lean on the advice of their parents or grandparents, and for Ginnette, some of the best advice came from her dad.

"When I was growing up, my dad used to say to me, 'Education increases your standard of living. When you increase your education, you increase your standard.' It was this mantra that stuck with me and continues to stick with me," she said. "I have an attitude of learning and education, and as long as I continue to learn and to grow, I stay satisfied."

As adults, however, most of us rely less on parents and more on our peers, supervisors, and mentors when it comes to our careers. For instance, one of the most common nuggets of payroll wisdom—from mentor to mentee is most cases—typically addresses the paycheck itself.

"Paulette Szajna, the controller at Wonder Bread who hired me for my first payroll job, once told me that the most personal thing a company can give an employee is their paycheck, so if it is wrong, it's very personal to that employee," she said.

As a result, Ginnette sees the benefit of sharing her knowledge to help those younger payroll professionals blossom into eventual payroll leaders.

"Being in payroll is more than just keying in information," she said. "It's a lot more about making sure the taxes are correct, making sure you stay up to date by state on what you're doing, making sure that you're opening the right accounts, and making sure you can read the room when you are having those conversations with upper management about things that are changing, or things that need to happen with an employee's pay."



Share a note with Ginnette!



Clockwise l to r: Handmade t-shirts created by Ginnette for the Christmas family photo in 2022; Ginnette's Aunt Joan and her Mom in Nashville 2020 during a "girl's trip;" Pegine and Ginnette during the 2024 Payroll Congress in Nashville; Ginnette and her husband, Scot; Rita Paul, CPP, Dan Maddux, and Ginnette during Payroll Congress in Long Beach; and Ginnette's payroll team Jodi Pollack, FPC, and Beth Pauli, CPP.

These key steps to payroll success are things that Ginnette willingly shares with anyone who asks, and that includes her team members at Hiab USA, where she now serves as the Senior Manager, Total Rewards/Payroll.

She even shares advice with her daughter, Jennifer, who has been in the payroll industry since 2022 (see sidebar article "**Following in Mom's Footsteps**").

"I pass some of these little nuggets of education to her," said Ginnette. "She doesn't always listen to me, so I will pass her along to someone else who will tell her the same thing, but in a different way."

Ginnette said she never imagined that any of her children would follow her into the payroll industry. In fact, when she took her daughter to work with her, she would—as most preteen or teenagers do—tell her mother how mundane her job was.

"I would bring them to work with me when they had a day off from school, because we lived in the country away from shopping centers or fast-food restaurants, and we'd go out to dinner afterward," she said. "She hated my job and always said it was the most boring job in the world."

Of course, her daughter's opinions about payroll changed and she eventually began to understand that the job of a payroll professional brings value. These days, Jennifer—like her mom—finds joy in taking on the challenges that come with a payroll career, and she plans to earn her Fundamental Payroll Certification (FPC) in the very near future.

"She loves the complexity and the work same as me, and she loves working for One Source Virtual. I believe she has truly found her home in this company. She has nothing but great things to say about her job," said Ginnette.

Not long ago, Ginnette was visiting her daughter and her family when her grandson started talking about what he wanted to be when he grew up.

"When I was visiting my grandchildren a couple of weekends ago, my grandson, Antonio (age 9), said when he grows up, he wants to process payroll just like mom and nana," said Ginnette. "I guess we are starting him out early!"

PayrollOrg's New President

There has never been an established timeline for when it is appropriate or just the right time for a PayrollOrg member to ultimately become the association's president. During last year's Summer Board Meeting, Dan Maddux pulled Ginnette aside and asked her if she was interested in running for PayrollOrg president.

She was shocked and elated at the same time.

"This has always been a goal of mine, to be PAYO president someday, but I certainly didn't expect it," she said. "Sometimes I have to pinch myself because it doesn't quite seem possible. But I know I would not have been chosen if others didn't have confidence in me."

Those who are in Ginnette's corner include four past PayrollOrg presidents. Bruce Phipps, CPP, who served consecutive presidential terms (2021-2023), gave Ginnette some key pointers on her speech for Payroll Congress, while other past presidents shared their experiences with her.

