

# Minding the books



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BOOKMINDERS®

BOOKMINDERS ACCOUNTING SERVICES OFFERS COMPETITIVE RATES AND LETS EMPLOYEES WORK FROM HOME, PART TIME

By SARAH E. MORAN

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THORNBURY — Kristen Hubbert was more focused on work than on her family, and she didn't like it one bit.

So, a few months ago, the 40-year-old mother of a kindergartner left her full-time job with Pinnacle Capital Solutions, a mortgage broker in Paoli, to work from home for Bookminders.

The brainchild of President and Founder Tom Joseph, Bookminders provides accounting and information management services for small businesses and nonprofit groups.

Recently expanding from its home base of Pittsburgh to the Philadelphia area, Bookminders employs a small army of accountants and bookkeepers — the lion's share of them are mothers with small children who've tired of putting in 50-hour work weeks somewhere else.

Bookminders employees now spend two-thirds of their week working from home and one-third meeting face-to-face with clients. Most work is between 20 and 30 hours a week.

The company employs about 50 in the Pittsburgh area and 10 more in the Pennsylvania side of the Philadelphia area.

All Bookminder workers are employees rather than subcontractors. As Joseph explained, "We can provide cafeteria-style benefits for our workers, but usually we don't. These women are part of working families and receive benefits through their spouses. Most are interested in the highest net income they can earn, so they're not going to buy benefits through us."

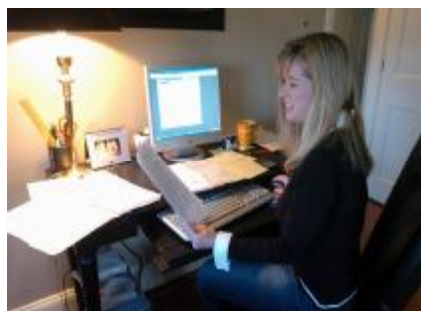
At any given time, Bookminders usually has male "bookminders", but doesn't right now, according to Joseph.

To work for Bookminders, an employee must have a four-year college degree in accounting or a related field, plus on-the-job

experience and computer fluency. Hubbert, for instance, has her degree in finance from Villanova University.

The operative Bookminders software is QuickBooks and the company provides extensive training.

Employees post bills, write checks, reconcile accounts and perform other tasks that an in-house bookkeeper or business manager usually does, but for a fraction of the cost, according to Rose and Vic Ballard, who own Gas Delivery Systems, a precision welding concern in West Goshen. "I get written reports every week," Rose Ballard noted. "In the past, we had a



LARRY MCDEVITT

**Working for Bookminders, Kristen Hubbert looks over figures in her office at her home in Thornbury.**

bookkeeper, but that person wasn't well-versed in accounting practices. Now, using Bookminders, I no longer have to pay a bookkeeper's benefits and Social Security."

How much each employee is paid depends on the number of transactions processed rather than on an hourly rate. Joseph said, "The more conversant and efficient employees become with our system, the more they earn."

On average, though, the hourly rate is usually about \$25. Most employees earn between \$2,000 and \$5,000 a month working 15 to 30 hours a week. Given that she's relatively new, Hubbert puts in 10 hours a week but will work more as she is assigned more clients.

"Hours are flexible and I can do most of my work at night or on weekends if I want," she said. "I wanted more time for my son, more time for my husband (a project manager for SAP America) and more time for volunteering."

The biggest benefit to cutting back is that she no longer thinks about her job all the time. "I was going in nights and weekends, and picked up information from clients at their homes all the time," she said. "I don't have to do that anymore."

Dorothy Nyland has four children and has worked for Bookminders for a year. Previously, she toiled full time for an insurance company as its finance manager and put in 50 hours a week, not counting the commute. Now she has reduced that to 35 or 40 hours and works from home.

"I wasn't necessarily looking for fewer hours but for different hours," she said. "I wanted the flexibility to attend my daughter's school Halloween parade."

With an accounting degree from Shippensburg University, the 42-year-old Nyland said the only challenge was that, "Working from home, it can be hard to stop and shift gears."

Rob Lukens, executive director of Historic Yellow Springs, switched from paying a part-time business manager to Bookminders about a year ago. Nyland works on the Historic Yellow Springs account.

"It's an incredible service, really," Lukens said. "We get professional accounting and bookkeeping support whenever we need it, and our reports are standardized and backed-up. Also, I can easily check things online." On the Web: [www.bookminders.com](http://www.bookminders.com).

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