

PEOPLE OF ACTION

William B. Coleman

President

Coleman & Williams, LTD

(Member since 2001)



Ato Kwamina Ado, a/k/a William B. Coleman (Bill) was born in Ghana and migrated to the US in 1979. Bill's Ghanaian name is steeped in tradition. In Ghana babies are named for the day of the week on which they were born, given an appellation (comparable to a nickname) and because Ghanaians believe in reincarnation, the baby is also given the name of an ancestor, for Bill it was his father's uncle, Ado. Bill's Ghanaian appellation (nickname) is Ato, he was born on a Saturday, Kwamina, and carries the incarnation of his great uncle, Ado. Bill's Christian name is William, confirmation name is Benjamin and his father's surname is Coleman.

After leaving Ghana, Bill worked for the Institute for Cultural Affairs in Nigeria and was transferred to Chicago to work with Africans living on the West and South sides of Chicago. He earned his undergraduate and MBA from DePaul University, Chicago.

Love brought Bill to Milwaukee when mutual friends introduced him to Agatha, also a native of Ghana but whose family had migrated to Milwaukee in the 1960s. Agatha's roots were firmly planted in Milwaukee and was not interested in living in Chicago. The couple married in 1984 and Bill moved here permanently.

Together the couple has raised three sons, one is an architect living in Washington, D.C., another is an actuary living in Des Moines, Iowa and the oldest is an internal medicine physician with a specialty in geriatrics who lives in Mequon, WI. Bill and Agatha have four granddaughters ranging in age from one to five years old.

The Colemans also adopted and raised two nieces who have grown into successful adults, the oldest lives in Chicago and earned a degree in Accounting and is currently studying for her CPA; the youngest is about to earn her PhD in psychology from the University of Illinois, Carbondale.

The Coleman family doesn't seem to stop growing as for the last 25 years they have nurtured and shepherded boys from Ghana who attend St. Lawrence High School. They've helped so many Bill has lost count of the number (must be a large number for remember Bill is an accountant). Bill also has a brother and sister still living in Ghana.

Professionally, Bill is a CPA and is also certified in global management accounting (CGMA) and is an information technology professional (CITP). His firm, Coleman & Williams was formed in 1990 and currently employs more than a dozen professionals. The firm's niche is primarily auditing strict compliance mandates of employee benefit plans as well as government and grant programs.

As President of Coleman & Williams, Bill encourages and pushes for diversity in the accounting profession and other fields. He frequently speaks with elementary and high school students to encourage those with diverse backgrounds to consider a career in accounting. He formalized this volunteerism into the YES Program (Young Entrepreneurial Scholars).

YES is a collaborative effort among the Milwaukee chapter of the National Association of Black Accountants (NABA), the Wisconsin Institute of Certified Public Accountants (WICPA), and the pre-college divisions of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The program provides internship and mentoring opportunities for students who are traditionally underrepresented in the accounting profession. Bill graciously opens his office to these students to further their learning by hosting training and other events during the 6-week YES internship. The program also connects the students to direct experience outside of Bill's accounting firm.

Service is the lynchpin of the Coleman Family's commitment to each other and to helping people reach their full potential. Agatha is a retired Registered Nurse who worked for Milwaukee County helping children with behavioral issues within the County's Detention Center. She continues to volunteer and work alongside Bill as he mentors "the boys."

Bill regularly gives back to community and tries to further the world of accounting in many ways:

- In 2018 he received the WICPA Diversity & Inclusion Impact award for championing diversity and inclusiveness in the accounting profession. This prestigious award is given to those who have demonstrated impactful initiatives as well as engagement in mentoring or coaching programs promoting diversity initiatives.
- Treasurer of the UWM Foundation.
- Trustee of Divine Word College and Piney Woods School
- Past chair of Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative
- Board Member of Froedtert Hospital Foundation, Inc.
- Board Member and Treasurer of IMPACT Inc.
- Board Member of Wisconsin World Affairs Council, Inc.
- Board member and Treasurer of Feeding America of SE Wisconsin
- Founder and President of the Cardinal Dery Foundation, Inc. - 501(c)(3) Charity devoted to significantly improving the physical, spiritual and intellectual lives of the people of Ghana by providing clean water, education and health care.

While we all continue to struggle with the effects of the pandemic, Bill and Agatha are grounded in their faith and commitment to each other and the need around them. A great influence in Bill's life was when as a teenager in Ghana he was active in the Young Catholic Student Movement. The Bishop in charge of this lay group continually impressed upon him that *everything must be about people*; Bill hasn't forgotten those early lessons from working in soup kitchens.

Rotary has played a big role in Bill's life. He witnessed firsthand the amount work it does in Ghana and how Rotary brings people together. It is a challenge for him to say no to Rotary. He has served as our Treasurer since 2008 and has volunteered for many committees. His generosity is abundant in time and treasure. He is a Paul Harris Major Donor and has contributed to the Arboretum, the Preservation Fund, MKE Urban Stables, the RCM Scholarship Golf Classic and is a consistent and dedicated mentor to RCM Scholars.

Commitment Above Self. Bill Coleman significantly exemplifies that Rotary mantra.



Editor's Note: We're back...*We have re-started this popular bi-monthly Rotary People of Action series. The May 8 edition will feature Janine Kolbeck. Rotary People of Action is written by RCM Board Member (and its Sargent at Arms) Barbara Velez.*