Lois Fried, CPP, PayrollOrg's first virtual president (during COVID-19), became a friend of Ginnette's when she was on the Board of Advisors. Although the two got to know each other during those meetings, they really built a deep friendship outside of the payroll space. Lois said her advice to Ginnette is simply to keep being a good listener and to never stop learning.

"Ginnette has gained tremendous experience in the industry and prepared herself to lead the organization by stepping up to volunteer in her local chapter and PAYO," said Lois. "My advice to Ginnette, as she assumes the presidency, is to continue to promote PAYO and lead with strength,

courage, kindness, and inclusiveness. She is ready to move PAYO forward!"

Linda Obertin, CPP, who served as president in 2023 when the association rebranded from the American Payroll Association to PayrollOrg, has been a close friend to Ginnette for more than 15 years.

"We were united by shared values and management approaches, particularly in fostering a gracious spirit and remaining the calm, steady voice during times of change, whether through system implementations, organizational updates, or process redesign," she said.

Linda said she and Ginnette had discussed PayrollOrg's presidency before Ginnette officially took the reins of leadership, and she advised her to lean on Dan [Maddux] and others in the association who are always willing to lend their support.

"My advice is to fully embrace her time as president of the largest and most respected payroll industry organization in the world, surrounded by those who admire and respect her, while continuing to inspire our profession to think bigger and bolder than ever before," Linda said.

Immediate Past President Jim Bolek, CPP, worked closely with Ginnette on the Board of Advisors, and saw first-hand the unrelenting passion she has for payroll. According to Jim, that's the kind of leadership PayrollOrg needs as the association continues to evolve.

"Ginnette is dedicated and approachable and that will serve her well as the leader of the association," he said. "My advice is that it goes so quickly, you have to enjoy and embrace the opportunity. I have no doubt that Ginnette will be great."

Making connections with others in payroll is a high priority for Ginnette, and it's one of the things she looks forward to while serving as PayrollOrg President.

"That is the benefit that I am going to get out of being president," she said. "Making new connections, inspiring people, and answering questions. I try to be relatable to people. That's the most exciting part about being PAYO President to me." ■

Following in Mom's Footsteps

Daughter Shares Joy of Seeing Mom Become PAYO President

BY BRYAN KIRK

Jennifer Olvera has only been in the payroll profession for a few years, and if you'd have asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up, she would not have said payroll.

Jennifer, who is the daughter of PayrollOrg (PAYO) President Ginnette Clark, CPP, recalled those childhood days of going to work on school breaks with her mom when she took her first payroll job with Wonder Bread.

Jennifer recalled sleeping under her mother's desk and thinking to herself that the coolest part of her mom's job was that she worked at the factory that made all the sweets she loved.

"Growing up, I wanted to be a counselor or a kids' parole officer, but as I got older, I realized that wasn't the path I wanted to take," Jennifer said. "I started exploring other career options. It wasn't until I was almost 30 years old that I finally decided which path I wanted to follow, and it turned out to be the same one my mom took."

Although it took two years, Jennifer signed up for a pilot program at the same company where Ginnette worked at the time. When she was awarded the position, the first person she called was her mom.

"She couldn't have been happier or more supportive," Jennifer said.

Ginnette has been Jennifer's biggest cheerleader on her payroll journey. She is currently helping her prepare for the Fundamental Payroll Certification (FPC) exam, and she has been an amazing resource when it comes to answering payroll questions.

"I have honestly yet to come to her with an issue payroll-related that she has not been able to answer or know who or where to go in order to get the answer," she said.

When Jennifer learned that her mom was going to be the next President of PayrollOrg, she was elated, both as a devoted daughter and a fellow payroll professional.

"I couldn't have been happier for her," she said. "Over the years, I have watched her grow in her career, education, and personal life in incredible ways. I have seen her overcome challenges that would have broken many people, yet she persevered. Knowing that all her accomplishments and goals are coming together teaches both me and my children that anything is possible with hard work! She deserves this more than anyone I know, and I couldn't be prouder to call her my mom." ■



Bryan Kirk is the Senior Writer and Editor of Membership Publications for PayrollOrg.